

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ



**Address
by
His Excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom,
President of the Republic of Maldives,
at the Opening of the Joint High-level Segment of the
13th Session of the Conference of the Parties
of the UNFCCC and the 3rd Session of the Meeting
of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol**

**Nusa Dua, Bali
12 December 2007**

President Yudhoyono, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Your Excellency Mr. Rachmat Witoelar, President of COP 13, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

May I begin by thanking the President and the Government and the friendly people of Indonesia for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to me, my wife and members of my delegation.

I also take this opportunity to commend Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the high priority he attaches to ensuring that our world is a safer and more environmentally friendly place to live in. It is my pleasure too to congratulate Prime Minister Kevin Rudd of Australia for his decision to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. Before I proceed further, I want to join the Secretary General and the previous speakers in strongly

condemning yesterday's wanton acts of terror in Algeria. I extend deep sympathies to the innocent victims and the bereaved families.

Mr. President, the last time I visited this beautiful country was in February 2005, to speak at the Special ASEAN Leaders' Meeting in the Aftermath of the December 2004 Asian Tsunami. We had come together then to resolve an environmental catastrophe, in which hundreds of thousands of people in the region lost their lives and millions were left in despair.

Yet again, we are gathered here to find a speedy solution to a rapidly growing problem of epic proportions that has started to affect millions around the world. Indeed, if we fail in our fight against climate change, the entire world will face sufferings that will far exceed the nightmare of the Tsunami.

Failure, therefore, is not an option!

For over a decade, the IPCC has delivered definitive and unequivocal scientific proof on the many facets of global climate change. The Nobel Peace Prize was no doubt a fitting recognition of IPCC's enormous contribution to this issue over many years.

The IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report makes grim but necessary reading. We are, yet again, reminded of the fate awaiting not only the world's Small Island States, such as the Maldives, but all low-lying areas of the world. Indeed, this Report is a powerful warning of where complacency could take us. The whole world must heed that warning.

The IPCC Report shed new light on the science of climate change, and thereby silenced sceptics who were hanging on a thin thread

of uncertainty. The Stern Review proved that climate change could be tackled effectively without submitting our economies to bankruptcy, as some were claiming then.

I firmly believe that this forum, more than any other in recent years, provides us with a golden opportunity to steer a new course that is free of scepticism, caution and confusion.

Mr. President:

Twenty years ago, I spoke at the UN General Assembly on the dangers that climate change poses to the Maldives and other Small Island Nations. I was focusing then on the prospect of an impending catastrophe. Today, that catastrophe is looming large on the horizon. Sea-level data over the past decade confirm our worst fears. Fears that, without immediate action, the long-term habitation of our tiny islands is in serious doubt.

Ten years ago, the fragile coral reefs that protect us from the fury of the ocean suffered severe bleaching following a prolonged El Niño. Furthermore, increased incidents of flooding from storm surges and sea swells have put many of our people in grave danger. Earlier this year, 70 of our islands were simultaneously affected by sea swells, extensively damaging key infrastructure and homes. Over half of our islands are eroding at an alarming rate. In some cases, island communities have had to be relocated to safer islands. Some varieties of fish in our waters are dying, in their hundreds of thousands, of a mysterious cause.

Indeed, climate change has now become a daily reality in the Maldives and other Small Island States. Our severe lack of adaptive capacity, including financial, technical, and institutional resources means

that we are ill-prepared to deal with these multiple threats. All the while, the impending long-term effects of sea-level rise are drawing ever closer.

Mr. President:

It is with a deep sense of honour that I present to this august gathering, the sentiments of the people of South Asia. In a short while, you will receive a copy of the SAARC Declaration on Climate Change, which was adopted by the SAARC Council of Ministers last week. SAARC countries have entrusted me with the responsibility of presenting this Declaration at this Conference. I sincerely hope that you will consider in your deliberations here the sentiments of the 1.5 billion people in our region. Many of our people are being adversely impacted, and in many cases displaced as a consequence of sea-level rise, river bank erosion, drought, severe storms and cyclones, accelerated melting of the Himalayan glaciers and permanent inundation.

Mr. President:

The impacts of climate change will be felt sooner, rather than later, in every nation, every community, and every neighbourhood. These impacts will pose huge economic, social and political challenges for all countries. But of course, the Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States will be faced with a much greater challenge than the rest of the world.

For more than 20 years, the LDCs and the SIDS have worked hard to raise global awareness on these threats. We have watched as climate change has changed focus from an issue of scientific conflict to

one of political recrimination. In 2007, our goal must be to protect the most vulnerable Parties to the Convention on Climate Change, both in the short- and in the long-term. Our overriding focus must be to put people back at the heart of the climate change issue.

With this in mind, the Maldives and other Small Island Developing States, adopted last month the Male' Declaration on the Human Dimension of Global Climate Change.

We believe that climate change must be viewed not only as a danger to natural systems, but also as a direct threat to human survival and well-being. We are convinced that this negotiation process must not be viewed as a traditional series of governmental trade-offs, but as an urgent international effort to safeguard human lives, homes, rights and livelihoods.

Mr. President:

The Bali Process must have a clear long-term target to stabilize the climate system, and ensure that temperature rises are reined in to reasonable levels. Even a 2°C increase compared to pre-industrial levels would have devastating consequences on Small Island States. Moreover, the four negotiating pathways we have discussed here in Bali – mitigation, adaptation, technology, and financing – must not be viewed in isolation from each other, but rather as integrated and mutually supportive components of a unified endeavour.

Adaptation must be at the heart of a post-2012 climate agreement.

The UNFCCC adaptation fund must be adequately resourced. It must also become easily accessible to the Small Island Developing States.

Mr. President, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

The SIDS are committed to advancing negotiations within the framework of the UNFCCC towards a global and comprehensive agreement to stabilize the climate system. This work must be completed by 2009 at the very latest. Here in Bali, we must agree on a roadmap for negotiations, setting out clear, time-bound milestones up to Copenhagen.

There can be no more delay, nor more distractions. After all, there is no more time.

Let us ensure that, two years from now, we look back at today as an opportunity grasped, and not as another one that had got away.

Here in Bali, we have the right ingredients in setting, timing and leadership for a historic change.

President Yudhoyono said in a very beautiful forum last night:

“We are gathered here in Bali, to save our planet. We are united here in Bali; for a better life, a better world, for you and me.”

The question is whether we have the will.

The answer must be a resounding YES!

Our people deserve no less than that.

Thank you and good luck to us all!