

Resounding call to speed up implementation of Paris Agreement obligations

Katowice, 4 Dec. (Evelyn Teh) - The official opening ceremony of the climate talks held on 3 Dec. in Katowice, Poland, heard a resounding call for Parties to take necessary actions in operationalising and fulfilling the Paris Agreement (PA) obligations.

The ceremony was attended by several heads of state and governments, and was presided over by Michal Kutyka, the Secretary of State for Environment of Poland, who is also the President of the 24th session of the UNFCCC's Conference of Parties (COP24).

The ceremony also saw the presence of Andrzej Duda, the President of Poland, UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, Maria Fernanda Espinosa, the President of the UN General Assembly and Patricia Espinosa, the UNFCCC Executive Secretary.

The President of Poland, **Andrzej Duda** stated in his speech that the negative consequences of climate change are felt all over the world, and this called for coordinated cooperation in the spirit of the PA. He added that we need to prove that the head of states are ready to fully implement the Agreement. This he said, needed a user manual which he referred to as the 'Katowice rulebook' on how to implement the PA.

The Secretary General of United Nations, **António Guterres** emphasised that the world is "still not doing enough or moving fast enough to prevent irreversible and catastrophic impacts of climate change", and he delivered four key messages. First is to ensure that "emissions must decline by 45% from 2010 levels by 2030 and be net zero by 2050," adding that renewable energy should supply half to two thirds of the world's primary energy by 2050, with a corresponding reduction in fossil fuels. In short, he said that "we

need to embrace low-carbon, climate-resilient sustainable development," and hoped that the Talanoa Dialogue (2018 facilitative dialogue) would provide the impetus to increase ambition in the commitments for climate action.

Secondly, the UNSG also reminded Parties that the finalisation of the PA Work Programme (PAWP) (referred to by the Polish President as the 'Katowice rulebook') was the main objective of Katowice. "This is a deadline you set for yourselves and it is vital you meet it", he emphasised. This includes having "a unifying implementation vision that sets out clear rules, inspires action and promotes raised ambition, based on the principle of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC), in light of different national circumstances."

The third point made by the SG was on the central importance of finance to successfully combat climate change; and to materialise transformative climate action in five key economic areas – energy, cities, land use, water and industry. He called for a clear progress to mobilise the pledged \$100 billion dollars a year by 2020 and also urged the member states to "swiftly implement the replenishment of the Green Climate Fund".

His fourth message was that "decisive climate action today is our chance to right our ship and set a course for a better future for all" adding that "with the availability of knowledge, viable and affordable technological solutions – the only thing needed more of is the political will and far-sighted leadership."

In stressing the importance of a low carbon economy, the SG also called for inclusivity and the full-scale mobilisation of young people, as well as a global commitment to gender equality in climate

actions. He ended by imploring the governments and leaders to understand that their legacies and the well-being of future generations are at stake and there was simply no option of failure in Katowice. He hoped that the “bond of trust established in Paris will endure” and that “incredible opportunity exists if we embrace a low-carbon future and unleash the power of the PA”.

The President of the UNGA, **Maria Fernanda Espinosa** stated that the nature and the complexity of climate change required strong collective action and global leadership. She stated that “humanities have never been so close to a global state of shock due to the devastating fact of climate change” adding that while it impacts all countries indiscriminately, it was clear that its might was felt much more by the poorest and most vulnerable. “This is why it is so important that we have common but differentiated responsibilities,” she added. The UNGA President stated further that we need to be “audacious, creative and to act together with greater ambition,” adding that “an effective multilateral system which gives results is not an option” but “is necessary for survival”. She also stressed the need for climate finance that should be both sufficient and predictable, and that there was a need for a clear and effective transparency framework to measure the global progress and the benefits.

Henryk Kowalczyk, the Minister of Environment of Poland also addressed the plenary and said that the world had high hopes for “a comprehensive package acceptable to all Parties” and to ensure financial and technological support for developing countries consistent with the vision for low emissions economic growth.

Michał Kurtyka, the COP 24 President stated that “we are all interdependent and have to come

together to protect our planet in solidarity, to push for deep and just transition,” that required changes including in our lifestyles, the way we earn a living, how we build cities and design buildings. He assured that the vulnerable are not alone in the transition to a low carbon future. He also stressed the importance of the ‘Katowice rulebook’.

The President of Poland then presented the ‘Declaration on Just Transition’ (which is a Polish initiative for Parties to join) and said that adopting it was to take another step in achieving the principles of the PA. He stressed further that it was necessary to create a development model which reduces emissions while reducing poverty, and creates new quality jobs at the same time.

Sir David Attenborough, the well-known television personality famous for his documentaries on the natural world, also spoke at the opening ceremony, and presented the voices from people around the world through a video. He said that the message was clear that “time is running out” and decision-makers have to act now, by making the tough decisions and sacrifices to help make the changes the world needed, adding that “the continuation of our civilisation and that of the natural world was in the hand of world leaders.”

While the opening ceremony was going on and throughout the whole day, negotiators were engaged in various meeting rooms in informal consultations and bilaterals, making efforts to advance work on the PAWP details. Informal consultations under the various agenda items of the PAWP will continue today, with the expectation that the facilitators of the consultations will produce a new iteration of documents for further negotiations latest by Wednesday, 5 Dec.