

Declaration of the Climate Vulnerable Forum

We, Heads of State, Ministers and representatives of Government from Africa, Asia, Caribbean and the Pacific, representing some of the countries most vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change:

Alarmed at the pace of change to our Earth caused by human-induced climate change, including accelerating melting and loss of ice from Antarctica, Greenland, the Himalayas, Mount Kilimanjaro and Mount Kenya, acidification of the world's oceans due to rising CO₂ concentrations, increasingly intense tropical cyclones, more damaging and intense drought and floods, including Glacial Lakes Outburst Floods, in many regions and higher levels of sea-level rise than estimated just a few years ago, risks changing the face of the planet and threatening coastal cities, low lying areas, mountainous regions and vulnerable countries the world over;

Asserting that anthropogenic climate change poses an existential threat to our nations, our cultures and to our way of life, and thereby undermines the internationally-protected human rights of our people – including the right to sustainable development, right to life, the right to self-determination and the right of a people not to be deprived of its own means of subsistence, as well as principles of international law that oblige all states to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction;

Conscious that while our nations lie at the climate front-line and will disproportionately feel the impacts of global warming, in the end climate change will threaten the sustainable development and, ultimately, the survival of all States and peoples – the fate of the most vulnerable will be the fate of the world; and convinced that our acute vulnerability not only allows us to perceive the threat of climate change more clearly than others, but also provides us with the clarity of vision to understand the steps that must be taken to protect the Earth's climate system and the determination to see the job done;

Recalling that the UNFCCC is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change;

Desirous of building upon the commitment of leaders at the recent United Nations High-Level Summit on Climate Change in New York in addressing the needs of those countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change as well as other political commitments, including the AOSIS Declaration and the African Common Position;

Underlining the urgency of concluding an ambitious, fair and effective global legal agreement at COP15 in Copenhagen;

Gravely concerned at reports of a downgrading of expectations for COP15 and calling therefore for a redoubling of efforts – including through the attendance in Copenhagen, at Head of State- or Head of Government-level, of all States, and especially of major industrialised nations and all major emerging economies;

Emphasising that developed countries bear the overwhelming historic responsibility for causing anthropogenic climate change and must therefore take the lead in responding to the challenge across all four building blocks of an enhanced international climate change regime – namely mitigation, adaptation, technology and finance – that builds-upon the UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol;

Taking account of their historic responsibility as well as the need to secure climate justice for the world's poorest and most vulnerable communities, developed countries must commit to legally-binding and ambitious emission reduction targets consistent with limiting global average surface warming to well below 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and long-term stabilisation of atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations at well below 350ppm, and that to achieve this the agreement at COP15 UNFCCC should include a goal of peaking global emissions by 2015 with a sharp decline thereafter towards a global reduction of 85% by 2050;

Emphasising that protecting the climate system is the common responsibility of all humankind, that the Earth's climate system has a limited capacity to absorb greenhouse gas emissions, and that action is required by all countries on the basis of common but differentiated responsibilities, respective capabilities, and the precautionary principle;

Underscoring that maintaining carbon-intensive modes of production established in 19th Century Europe will incur enormous social and economic cost in the medium- and long-term, whereas shifting to a carbon-neutral future based on green technology and low-carbon energy creates wealth, jobs, new economic opportunities, and local co-benefits in terms of health and reduced pollution;

Convinced that those countries which take the lead in embracing this future will be the winners of the 21st Century;

Expressing our determination, as vulnerable States, to demonstrate leadership on climate change by leading the world into the low-carbon and ultimately carbon-neutral economy, but recognising that we cannot achieve this goal on our own;

Now therefore,

Declare our determination, as low-emitting countries that are acutely vulnerable to climate change, to show moral leadership on climate change through actions as well as words, by acting now to commence greening our economies as our contribution towards achieving carbon neutrality,

Affirm that this will enhance the objectives of achieving sustainable development, reducing poverty and attaining the internationally agreed development goals including the Millennium Development Goals,

Call upon all other countries to follow the moral leadership shown by the Republic of Maldives by voluntarily committing to achieving carbon-neutrality,

Assert that the achievement of carbon neutrality by developing countries will be extremely difficult given their lack of resources and capacity and pressing adaptation challenges, without external financial, technological and capability-building support from developed countries,

Declare that, irrespective of the effectiveness of mitigation actions, significant adverse changes in the global climate are now inevitable and are already taking place, and thus Parties to the UNFCCC must also include, in the COP15 outcome document, an ambitious agreement on adaptation finance which should prioritise the needs of the most vulnerable countries, especially in the near-term,

Call upon developed countries to provide public money amounting to at least 1.5% of their gross domestic product, in addition to innovative sources of finance, annually by 2015 to assist developing countries make their transition to a climate resilient low-carbon economy. This grant-based finance must be predictable, sustainable, transparent, new and additional – on top of developed country commitments to deliver 0.7% of their Gross National Income as Overseas Development Assistance,

Underline that financing for mitigation and adaptation, under the authority of the Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC, should be on the basis of direct access to implement country-led national Low-Carbon Development Plans and Climate Resilient Development Strategies, and the process to allocate and deliver the finance must be accessible, transparent, consensual, accountable, results-orientated and should prioritise the needs of the most vulnerable countries,

Further underline that fundamental principles and issues relating to the survival of peoples and preservation of sovereign rights are non-negotiable, and should be embedded in the Copenhagen legal agreement,

Call on Parties to the UNFCCC to also consider and address the health, human rights and security implications of climate change, including the need to prepare communities for relocation, to protect persons displaced across borders due to climate change-related impacts, and the need to create a legal framework to protect the human rights of those left stateless as a result of climate change,

Invite other vulnerable countries to endorse this Declaration,

Decide to hold a second meeting of the Climate Vulnerable Forum in Kiribati in 2010 to take forward this initiative, to further raise awareness of the vulnerabilities and actions of vulnerable countries to combat climate change, and to amplify their voice in international negotiations. In this context, request support from the UN system to assist the most vulnerable developing countries take action in pursuit of this Declaration.

Adopted in Malé, Maldives, 10th November 2009

Adopted by:

Bangladesh

Barbados

Bhutan

Ghana

Kenya

Kiribati

Maldives

Nepal

Rwanda

Tanzania

Vietnam