Statement of His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nehyan
Minister of Foreign Affairs
COP 16
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
Cancun, Mexico

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honor to address you here today, on my first attendance of the Conference of Parties. I would particularly like to extend my thanks to the government of Mexico, who have hosted us here so graciously and who have worked so tirelessly this year in support of the process.

With each passing year, the scale of the challenge presented by climate change becomes clearer. Improving science shows us a litany of receding ice sheets and glaciers; of rising sea levels; and of more unpredictable extremes in weather patterns.

And year after year, emissions continue to rise.

But I am here because we believe that as an international community we still have the capacity to rise to this challenge.

The United Arab Emirates is striving to play its part. In the last few years we have implemented a range of initiatives. To cite just a few, we have begun construction of a major solar power plant to contribute to the 7% renewable energy target we have; we are building nuclear power stations to generate a quarter of the UAE's electricity by 2020. We are implementing new efficiency standards, developing a major carbon capture and storage project, and building Masdar City, a cutting-edge low-carbon urban center.

We are also financing clean energy abroad. We are major investors in solar power in Spain, wind energy in the UK and more. We are also one of the world's most generous international donors encouraging climate change mitigation and adaptation. We have given full support to the new International Renewable Energy Agency, which has its headquarters in Abu Dhabi. We have pledged $350 million for renewable energy projects in developing countries, as well as support for small island states.

But we believe that the multilateral process will let us all go further than we can go alone. We need to be realistic about what we can achieve in the near term, but remain optimistic and ambitious about what we can achieve together.

There are clearly some critical priorities for this meeting. We need to ensure a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. As countries committed to multilateral frameworks, we must surely agree on the importance of maintaining those treaties that we already have. Agreement of a second commitment period can reaffirm our commitment to multilateral treaties and to maintaining critical mechanisms such as the CDM, which has been one of the most important achievements of the climate regime so far. We also need strong decisions under the Convention, including on a finance mechanism and on technology transfer.

But we also need a longer-term vision. And I am proud to be contributing to such a vision through my participation on the Global Panel on Sustainability, which is being convened under the leadership of the UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon. I accepted this role because the UAE sees the need for a more comprehensive vision for multilateral action based on international law, broad participation, and clear focus on development.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The United Arab Emirates is convinced that a multilateral solution to the climate challenge remains feasible. We will not resolve all our issues in Cancun, but we have a real opportunity to put the foundations on a future architecture for international cooperation.

We need a powerful solution to the climate challenge, and the UAE is committed to being part of that solution. We owe future generations no less.

Thank You.