

Beyond Bali: Perspectives for addressing climate change in the context of sustainable development

Keynote statement

**by Dr. Han Seung-soo, Special Envoy on Climate Change
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Climate change has risen to the top of the global policy agenda. There is now a growing public perception that climate change is not a challenge for tomorrow, but one that we must face today.

The most recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states that warming is “unequivocal”, and that warming is attributable to human activities with 90 per cent certainty. In other words, the scientific consensus has hardened to the point where the most pertinent question is not whether climate change is happening, but rather what to do about it.

Climate change is now widely recognized as an urgent global problem. Increasingly, it is also understood as a sustainable development challenge, with broad impacts not only on the environment, but also on economic and social development.

The adverse impacts of climate change can and do interfere with achieving sustainable development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. This point has been powerfully reinforced in the 2007 Human Development Report.

The Secretary-General has identified climate change as one of his chief priorities. On 24 September he convened a high-level event, with the participation of almost 80 heads of state and government. The meeting revealed a shared commitment to action, and a determination to tackle climate change through the multilateral framework of the United Nations.

The 13th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change just concluded this past Friday. The Conference was attended by a record number of government delegates, business representatives, civil society groups and other stakeholders. COP-13 was an impressive manifestation of the importance accorded by the world community to address the climate change challenges.

At the Bali conference, the Secretary-General noted that there is a general recognition that industrialized countries are required to make much deeper emission reductions, and that they must continue to take the lead in this respect.

At the same time, many leaders from developing countries also acknowledged their common but differentiated responsibilities and the need to take action to limit growth in emissions. Access to cleaner technologies, including energy efficiency technologies, is a major concern to many developing countries. There is also a renewed interest in considering incentives for curbing emissions from deforestation.

Approaching climate change from a sustainable development perspective can yield positive development and climate outcomes. For instance, the co-benefits of GHG mitigation actions can include improved energy security, urban air quality and human health benefits. These opportunities for synergies need to be further explored and put into practice.

Between 1970 and 2004, growth in global economic activity and population has contributed to a 70 per cent increase in annual greenhouse gas emissions. During the same period, technological progress led to some significant decreases in energy intensity which fell by 33 per cent. Without such progress and energy efficiency improvements the increase in global GHG emission undoubtedly would have been much higher.

Further promotion of energy efficiency will need to play a key role in addressing the climate change challenges. Technology is a key “building block” for addressing climate change. It is also an area that unites the interests of industrializing and developing countries.

Accelerating deployment of energy efficient technologies is a critical challenge: we do not have the luxury of decades to innovate, deploy and commercialize innovations. On the one hand effort must go into the clean technologies of tomorrow, but on the other we need to focus on overcoming technical, economic and policy barriers to ensure that the technologies of today are rapidly deployed. Energy efficiency is repeatedly singled out as one of the most important near-term technology options. Developing renewable energy technologies also require sustained policy support.

Policies to enhance efficiency in energy use are of particular importance also for the developing countries, in particular those where economies are expanding fast. Energy efficiency and long term energy costs need to be taken into careful consideration at the time that investment decisions are taken, products designed, buildings developed, and durable consumer goods selected. Once the investments are made, potentials for improving energy efficiency in operations are often much more limited.

Much more needs and can be done to harness the full potential of energy efficiency in the main energy end-use sectors, including industries and manufacturing, commercial, institutional and residential buildings, electrical home and office appliances,

and in transport. At the same time, we must move forward with deployment of cleaner and advanced energy technologies, in particular also in power generation.

I am indeed grateful to the Government of the Republic of Korea, my own country, to host this international expert Forum. Due to its scarce indigenous energy resources the Republic of Korea is particularly dependent on imported energy supply. Energy efficiency and energy security have always been priority concerns for the Republic of Korea. There are certainly many valuable experiences on energy efficiency technologies and policies that can be shared internationally for mutual benefit.

In Bali, the Secretary-General highlighted the importance of taking collaborative action on sustainable development and on addressing climate change. He will certainly be pleased to know that his call for action is being followed-up immediately.

Thank you very much.