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**Science for Adaptation Action: Nobel Laureate High-Level Dialogue
Groningen, Netherlands (virtual), 22 January 2021**

Keynote address by IPCC Chair Hoesung Lee

Thank you for the invitation to speak at this important and timely meeting.

The world is hopefully starting to emerge from a crisis that is a foretaste of what climate change could do to our society, to nature, and to our lives.

The COVID-19 pandemic has many lessons for us: not only underscoring the risks at the nexus between climate change, biodiversity and health, but also showing us possible responses to global crises of this kind, and their ramifications.

Just over two years ago I was at the launch of the Global Center for Adaptation in the Hague, and presented the IPCC's new Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C.

SR15 findings

We distilled those findings into three simple sentences:

- Every half a degree of additional warming matters
- Every year matters
- Every choice matters

Implications for adaptation

It is worth recalling some of the implications of that report on adaptation:

Even at 1.5°C there are limits to adaptation. Small island states threatened with inundation do not have adaptation options;

You don't need complex models to assess the probability of warming of 1.5°C when you are already at 1°C. 1.5°C will happen in the next few decades if we continue business as usual. It will soon become obvious whether we have done enough. We need to accelerate adaptation;

The impact differentials between 1.5 and 2°C show that by increasing our mitigation ambition we can reduce our adaptation needs: it will be easier to adapt to warming of 1.5°C than to higher levels of warming. The world is very different at 1.5 and 2°C;

For example 10 cm less sea level rise by 2100 – the difference between warming of 1.5 and 2°C - results in more time to adapt, and 10 million fewer people exposed to risk;

Thus ambitious mitigation is the best and surest way to expand adaptation capacity, and reduces costs by lowering the need to adapt.

Lessons from COVID-19

The recovery from COVID-19 provides an opportunity to invest in a low-carbon economy so that we can build resilience to climate change into our lives.

But the trend in emissions continues to rise and will do so for the next few years.

That threatens efforts to build back with a green climate-resilient recovery.

And it risks testing the limits to adaptation that we know are there.

We had two additional special reports released in 2019. The special reports on land use and on the ocean and cryosphere found among others that sustainable land management, sustainable fisheries, blue carbon ecosystems, and ecosystem-based adaptation will be effective only in a low emission world.

I congratulate the scientists at this dialogue for preparing a thoughtful and robust statement on adaptation to be transmitted next week to world leaders.

Many policymakers in recent months have made pledges to bring emissions to net zero in the coming decades.

But leaders may want to consider how those pledges and green recovery can be compatible with rising emissions.

The next few years will be very challenging.

AR6 and adaptation

The IPCC is now working on our Sixth Assessment Report and I salute the scientists contributing their work to the IPCC especially in these difficult times.

The Sixth Assessment Report includes the assessment on impacts, vulnerability, and adaptation. This will add to our knowledge of adaptation.

- First of all, it will explore the links between the natural world and humans, e.g. impacts of climate change on human health and pandemics, on food and on wellbeing, and adaptation options and limits;
- It will assess the role of cities as places of increasing vulnerability and also opportunity for adaptation and mitigation;
- It will focus on adaptation solutions; and
- It will assess the large-scale transformations implied by adaptation.

Both climate change and COVID-19 have shown us the risks of an unthinking and rapacious approach to nature and its resources. In addressing both crises we can respond rapidly to invest in a more sustainable world.

We can build our future, which will be more prosperous and in harmony with nature than the world we see today.

Thank you for your attention.

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