Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Country Statement

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THE JOINT HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE SIXTEENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES OF THE CLIMATE CHANGE CONVENTION AND THE SIXTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES SERVING AS A MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE KYOTO PROTOCOL (COP16/CMP6)

(Cancun, Mexico, 9 December 2010)

Madam President,

Heads of State and Government,

Honorable Ministers and Heads of Delegation,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me at the outset congratulate you on your election as President for the sixteenth session of the COP and the sixth session of the CMP. Likewise allow me to express my deep appreciation and gratitude to the Government and people of Mexico for their hospitality and warm welcome in this beautiful city of Cancun. My appreciation is also extended to the UFCCC Secretariat for their excellent arrangements and documentation and the UN translators for their excellent work.

Madam President,

Our people in Afghanistan are suffering from the adverse effects of climate change, as is the case in most countries in the world. In Afghanistan, however, climate change can not only be considered as an environmental problem, but also as a significant threat to peace and security, sustainable development and social stability. The majority of Afghans are entirely dependent on subsistence agriculture and livestock to meet their livelihood and survival needs. Small fluctuations in climate in Afghanistan can result in hunger, conflicts and long-lasting food insecurity. As you know, there are many peace and security challenges in our country which are being made even more challenging by climate change.

Climate change has had severe impacts on my country. We are experiencing frequent seasonal droughts and dramatic damaging floods. These not only heavily affect our development process and environmental sustainability, but also threaten our people and their meager livelihoods. Changes to snow and rainfall patterns have led to severe problem of desertification. Warming temperatures on the Pamir and Hindu Kush ranges are melting our glaciers and causing disastrous impact on farming and water availability.

Afghanistan has lost well over seventy two percent of its forests and over eighty three percent of its green cover during the past three decades. As part of a loss of global bioversity due to climate change, some of our unique medicinal plants have been lost forever.

This catalogue of adverse consequences of global warming is not unique to Afghanistan. All countries, both rich and poor are experiencing them in different ways. However, the LDCs and SIDS have the least capacity to adapt to the severe impacts of global warming. They are therefore much more vulnerable to adverse impacts of climate change.

Madam President; we have come here with a lots of hope and high expectations that we will achieve agreements to help us overcome all of these challenges. It is difficult for us to go back to our country, and say to our people, that there was not significant progress in Cancun. We must make major progress at this Conference.

Given its vulnerability to climate change, there are 5 key areas at this COP that are particularly important to Afghanistan. These are Finance, Adaptation, Mitigation, Technology and Capacity Building.

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan welcomes the financial pledges made by developed countries in Copenhagen and urges these countries to deliver the financial support promised. A climate fund must be established urgently to operationalize these finance pledges. This fund must have sufficient resources and provide direct and easy access to enable and support enhanced action on adaptation, mitigation, capacity building and technology development and transfer, in developing countries, particularly vulnerable countries such as Afghanistan.

The committee to oversee adaptation under the Convention needs to be formed immediately. This committee would oversee the implementation of an appropriate adaptation program under the UNFCCC.

The UNEP Emissions Report highlighted the huge gap between the Copenhagen mitigation pledges and the emission reductions needed. A gap of between 5 and 9 gigatonnes was identified for 2020. This gap is between the Copenhagen pledges and the emissions pathway needed to put the world on a trajectory to stay well below 2 degrees Celsius, compared with pre-industrial levels. We therefore urge all developed countries to substantially increase their mitigation commitments for the post-2012 period.

A Technology Executive Committee and a Climate Technology Centre and Network also need to be urgently established under the UNFCCC. These would help to provide appropriate technology for mitigation and adaptation for developing countries. Our countries also need support in developing our capacity to effectively participate in these new urgently needed initiatives in Finance, Technology and Adaptation.

There are severe impacts of climate change on our dry, mountainous country. Mountain areas are repositories of biological and cultural diversity and provide vital services with a tangible economic value – such as water, power, tourism, minerals, and medicinal plants- to mountain communities and even more important, to often heavily populated downstream areas. However, mountain environments are highly fragile. The effect of climate change on mountainous countries should be given special consideration under the Convention. Many of these countries are extremely vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change.

I urge all of the delegates to commit to the actions that are urgently needed to address these challenges. We need to agree now the way forward on Finance, Adaptation, Mitigation, Technology and Capacity Building.

Thank you, Madam President and Distinguished Delegates for listening to my plea for more assistance for my country and other countries which are suffering from climate change that they did not contribute to.