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**“Climate Change and China: Towards Local Action”**

*Launch Ceremony*  
*Provincial Climate Change Programme*  
*June 30, 2008 Guohong Hotel, Beijing*

Director General Su Wei, Director General Gao Guangsheng, NDRC  
Environment Counselor, Embassy of Norway, Embassy Per Schive,  
First Secretary, European Commission Delegation in Beijing, Stefan Agne  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to join you today for the launching of the new joint initiative between NDRC, UNDP, Norway and the EU entitled “Provincial Climate Change Programmes.” On behalf of UNDP I would like to congratulate NDRC and your local partners for leading the design and launching of this important new programme. The programme we launch here today is meant to support the local implementation of the National Climate Change Programme, which we congratulate the Government of China on launching about one year ago. Now more than ever, what we need is strategic thinking and innovative solutions to overcome the risks which environmental degradation now poses at the local level across China. At the top of this list of concerns stands the specter of global climate change – a reality that now poses risks for generations to come.

**1) The Challenge**

Climate change has become the defining human development issue of our generation. All development is ultimately about expanding human potential and developing the capabilities that empower people to fulfill their lives. Climate change threatens to erode this potential and limit development choices. It calls into question the Enlightenment principle that human progress will make the future look better than the past.

The signs of change are evident. Today, we are witnessing first hand what could be the onset of the largest reversal of development trends in our lifetime. As noted by Nicolas Stern, climate change could become the greatest market failure in human history, possibly resulting in a U-turn in the global economy by mid-century. The impacts of climate change are subtle yet serious. They are felt through increased drought, melting glaciers and icecaps and reduced water and food security. As noted by the UN Secretary General, if 2007 was the year that climate change rose to the top of the global agenda, 2008 must be the year when we take action. How the world deals with climate change today will have a direct bearing on the human development prospects of a large section of humanity. UNDP takes a “people-first” approach to climate change, placing human development at the forefront of our efforts to mitigate emissions and to adapt to climate change impacts.

Countries like China have made historic achievements towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and poverty reduction over the past decades. However, climate change now brings serious risks for ensuring that such gains are sustained for future generations. What we do today about climate change has consequences that will last a century or more. The heat trapping gases we send into the atmosphere in 2008 will stay there until 2108 and beyond. We are therefore making choices today that will affect our own lives, but even more so the lives of our children and grandchildren.

## **2) Building Partnerships**

Central to our future efforts is the fundamental principle underlying the global climate change regime, that of common but differentiated responsibilities. It challenges political leaders and individuals in rich nations to acknowledge their historic responsibility for current levels of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere, and to initiate deep cuts in greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time, it acknowledges that much of the world’s future emission will emerge from rapidly emerging developing economies. Above all, it challenges the entire human community to engage in a new global partnership for prompt and strong collective action based on shared values and a shared vision.

If these disturbing trends continue, our carbon footprint will surpass the carrying capacity of the planet. According to leading experts, the global carbon budget to avoid dangerous climate change is about 1,456 Giga-tones of CO<sub>2</sub>, a level set to be surpassed between 2032 and 2042 if current trends continue. If that happens we will almost surely face ecological crisis with far reaching consequences for human development in both developed and developing countries. In order to avoid that, we must fix our global carbon budget below that level over the next decades. This will require serious and rapid actions in industrialized countries to meet and go beyond the Kyoto targets, and it will also require actions within large emerging economies that will rapidly increase emissions over the next decades.

The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities is as relevant as ever. Rather than bolstering the historic division between developed and developing countries, what the future calls for is a new paradigm - a new framework that balances historic responsibilities of the West with the new and emerging sources of emissions in a new multi-polar world economy. The path to a new post-2012 regime is a difficult one, but one which we must build together over the next two years if future generations are to aspire to the same opportunities that we wish for today.

### **3) Towards local action**

Global and local targets are important to set clear goals, monitor progress, or lack thereof, and support compliance and corrective action. We must go beyond the debate over the efficacy of current global targets and the design of new targets under the post-2012 regime. What the world requires is a new Green Revolution – a fundamental shift in global experiences in industry and our way of life, a shift to a new Low Carbon Economy. The Low Carbon Economy has to be based on a new ‘paradigm of progress’, that human progress and economic growth can be de-coupled from reliance on fossil fuels. This is a challenge of historic significance, and what some have called the greatest market opportunity of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. New energy

efficiency standards for products like automobiles, manufacturing , heavy industry and habitat- buildings can serve as a major catalyst of financing and innovation to bring practical solutions to market in a timely fashion.

With the right set of incentives and policy actions, we need a jump start over a new age of innovation in technology coupled with a new sense of 'environmental citizenship' in which individuals not only demand action from government and industry, but also do 'their part'.

The challenge now is to set a solid foundation for practical actions towards the goal of a lower-carbon economy. This must include measures for sustainable consumption - to rapidly increase energy efficient technologies in industry, eco-design solutions in buildings, and alternative and renewable technologies in transport and energy supply. It should also include sustainable production – through increased manufacture and sale of green lighting, energy efficient appliances and increased use of climate-labeling so consumers have real choices to take action in the market-place. At the base of such actions must lie an expanded source of green investment and finance, mobilizing the spirit of innovative and entrepreneurship which spurred the fossil fuel based industrial boom 150 years ago. Today a new set of global partnerships have arisen to do just this.

The programme we are launching here today is a perfect expression of this new partnership to fight climate change, meant to implement the National Climate Change Programme at the local level. It is clear that China has already become a 'climate super-power', now the world's second largest consumer of energy and its second largest emitter of fossil fuels. China is also one of the largest producers and exporters of solar panels, wind turbines and is rapidly investing in energy efficiency vehicles. The relationship between the global climate crisis and China must become much more nuanced and less polemic if we are to address climate change in the new multi-polar world.

As with many elements of the world sustainable development agenda, the role of China will be critical. China has shown great ingenuity and

leadership in taking a sequenced approach to development and innovation – from establishing well-targeted policy frameworks to moving quickly on local pilot operations, and bringing forth lessons learned and successful models for up-scaling and replication at the national level. Given the size and scale of the challenges and opportunity for low-carbon approaches in China, there is tremendous room to cooperate in areas such as carbon capture and sequestration, low-carbon material production, and design of eco-cities – the potential to leapfrog the carbon constraints of the last industrial revolution.

Such successes can have resonance in China and the world. As China increases its presence on the global stage and its investments in infrastructure and resource sectors around the world, the opportunities for South-South Cooperation will be vital to forming strategic alliances for a new era of technology transfer and finance. The role of programmes like this one will be to leverage our global networks and create the space for collective thinking, research, design and testing of new low-carbon solutions.

Through this and other programmes on energy efficiency, renewable energy, CDM and adaptation, UNDP is active in China with a ongoing and planned portfolio of more than \$500 million in the area of energy and environment, including sizeable financing and technology solutions leveraged from Chinese and international institutions, from both public and private sectors.

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

Unless actions are taken in the very near future, the world will likely suffer serious corrections in the global economy. Already we are seeing serious stresses on global food and water security. How will the world be in 50 or even 20 years from now if current emission trends continue at the current rate? This innovative programme can ensure that global best practices and solutions start to bring real results at the local level in China. This is not an academic debate, but a call for enlightened thinking for the outlines of a new revolution based on innovative policies, technologies and financing that bring

energy security to emerging economies and reduce the threats of ecological crisis. Climate change confronts humanity with stark choices. We can avoid 21st Century reversals in human development and catastrophic risks for future generations, but only by choosing to act with a sense of urgency.