

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Statement by Her Excellency, Kirsten Brosbøl, Minister for the
Environment, Government of Denmark
to the Opening Session of the 40th Session of the IPCC
Copenhagen, 27 October 2014

Intro: Climate change is happening now

1. Chairman of the IPCC, Dr. Rajendra Pachauri, Mr. Rasmus Helveg Petersen, Mr. Frank Jensen, distinguished delegates.
2. My message to you today is clear: Climate change is real. It affects people and regions differently. But it affects us all.
3. The expected damage is immense and the challenge overwhelming.

4. Only if we act now, adopt intelligent solutions, and learn from each other, we can reduce the impact that is coming.
5. The severity of the challenge is clearly illustrated in this 5th assessment report from the IPCC.
6. I received a briefing on the issues described in the report yesterday. And let me be clear: The findings of the report are enough to send chills down anyone's spine.

7. The challenges facing the world are daunting. And I wish to thank all of you who have worked tirelessly to ensure this profound analysis for decision-makers to act upon.
8. The evidence makes it clear that not only are the issues we need to address immense, they are also right at our doorstep.
9. We are not talking about events that might come to pass in a distant future. These events are happening right now.
10. We hear dramatic stories of climate events on the news on a daily basis, and the very multitude of these reports might

cause some people to tune out, saying, this is happening somewhere else, what has it got to do with me?

11. To that, there is only to say that if such an approach were ever viable, it certainly isn't anymore.

12. Dramatic weather events are not confined to a few regions of the world, they are happening globally, and at an increasing rate.

13. Taking a quick tour of the various regional implications of climate change, rising sea levels have tremendous

consequences for Small Island states in the Pacific, which face having to make substantial investments in securing coastal areas at risk.

14. At the same time, cyclones will be more frequent and pose a threat to low-lying areas.
15. In Africa, rising temperatures will result in drought, which again threaten the production of crops.
16. And in Europe, climate change will result in reduced access to water in the Southern part of the region, happening at the

same time as an increase in the need for water for irrigation, industry and private households.

17. In Denmark, we have witnessed extreme rainfall in recent years. And we are used to rain in Denmark. Falling on average every 2nd day, it is part of the national experience.

18. But during the past 10 years we have experienced more extreme rain showers and storms. In Copenhagen as well as many other parts of the country.

19. In 2011 Copenhagen was flooded by an extreme cloudburst. Damages due to the flooding were estimated at more than 650 million Euros.

20. Only a few weeks ago in the region of Northern Jutland, one single locale received 148 millimeters of rain over the course of the course of 36 hours. Normally this part of the country receives on average 83 millimeters of rain in the entire month of October. That's almost twice the monthly average in a mere two days.

21. And 100-year events are predicted to not only become more frequent, the intensity will also increase with 130 – 170 per cent at the turn of the century.
22. And water from above is only one side of the coin. Flooding as result of rising sea levels pose a perhaps even greater threat to our way of life.
23. Last December, we saw how areas along the harbor in Copenhagen only just avoided flooding by an extreme storm surge. Many areas of the country including many private homes were less fortunate.

24. With the IPCC's predictions on the extreme weather of the future, the damages in Denmark and elsewhere are merely a premonition of things to come.
25. The responsibility to act on these facts falls squarely on the shoulders of politicians and decision-makers. We cannot sit idly by, and hope for the problems to go away. Because they won't. And the longer we wait, the bigger they get.
26. But governments, while bearing the primary responsibility for addressing the challenges facing the world by climate change, cannot fix things on their own.

27. As citizens, we all have a responsibility to be mindful of how our actions affect the world surrounding us.
28. One of the most important tasks for all governments and city administrations – not least for me and my colleagues as Ministers for Climate and the Environment – are how we provide individuals with tools to fight back.
29. Citizens can play a key role in preventing further climate change, and they can help adapting to the changes in their own backyard.

30. It is in all of our interests to act before the effects of inaction and the costs become insurmountable.
31. Highlighting a few key figures, damage costs from coastal flooding in Europe alone are expected to reach as much as 11 billion euros a year by 2050. In 2080 that number is expected to rise to 25 billion euros a year. The number of people affected by the flooding is approximately 55.000.
32. The UN has estimated that by 2050 up to 350 million people will have to abandon their homes and settle in other areas due to climate change.

Let us learn from each other

33. To avoid this, let us learn from each other. Good solutions that have worked in one place might also help in other parts of the world.
34. In Denmark we look to other countries that are used to dealing with heavy rainfall and storm surges to find smart solutions.
35. And maybe we can provide inspiration to others as well.

36. We try to handle water at the surface instead of leading water to the sewer system. This can save us from flooding our homes with sewage water, but it also gives us more attractive blue and green cities.

37. We also work with smart technology, such as intelligent sewers that empty themselves before a heavy cloudburst.

Outro: Regional challenges are global challenges

38. The 5th assessment report clarifies the need to deal with climate change.

39. It serves as a chilling reminder that we have to reduce emissions of greenhouse gas as well as adapt to the changing climate.

40. It also reminds us that governments cannot fix the world's problems alone. It is critical that the challenges are met by public authorities, industry, NGO's and citizens all coming

together and doing their bit. We cannot afford the luxury of exempting anyone from responsibility.

41. But to me, the main lesson is that while climate change impacts regions differently, we must remember that the world is made up of regions, and that regional challenges are therefore global ones. We are all in the same boat.

42. It is against this bleak backdrop that I once again thank you for your efforts regarding the adoption of the 5th assessment, and wish you a fruitful and productive meeting.

43. Thank you.

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