



Kofi Annan
FOUNDATION

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Embargoed until 19.00 CET, 9 October 2009

H.E Kofi Annan | 9 October 2009 | Copenhagen, Denmark

“From Kyoto to Copenhagen” – Address at the opening of the Global Editors’ Forum

Prime Minister Rasmussen,

Ministers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to join you for this crucial conference.

Your presence here powerfully underlines your commitment to combating climate change.

This is absolutely critical because you represent the world’s best known, respected and influential newspapers.

And this influence – on our leaders and on your readers - has never been more important than in the next few weeks.

Prime Minister Ramussen has just set out what is at stake here in Copenhagen in December.

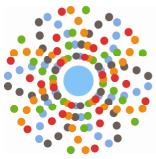
This great city’s influence has long been felt beyond the borders of this country.

But it has never played a more pivotal role in our world than over the next couple of months.

For the decisions taken – or ducked – at the climate change conference will have the most profound impact on our world and on future generations.

It is why the task of constructing a post-Kyoto agreement is not one which can be left to politicians alone.

It is the responsibility of all of us to create the conditions where obstacles are overcome – and to ensure that the decisions taken are followed through.



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Achieving this will be extremely difficult. The negotiations ahead will be complex and difficult.

The actions that are needed to prevent damage and destruction on a colossal scale will transform not just our economies but effect every aspect of our lives.

Given the scale of the threat, progress has been painfully slow.

Fortunately the UN Summit convened by Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon last month has finally concentrated minds at the highest possible level on what needs to be done and its urgency.

Let us be clear about the scale and urgency of the climate challenge.

Earlier this year, 2500 scientists warned that on present emission levels, the world was edging towards potentially catastrophic climate change.

Time is fast running out and there is no excuse for inaction.

No country will escape its impact, directly or indirectly.

Rising temperatures, the increase in droughts, storms and sea-levels will damage economies and quality of life, bring new health risks and add new pressures to food and fresh water supplies.

The United Nations has warned the increased stresses of climate change will see rising tensions and conflict across the globe.

Last year alone, more than 20 million people were displaced by climate-related disasters, and this number is set to grow.

Nor is climate change, as many of you know from your own countries, an abstract or future threat. It is happening now.

From Australia to Zambia, we are already seeing an increase in extreme weather events linked to climate change.

Livelihoods are being ruined and lives lost – with the most vulnerable and disadvantaged paying the highest price.

For it is a tragic irony that the countries which have done least to cause climate change are those which are suffering and will suffer most from its impact.



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The least developed countries have contributed less than 2% of the greenhouse gases in our atmosphere.

Yet while climate change will affect us all, those in the greatest danger live in the poorest countries or small island nations.

These are also the same societies with the least resources to protect their people.

Without support, they will be left facing a catastrophic problem they simply can't manage alone.

And this brings me to the core of my message to you tonight – and to a principle common to every continent and understood in every culture.

And that is the principle of fairness.

For as well as being universal and ambitious, any future agreement must be underpinned by climate justice.

What does this mean?

First, that a new agreement will be successful only if it is perceived by all participating countries to be equitable.

Climate justice demands that the industrialised countries meet their historic responsibility for the accumulation of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere.

It is their industrial activity over the last century which is overwhelmingly the cause of the changes underway in our climate.

While all countries need to take steps to reduce emissions, the developed economies must take the lead by making the most dramatic cuts – something within their capability.

They must lead in ensuring global emissions peak by 2020 – and fall by at least 50% from 1990 levels by 2050.

To achieve this, industrialized nations need to commit themselves to reduce emissions by between 25 and 40% by 2020 as Japan and the EU have already pledged to do.



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Fast-emerging economies such as Brazil, China, India and South Africa also need to engage meaningfully but in a way which does not prevent them improving standards of living through economic growth.

This requires them to commit to reducing their energy intensity significantly by 2020, and agreeing to emission reduction targets afterwards.

These steps by both industrialised and fast-emerging economies must be backed by national policies and targets that can be monitored and verified.

We must also ensure action to tackle climate change does not come at the expense of trapping millions in abject poverty.

So developing countries, particularly the least developed, must be given the capability to catch up with the rest of the world through economic development.

The key is to help them achieve economic growth in a sustainable way.

So cuts in emissions, no matter how dramatic, are not on their own enough. Climate justice also demands major and additional transfer of resources to help meet the cost of adaptation and mitigation measures in developing countries.

They need help both to grow economically without a proportionate rise in emissions and to protect vulnerable communities from the climate change already underway.

This requires at least \$100 billion a year for adaptation – far more than committed so far by the richer countries but a figure around which there is a growing consensus.

