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Opening

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear participants.

I stand here today on behalf of the incoming COP-15 President, the Danish Minister of Climate and Energy, Mrs. Connie Hedegaard – who unfortunately was unable to be here today.

The challenge of climate change

In Copenhagen, this December, countries of the world will be gathered in an attempt to agree on a new ambitious global agreement to combat climate change.

The agreement should be ambitious AND fair: sufficiently ambitious to save the world from otherwise un-manageable climate change consequences, and sufficiently fair so that developing countries have room to grow, prosper, and lift their people out of poverty.

I guarantee that Denmark, as COP-15 host, is working towards a new agreement under those two Conditionalties. On the top of this any agreement must be based on science.

We will be listening carefully to all Parties and promise to work hard to ensure transparency in building consensus.

The industrialized countries must show clear leadership in handling climate change and commit to clean ambitious and binding reduction targets. And developing countries will have to contribute as well in accordance with their respective capabilities and development imperatives.

Sustainable emission pathways are the answer. The provision of energy services is essential for economic and social development and improved quality of life. In many African countries energy is in short supply and there is a need for increased investments in this sector. Herein lies the opportunity to combine sustainable growth and low carbon development. Green efficiency is simply sound economics.

Developed countries will have to strongly support developing countries in starting to curb their emissions. In efforts to do so, we will have to secure additional, thorough and predictable financing is provided.

The discussion on long term emission reductions is important. But we have to address the near future as well. It is never difficult for politicians of today to decide what should happen by

2050, none of them are in office by then. The real political commitment is proven by short and medium term commitments.

As COP-15 host, Denmark will work hard to ensure that the voices of the most vulnerable – those with the fewest resources and those countries suffering massively from adaptation challenges – are heard and respected.

Last June AMCEN started to develop a common African negotiating position for the international negotiations on a future climate regime up to and beyond 2012.

I have been told that this decision was based on the belief that Africa has a common vision on both adaptation and mitigation as well as the supporting elements of finance and technology.

It was also based on the conviction that African countries would benefit from having a common approach to engaging with the rest of the international community on the challenges of climate change.

The Danish Government stands fully behind your continued efforts.

It is important that all countries consider their views adequately reflected in a future agreement. Pooling your resources based on a shared vision is the best way of making your voices heard on the negotiations.

The Danish COP-15 Presidency already has excellent relationships with the representatives of Africa in the climate negotiations and we look forward to continuing this work strengthened by the decisions and recommendations that will come from this Special Session.

Conclusion

We have a lot of work in front of us in 2009 – COP-15 is only seven months away.

The Bali Action Plan gave Parties a good mandate, but we have made too little progress since then. We need to step up the pace and you together with the rest of the world have to become more specific and concrete on the building blocks.

During the process since Bali Parties have experienced differences in perception on some issues, and outright disagreement on others. But we must not let ourselves be discouraged by this.

It is only after considering concrete proposals and concepts with an open mind that you can all move to common ground.

The answer is first of all leadership and political courage from governments all over the world.

African countries should speak up in a strong and loud voice in calling for global emission reductions and an international agreement that provides and facilitates implementation of adaptation.

We look forward to Africa's continued support and cooperation towards making COP-15 a success.

Thank you.