

Welcoming Speech by Minister of Environment Opening Ceremony of the 48th Session of the IPCC

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to welcome you to the opening ceremony of the 48th session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Let me first thank honorable Chair Lee, Heosung of the IPCC for his excellent leadership and the staff members at the IPCC Secretariat, Korea Meteorological Administration and Incheon Metropolitan City for their hard work to make this event possible.

Also I would like to thank Deputy Secretary General Elena Manaenkova of the World Meteorological Organization, Chief Scientist Jian Liu of the UN Environment and Director Youssef Nassef of Adaptation Programme of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Thank you all for traveling so far to join us today.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

I am very honored to witness this historic moment here in Songdo, embarking on our discussions on the progress and implementation of the Paris Agreement. I am also glad that last summer's scorching heat has finally passed and autumn is here for us to meet.

Since its inception in 1988, the IPCC has made a remarkable contribution to the international community by proving climate change is an undeniable fact. It has also provided numerous climate scenarios and scientific evidence to climate change. In 2007, the Nobel Committee awarded a Nobel Peace Prize to the IPCC in recognition of its contribution to sharing such valuable knowledge and building a foundation for climate action.

Through the years, the IPCC Assessment Reports have served as a reliable scientific basis for many important milestones that followed: the UNFCCC established in 1992, the Kyoto Protocol adopted in 1997 and finally, the Paris Agreement adopted in 2015. The reports have become an important driver to the progress we have made in climate action.

I have no doubt, therefore, the Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius, to be addressed in this session, will be a stepping stone for us to achieve the long-term goal of the Paris Agreement.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

The earth is experiencing unprecedented scale of extreme weather events -- heat waves, floods, wild fires and strong typhoons. It is a clear warning and message that we should act now to move into a low-carbon future as pledged in the Paris Agreement.

Recognizing such urgency, the Korean government is faithfully fulfilling the Paris Agreement to set itself onto a sustainable, low-carbon path.

First, the Korean government is doing its best to achieve its target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 37% from the BAU level by 2030. Last July we improved our existing national roadmap in a way that significantly increases our domestic reduction target.

Our main focus is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and fine dust level. To do so, we will decrease dependence on fossil fuel while increasing renewable energy share by four times up to 20% by 2030. We will also transform the current energy intensive industry structure into a highly energy efficient one that emits less carbon.

Second, we are encouraging businesses to act, too. As of now, two-thirds of the total greenhouse gases in Korea are emitted by major businesses. The Emissions Trading Scheme in Korea allows companies to actively engage in climate action. Recently the 2nd phase allocation plan has been established, introducing auctioning as part of the scheme.

The scheme provides economic incentives for businesses to achieve their reduction targets, stimulating technological innovations for emission reduction.

Third, the Korean government is keen to take preemptive adaptation measures to protect vulnerable populations affected by climate change.

Damages caused by climate change will be controlled at the national level within its emergency response system. Action plans will be followed for the sake of vulnerable populations and areas to protect their welfare.

Fourth, Korea remains committed to supporting developing countries in their climate change response.

Indeed, Korea has founded the Global Green Growth Institute and hosted the Green Climate Fund, showing its dedication to the global support for developing countries' sustainable development and climate action.

Based on such experience, we will continue to step up our efforts to help developing countries' mitigation and adaptation actions.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

The Special Report to be adopted at this session is the first official report that looks into the impacts of global warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius and greenhouse gas emission pathways. I believe the report could send us a clear signal for urgent global action to stop climate change.

I understand there are some climate change skeptics out there, but let me tell you this: Truth is truth. Climate change cannot be denied.

For this reason, Korea stands ready to implement the Paris Agreement, working closely with the United Nations and international community.

To hand over a better future to our next generation, it is imperative that we have a robust implementation framework for the Paris Agreement. I hope the IPCC and the special report will serve as a strong platform on which the implementation framework could start to be built for the upcoming COP24.

Once again, I would like to thank you all for preparing such a wonderful session. Finally, let me thank the governments of 195 member states and researchers for your participation in preparing this special report. Thank you.