

**STATEMENT**

**Mr Achim Steiner, Executive Director**  
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

On the occasion of the opening of the **Third Global Congress of Women in Politics and Governance: Gender in Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction** on October 19, 2008 Manila, Philippines.

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**Dr. Jung Sook Kim**, President, Center for Asia Pacific Women in Politics (CAPWIP)

**Hon. Loren B. Legarda**, Senator, Philippine Senate

**Dr. Salvano Briceno**, Director, United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) Secretariat

**Dr. Supachai Panitchpakdi**, Secretary General, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

**Hon. Jose L. Atienza, Jr.**, Secretary, Department of Environment and Natural Resources

**Hon. Prospero Nograles**, Speaker, Philippine House of Representatives

**Honourable Members of Parliament, distinguished ladies and gentlemen.**



It gives me great pleasure to briefly address you on the occasion of this very important world congress.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The world today is in a **Climate Crunch!**

Climate change is an increasingly prevalent issue dominating the world. We are facing a carbon crisis as greenhouse gas emissions steadily increase by 2.5 percent. This presents the possibility of a dramatic alteration in the natural balance of local and global ecosystems and the infringement on human settlements.

The IPCC predicts that “climate change impacts will be differently distributed among different regions, generations, age classes, income groups, occupations and genders”. This “will fall disproportionately upon developing countries and

poor persons within all countries, and thereby exacerbate inequities in health status and access to adequate food, clean water, and other resources.”

Recent disasters such as floods in Myanmar, the earthquake in China, and recently Hurricane Ike in the Caribbean and the USA have revealed how various conditions determined by physical, social, economic and environmental factors or processes, increase or decrease vulnerabilities of affected communities.

Socially based roles and responsibilities of men and women often determine the extent of vulnerability as well as how the communities will cope with the impact of a hazard or disaster. Furthermore, people living in poverty are more vulnerable to environmental changes. The gender-poverty links show that up to 70 percent of the world’s poor are women and their vulnerability is accentuated by race, ethnicity, geographical location and age.

Ladies and gentlemen,

All is not doom and gloom! Examples from all over the world have shown how innovative investments and market mechanisms, and strategic planning are enabling many countries to address and overcome climate change and disaster related challenges. Moreover, by doing so countries are beginning to tackle the achievement of the MDGs.

Every one of us has a role to play, at the individual, community, institutional, national, regional and global levels. Each and every one of us is responsible for ensuring that climate change does not go unchecked any more and measures to reduce disaster risks and vulnerabilities are implemented.

Today, global forest cover has reduced by at least one third! We need action to halt the continuous depletion of our forests! We need to plant trees and show the world that through small, but significant, individual efforts in our gardens, parks, countryside and rural areas we can assist in countering climate change.

The **UNEP Plant for the Planet: Billion Tree Campaign** was launched as an engine for voluntary expressions of solidarity in countering climate change through global tree planting. Initially, the target was one billion trees by 2007, which was achieved before the year ended and the new target is to plant 7 billion trees by the end of 2009 when countries meet in Copenhagen.

Philippines the host country for this congress has already planted **23,825,868 trees!** Many countries are encouraged to follow suit.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The clear links between climate change and disasters cannot be underscored. UNEP has in its Medium Term Strategy placed climate change and disasters and

conflicts among its six priority focus areas. Both sub-programmes will integrate gender related considerations and the use of gender sensitive indicators, sex disaggregated data collection methods into the adaptation planning, environmental assessments and capacity building processes.

Although gender concerns are intertwined with the implementation of national response strategies, scientific data on this link is lacking. For the full realisation of the connection between gender and climate change, UNEP will support the development of data highlighting how the juxtaposition of gender and climate change plays out in a number of sectors, including: water and sanitation; agriculture; energy; land use, change, deforestation and degradation; biodiversity and traditional knowledge; forestry; and disaster risk reduction.

Ladies and gentlemen,

UNEP will continue to integrate gender equality and equity into all its policies, programmes and projects with special attention given to the role of women in environmental policymaking, environmental management and early warning, and disaster management.

UNEP's commitment to mainstream gender equality and equity in its programmes will be extended to its work with partners and other agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations System.

I wish you fruitful deliberations and look forward to hearing of the outcomes of the congress.

Thank you