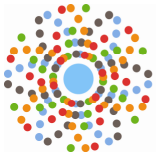
These are large sums. But we have seen the same countries find trillions of dollars over the last 18 months to rescue their banks.

We know the money can be found.

So the agreement in Copenhagen must establish a fund, governed transparently, to support the mitigation and adaptation actions of developing countries.

We need as well to see the widespread transfer of clean energy technologies to developing countries on preferential terms, to enable them to grow their economies in a more sustainable way.

The barriers that hamper the sharing of such knowledge, such as intellectual property rights and competitive rules, must be overcome.



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This will require businesses and countries to put the future of the planet before short-term profits.

This is all a huge challenge. But thanks to your reporting, analysis and campaigning, the dangers we face from climate change are widely recognised across our societies.

Indeed surveys suggest that public understanding of the need for decisive action is running ahead of commitments by our politicians.

We need to turn that to our advantage so that Copenhagen is a different kind of agreement – one that comes from the people rather than imposed on them.

This requires every one of us to show leadership and accept responsibility in the next vital few weeks and in the coming months and years.

And no one has a more important role than your newspapers which give a voice to your communities and countries.

Every day you reflect the priorities of your readers, hold your leaders to account and shape opinion – creating the context in which they operate.

You have already helped push climate change right up the agenda but I urge you to step up efforts to mobilise demands for action.

The internet gives many more people the chance to express their opinions.

But it is your voices which still rightly carry weight and authority.

Use your pages and web-sites to report on the impact of climate change within your own communities and in the wider world.

As senior editors give your staff the space, time and encouragement to write about the way climate change is already altering our lives and reducing opportunities as well as the even bigger challenges to come.

And not just on the news and comment pages but in the business sections as well. Business and finance have a pivotal role to play in delivering on any agreement and making the most of the opportunities ahead.

Investment in clean energy research and infrastructure development, both in the developed and developing world, can't be left to Governments alone.



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Increase as well your efforts to inform and educate your readers about the recent advances in more efficient and less costly energy technologies, as well as carbon capture and storage.

The more accurately and comprehensively you get over the challenges in front of us, the better the chance that all sectors of society will come together to overcome them.

Find innovative ways to mobilise your readers to demand a deal at Copenhagen and that their countries take the lead.

Work with grass-roots organisations and the whole range of civil society to mobilize the public around campaigns, such as the tck,tck,tck: time for climate justice campaign.

Keep up pressure on political leaders to attend the summit in Copenhagen in person – and to instruct their negotiators to prepare the ground for a deal in advance.

The latest reports from the meeting in Bangkok show just how important this is going to be.

We saw last month how the speed of progress increases when Presidents and Prime Ministers focus personally on the challenge in front of them – and their own prestige is at stake.

If we can convince the world's leaders to come to Copenhagen, we will see much greater effort to overcome obstacles.

Work as well to give our political leaders the confidence and courage to put aside narrow national interests and to stand up to powerful lobby groups.

Hammer home the message that climate change is a global challenge.

We have seen from the economic crisis that no country has escaped from its shock waves.

We have learnt that we sink or swim together.

So no country or region can wait for another to move first.

You must encourage them – now and in the future – to ignore the tyranny of electoral cycles which restrain action.



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Get them to focus instead on the impact of failure at Copenhagen on the lives of future generations.

Help them as well focus on the opportunities and not just the threats. Explain our collective but differentiated responsibilities.

As Denmark has demonstrated, the choice is not between being economically successful and environmentally sound.

They are two sides of the same coin.

Investment in sustainable energy here has provided energy security and transformed an economy once heavily reliant on coal-fired power stations.

Denmark is no longer dependent on imported coal and oil but has become a net exporter of energy. It has also created new industries and new jobs.

Over half of the world's wind turbines – which produce 20% of Denmark's energy needs - are made here.

And just as we all have a responsibility to convince our leaders to reach agreement in Copenhagen, we share a responsibility, too, to live in a more sustainable way.

Tell your readers how this can be achieved. Think about the way you run your businesses. Lead by example.

Governments can make decisions but all of us will have to deliver them.

We will all need to modify our behaviour to reduce carbon footprints – starting with the food we eat, the transport we use, the energy we consume.

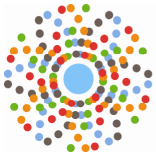
It falls to you to help get this message across.

Nor is this a campaign which finishes in December.

Copenhagen is not the end but the necessary beginning of the changes we have to see.

Through our actions and our voices, we can create such a noise that our leaders will not be able to ignore us, nor dare to.

There is a big responsibility on your shoulders. But the prize is greater still.



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Through our efforts here in this city later this year, we can change the world for good.

Ends