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United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

COP 16/CMP 6

Statement by Mr. Ciarán Cuffe, T.D., Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Ireland, at the Joint High Level Segment – 9th December 2010

- Madame President, allow me to thank you at the outset for your sustained efforts to secure a positive outcome to the negotiations here in Cancun, and for the warm welcome provided by the Government and people of Mexico. Like many other colleagues, I very much welcome and support your constructive engagement with all Parties. This has created the right atmosphere for progress in these talks and we encourage you in your endeavours.

- There is a moment in time when we must look beyond the relentless pursuit of economic growth. Real prosperity must reflect the future health and happiness of our children's lives. That moment has arrived. It is now time to aim high in our thoughts and in our deeds. The next generation's well-being depends on our actions in these crucial days. Our future development must be based on foundations that are socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. To that end Ireland's Central Statistics Office is developing a new national welfare index that will reflect quality of life as well as economic indices.

- Ireland supports the case for strong urgent action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in order to stay as far below a 2 degree Celsius increase in global temperature. We know from the scientific advice that this is a necessity in order to avoid the worst effects of climate change. It is time, Madame President, to stop talking about the need for action, and to invest our collective efforts in taking a first step towards real and effective global action

to meet the ultimate objective of the Convention. We must re-establish our determination to succeed by taking a substantial incremental step forward at COP 16 here in Cancun.

- Madame President, Ireland fully supports the international process under the Framework Convention on Climate Change. We see no realistic alternative and we urge all Parties, starting here in Cancun with the benefit of your guidance, to underpin the process with a powerful consensus build on partnership and energised with a resolute determination to succeed. We wish to contribute to that partnership. In collaboration with UNEP and the World Resources Institute, Ireland is supporting a new and exciting research project that will address a number of the most pressing issues in the negotiations. Our objective is to seek out innovative ideas and to provide analysis of these, as an input to parties and other stakeholders, to stimulate progress on these issues and the negotiations generally. With UNEP and WRI, we look forward to presenting the results of this research at the Bonn session in June next year.

- Ireland is also playing its part at home. We will meet our greenhouse gas limitation target for the purposes of the Kyoto Protocol. In doing so, we are already looking to the longer-term and focussing on the importance for Ireland to commence the transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable society.

- The Irish Government is currently finalizing a legislative proposal that will provide statutory backing for our immediate and medium term mitigation targets, and our longer-term transition objective. Our outlook is progressive and the legislation in preparation will provide the clarity and certainty for our stakeholders to look ahead with confidence to the low-carbon world of tomorrow. The legislation is being progressed as a matter of urgency and I expect it to be in place early next year.

- Madam President, no country can tackle climate change on its own; the task is too great and we, all of the Parties to the Convention, must work together in a spirit underpinned by mutual respect and mutual support. Ireland recognises that many developing countries who contributed least to climate change are already challenged by its impacts. Those countries don't just need our support, they deserve it – the merits of their case speaks for itself and Ireland is committed to honouring its contribution to the fast start financing commitment in the Copenhagen Accord.

- In this respect, I am pleased to announce that the Irish Government is in the process of making a fast-start-finance contribution of €23million in 2010 through the Global Climate Change Alliance established and operated by the European Commission. I believe that the fast start finance commitment under the Copenhagen Accord was one of the most positive outcomes at COP 15 and I hope that the response by developed countries will contribute to rebuilding trust and forging a dynamic consensus that will enable early agreement on a fair and effective global response to climate change.

- Madame President, The Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko once wrote "The young ... will not forgive in us what we forgave." Truly the young will not forgive us for failure. Obstacles exist but we can look beyond them, we must look beyond them and see with clarity what is required. Our task here in Cancun is not easy. But we must deliver a positive outcome to these negotiations. I would like to assure you that Ireland will continue to support your efforts to reach a successful conclusion.