

EL SALVADOR
Statement by Herman Rosa Chávez
Minister of the Environment and Natural Resources
United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20
Rio de Janeiro, June 21, 2012

Mr. President,
Excellences,
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by thanking the Brazilian people for their warmth and hospitality. I also wish to recognize the transparency with which the Presidency of Brazil has led this process which confirms the importance of preserving and strengthening multilateralism to solve global problems.

We know that it has not been easy to reach a consensus declaration with such diverse positions and it will not be easy to explain in our respective countries that the great achievement in Rio +20 has been to avoid a major setback in relation to the principles and guidelines that we adopted 20 years ago. Indeed, the outcome that we have is just a sterile gauze to control the hemorrhage from a bleeding wound.

Mr. President

Rio 92 bequeathed us an extraordinary declaration of principles, including the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, which recognizes the historical contribution from different countries to global environmental degradation. But here we had to defend tooth and nail this principle.

Rio 92 also gave us the conventions on climate change, biodiversity and desertification, but since then the spirit of Rio 92 has been eroded and worst there has been a systematic disregard for the commitments that were made.

The most obvious example is in the climate change convention. The commitments on funding, technology transfer and capacity building to address climate change have not been met. In addition, the emissions of greenhouse gases increased aggravating the disturbance of the global climate system.

Mr. President

For El Salvador and the countries of the Central American Integration System - SICA - the adverse effects of climate change entail substantial losses and damages that exceed our financial capabilities and undermine our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development. In this regard, we urge the international community to recognize the effects of climate change in the Central American Isthmus and facilitate cooperation and financial and nonfinancial support for adaptation to climate change and integrated risk management.

Mr. President

Let me illustrate with the case of El Salvador the dramatic situation experienced by Central America. Until the eighties El Salvador was affected by one or two extreme weather events per decade. In contrast, in the last three years we were hit by five extreme weather events, two from the Caribbean and three from the Pacific Ocean. The last three were so severe that left us losses and damages of \$1.300 million dollars, equivalent to 6% of GDP.

But we are not remaining passive. In the last three years we strengthened systematic climate observation and we now have one of the most comprehensive and advanced monitoring system in Latin America. We also strengthened our Civil Protection System and for the most affected sectors such as infrastructure and agriculture we have developed is strategies for climate change adaptation. In addition, we have a state environmental policy which aims at reversing environmental degradation in our territory and reducing our vulnerability to climate change.

Mr. President

We know our priorities and we know what we need to do to build a robust and climate-resilient economy which is able to generate quality jobs so that our youth can find a future in our country instead of being forced to emigrate. But we cannot do this alone, especially when we have to spend much of our resources to meet emergencies and reconstruct what we lose year after year.

Twenty years ago, also in 1992, El Salvador put an end to a 12 year civil war with the support of the international community and the direct mediation of the UN Secretary General. With our historic Peace Accords El Salvador began to take the first steps towards a strong and lasting democracy.

Twenty years later a changing climate has become our greatest threat and again we require the international solidarity to build the pillars for a sustainable development that provides opportunities for all.

With the support of the international community El Salvador can be an example of what can be achieved in a short time to adapt to climate change. And although the contribution of El Salvador to climate change is insignificant my country is also willing to do its part to mitigate climate change and has built a innovative proposal for adaptation based mitigation.

Mr President,

It is urgent that we recapture the enthusiasm and the spirit of Rio 92 particularly now that we face multiple global crises. This is not the time to pull back from the commitments. On the contrary, the commitments that have been made must be fulfilled without excuses or delays. Our common future is at stake.

Thank you very much.