

Press Release

UN Secretary-General convenes world leaders to build momentum for climate change talks in Bali

New York, 17 September – United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will seek to advance the global agenda on climate change when he meets with heads of state and other top officials from more than 150 countries at United Nations Headquarters on 24 September.

More than 70 heads of state or government will attend the one-day event, making it the largest meeting ever of world leaders on climate change.

The high-level event – which takes place one day before the opening of the UN General Assembly’s annual General Debate – is aimed at securing political commitment and building momentum for the UN Climate Change Conference in Bali where negotiations about a new international climate agreement should start. The Bali meeting, from 3 to 14 December, will convene the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

“Bali must advance a negotiating agenda to combat climate change on all fronts, including adaptation, mitigation, clean technologies, deforestation and resource mobilization,” said Mr. Ban, who has made the issue one of his top priorities. “Bali must be the political response to the recent scientific reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. All countries must do what they can to reach agreement by 2009, and to have it in force by the expiry of the current Kyoto Protocol commitment period in 2012.”

Action, not business as usual

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), if no action is taken on greenhouse gases, the Earth’s temperature could rise by 4.50°C (8.1°F) or more. The effects of climate change are being felt already, according to the Panel. The Arctic is warming twice as fast as the global average and adverse effects on human activities are documented. Impacts of warming have also been observed in other regions and sectors, in particular on ecosystems. As glaciers retreat, water supplies are being put at risk. And for populations living in dry lands, especially those in Africa, changing weather patterns threaten to exacerbate desertification, drought and food insecurity. Other regions are expected to suffer from floods, sea level rise and extreme weather events.

“We cannot go on this way for long,” Mr. Ban said, addressing a recent session of the UN General Assembly. “We cannot continue with business as usual. The time has come for decisive action on a global scale.”

Climate change will hit the poorest and most vulnerable the hardest, according to the IPCC, but it will affect everyone. With their greater economic and technological resources, industrialized countries can do the most to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but everyone has a role to play. Increasingly, developing countries are also taking steps to cut back on emissions and to adapt to the impacts of climate change. The international community is identifying resources, tools and approaches to support these efforts. According to the IPCC, strategies for adaptation should take into account environmental, economic and social concerns of sustainable development.

Governments, civil society and business leaders

The high-level event, titled “The Future in our Hands: Addressing the Leadership Challenge of Climate Change,” will consist of an opening session, followed by four simultaneous plenary sessions each of which will focus on one of four themes: mitigation, adaptation, technology and financing. Each thematic plenary will be chaired by two heads of state. Speaking will be world leaders and other heads of delegation, as well as a number of civil society and business leaders.

The Secretary-General will address the opening of the event, and give a closing summary of the main points articulated by the speakers. He will also address the media at a press briefing at the end of the day.

The sessions will be webcast live at www.un.org/webcast