

Opening of the 32nd Session of the
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

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Address from Mr. Achim Steiner
UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director

Delivered by:

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**Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Dr. Pachauri and Members of the IPCC,
Ladies and Gentlemen:**

May I begin by thanking the Government of Republic of Korea for agreeing to host this important meeting. Your country has been an exceptional host to a series of United Nations and other international events this year.

Over the coming four days, delegates to this 32nd Session of the IPCC will discuss complex issues and adopt important decisions.

- The progress in implementation of the IPCC fifth assessment report is of course on the top of the agenda.
- But the plenary is also an important moment in terms of the evolution of the IPCC in respect to its procedures and processes and in terms of the responsibilities and challenges it faces in bringing the best, impartial risk assessment of climate science to policy-makers.

I will not go into the extraordinary events of the past year in terms of the questioning and sometimes heated debate surrounding the science of climate change – everyone in this room knows the story.

- It has certainly had consequences in terms of public opinion, and the public policy arena.

Therefore this plenary is as much about leadership, restoring public confidence in the IPCC, and fitting it for a new century as much as it is about AR-5.

- Indeed a rigorous, credible and convincing AR5—at least in terms of the global public—may in part rest on your decisions here in terms of this scientific body and the way it operates and communicates.
- Before you are the recommendations of the outcome of the Review of the IPCC Processes and Procedures organized by the InterAcademy Council – jointly requested by the Chairman of the IPCC, Dr. Rajendra Pachauri and the UN Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon. This request followed discussions that took place at the UNEP Governing Council’s Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF) held in Bali, Indonesia in February 2010.

UNEP, in collaboration with WMO, have supported this independent review process in several ways.

- For example, by contracting the IAC to conduct the review in time for consideration by the IPCC Plenary in October of this year.
- And together, and also with generous contributions from the governments of -- Denmark, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America -
- provided the funding to make the IAC’s independent assessment possible.

Here I would like to note the IAC’s commitment and professionalism that produced such a rich and a high quality review report in such tight schedule.

UNEP notes that the IAC recommendations did not touch on the roles of WMO and UNEP as hosts: however UNEP would like to assure its constituents that we are ready to assist Member States to enable implementation of the recommendations, particularly those that relate to the management structures and governance within the Secretariat. If so requested by Member States, UNEP could bring these matters to the attention of the next session of the UNEP Governing Council / Global Ministerial Environmental Forum in February, 2011.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

UNEP also appreciates the great value of recommendations of the Review Committee for other global assessment processes such as the proposed Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the Global Environment Outlook (GEO), and the Global Reporting and Assessment of the Marine Environment (GRAME). We will certainly endeavor to capitalize on the Committee's recommendations to strengthen the scientific robustness of the above processes.

Furthermore, the IPCC's fifth assessment is going to be an integral part of the United Nations' global assessment work. I would also like to specify that there are more UNEP's assessment activities which have direct connections to climate science and policy. These include:

- The 'Emissions Gap Assessment' which is bringing together the views of over 20 scientific groups about the possible "emissions gap" in 2020; meaning here the gap between expected emissions after pledges are taken into account, and emission limits for staying within the two degree target of the Copenhagen Accord.
- An Integrated Assessment of Black Carbon and Tropospheric Ozone and its Precursors, with the assessment to be completed by the end of this year and the report released in early 2011.
- Establishing a Secretariat of the Programme for Research on Vulnerability, Impacts and Adaptation (PRO-VIA) to help the scientific community coordinate its research on climate impacts, vulnerability and adaptation, and
- Producing a 'Climate Change Science Compendium' in 2011 which is a response to the UNEP mandate to identify and report emerging environmental threats on the global scale.

I am also glad to inform you that UNEP continues to support the IPCC Secretariat in its day-to-day work. The long-awaited recruitment of the Deputy Secretary has come to an end, and we expect to be in a position to introduce the new Deputy to you in the next few days.

Again, it is my great pleasure to renew UNEP's commitment to IPCC's admirable work.

- Work that is essential in unraveling the complexities of climate change, where new science, requesting and requiring new understanding, emerges almost daily.
- There have been many moments when world attention has focused on the IPCC – this week is one of the moments. The world is looking to this plenary and to governments to take the IPCC, as a body on

which it relies, forward by drawing and acting on the IAC's recommendations, or to propose and agree on other arrangements in terms of "retooling" the IPCC.

I am confident you will make the kinds of decisive and definitive decisions that will open a new and transformational chapter in the history of this extraordinary and unprecedented scientific effort which is the IPCC. UNEP stands ready to support you in this Endeavour.

My best wishes for a successful Plenary and I thank you.