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Kofi Annan calls for unprecedented global leadership to tackle climate change

Former UN Secretary-General warns “time is running out” and says “leadership has never been more needed than it will be in the coming weeks and months”.

Wednesday 23 September, New York – Kofi Annan will today call on the world’s political leaders to demonstrate the vision and courage to reach a post-Kyoto agreement which is global, effective and fair, with climate justice at its heart.

In his inaugural address as a Global Fellow at Columbia University, Annan will state that climate change is the greatest global challenge of modern times, which risks becoming the main restraint on development. In the speech to be delivered the day after the UN High-Level Meeting on Climate Change, entitled ‘Climate Change: the leadership challenge of our time’, he will call on leaders “to focus on the long-term and wellbeing of future generations, and ignore the usual electoral cycles which all too often restrain action”.

Annan will state:

- **“Time is running out”:** Climate change is already having “a damaging, often disastrous, effect on hundreds of thousands of people – overwhelmingly in the poorest groups in the poorest countries”.
- **The lack of tough political decisions and radical actions needed on climate change is “deeply worrying”:** It is essential in advance of Copenhagen to create the political momentum required for complex and detailed negotiations to succeed. “Each Head of State or Government has a responsibility to give clear instructions to their negotiators to make a deal in Copenhagen”.
- **Success means establishing a strong political framework for ambitious, co-operative action to confront climate change:** The post 2012 agreement must be global, effective and fair, with climate justice at its heart.
- **Fairness means implementation of the “polluter pays” principles:** Industrialized nations must use their intellectual, technological and financial resources to reduce

emissions dramatically, within the range of 25-40 per cent by 2020; emerging economies such as Brazil, China, India, South Africa and Mexico must lower emissions relative to 'business as usual' scenario; least developed countries must be helped to grow their economies and spread prosperity without a proportionate increase in emissions.

- **Industrialized countries must accelerate their support for mitigation and adaption measures in developing countries:** "The sums so far committed are simply nowhere near enough. We are a long way yet from mobilizing the money, let alone reaching binding agreements that will provide developing countries with a predictable and sustainable level of resourcing".
- **Leadership should not be confined to politicians alone:** Business leaders, academics, civil society groups and individuals must demand action so that our leaders are not able to ignore it.
- **Civil society groups from around the world have joined the Global Humanitarian Forum to launch the 'Tck Tck Tck' campaign:** "Join the million plus who have signed up to the campaign to demand a fair, global agreement in Copenhagen".

Welcoming the special summit of the United Nations called by Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon as an "important and necessary step", and urging leaders of the G20 to catalyse the growing momentum on climate change at the Pittsburgh Summit, Annan will conclude on an optimistic note: "If the global community can come together to tackle climate change fairly and effectively, it can provide the basis for a new age of international understanding and co-operation."

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Contact

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Notes to Editors

- Kofi Annan delivered the Gabriel Silver Memorial Lecture entitled 'Climate Change: the Leadership Challenge of our time' at Columbia University on 23 September 2009. Earlier this year, Annan became a Global Fellow at the University - an initiative to bring distinguished leaders to the campus to design, shape and implement solutions to critical international problems.
- As President of the Global Humanitarian Forum, Kofi Annan is currently heading the 'Tck Tck Tck: Time for Climate Justice Campaign' to apply pressure on world leaders to reach a just and binding deal at the UN Climate Change Conference in December 2009. For more information please visit: www.timeforclimatejustice.org
- Kofi Annan served two terms, from 1997 to 2006, as UN Secretary-General. In 2001, Annan and the United Nations were jointly awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace. Since leaving the United Nations, Kofi Annan has established a Foundation through which he continues to provide leadership on critical global issues, particularly preserving and building peace and facilitating more equitable sharing of the benefits of globalization, by promoting poverty alleviation, good governance, human rights and the rule of law. Please visit: www.kofiannanfoundation.org