



Statement by Martin Khor, Executive Director, South Centre, at the UNFCCC Climate Conference (COP16, CMP6) at Cancun, 10 December 2010

As an inter-governmental organisation with 51 developing countries, the South Centre is very pleased to be participating in the COP16 and CMP6 in Cancun. Climate change is among the top priorities for the Centre as we believe that it poses a threat to the global environment as well as to development prospects in developing countries.

It is crucial to find international cooperative ways to address the climate problem. We believe that the UNFCCC is the best and sole venue for convening the multilateral process towards the seeking and implementation of solutions.

The global solution requires addressing the environment, development and equity dimensions simultaneously. The atmosphere can absorb only another 600 to 750 Gigatonnes of carbon dioxide between now and 2050. The world is emitting nearly 50 Gigatonnes of CO₂ equivalent annually. The window of opportunity to act is very small. Sharing the very limited atmospheric space left in an equitable way is humanity's greatest challenges.

Since developed countries are responsible for three quarters of the CO₂ emitted historically, the UNFCCC recognises their leading role in emission reduction and their commitment to meet the financial requirements of developing countries and in technology transfer.

The developing countries are faced with the enormous challenge of maintaining their ambition for socio-economic development and yet significantly reducing their emissions growth and later their emissions. This has to be done by a radical paradigm shift in production systems, in economic and business models, that have yet to be tested or even devised.

International financial and technology support are thus crucial. We have compiled estimates by various respected organisations and researchers of the financial resources required by developing countries for mitigation and adaptation measures, and they total more than one trillion dollars annually. The sums transferred so far over the years are miniscule. Moreover, technology must be transferred to developing countries, including for them to undertake their own innovation and design. The barriers to affordable access to technologies at the cheapest cost have to be identified and dealt with. These include high costs, lack of innovation capacity, and intellectual property. A model of monopolisation of knowledge and technology has to give way to framework of cooperation and sharing, to save the world and ourselves.

At Cancun, there is urgent need to complete the negotiations for the second period of the Kyoto Protocol, with a scientifically appropriate aggregate cut of at least 40% for Annex I parties (by 2020 from 1990 levels), and a comparable commitment inside the Convention by non Annex I parties of the KP. This would be the needed clear sign of the leadership and commitment of developed countries to the global mitigation effort. It would be the solid foundation on which developing countries would take their own enhanced mitigation actions, supported by finance and technology transfers. A failure on the part of the developed countries now would send absolutely the wrong signal to developing countries that are now seriously gearing up for climate actions.

At Cancun the COP must also establish the new international climate fund, under the authority of the COP, with an equitably balanced governance system, with its own Secretariat, and with the potential to obtain and disburse the very substantial amounts of funds required by developing countries for their climate actions. Failure to establish this fund would send a depressive signal to the world.

The technology policy and implementation mechanisms that have long evaded the UNFCCC must also be established in Cancun. This will allow policies and actions to flow as soon as possible.

On adaptation, developing countries feel the urgent need to manage the severe effects of climate events, such as the floods, hurricanes and cyclones that have increased alarmingly this year. The Cancun conference must thus set up an international mechanism to address damage and loss from these climate-related events and effects, as well as to establish an adaptation committee to deal with adaptation policies and measures overall.

The developing countries in turn have already agreed through the Bali Action Plan, to enhance their climate policies and actions. Many countries have set up or are setting up national institutions such as climate coordinating councils, often under the chairmanship of the highest political leaders, and are drawing up national climate action plans. Those mitigation actions that are supported are to be measured, reported on and verified, as agreed under the Bali Action Plan. The national communications are to be significantly improved. The countries will need international support for this institutional building, reporting and actions.

We now know that Cancun can take significant steps forward, but not fulfil all the expectations that the world public has and the science requires of this Conference. The most important thing at this stage is to make the best of the remaining time to achieve whatever is possible, and to strengthen the goodwill among Members on the basis of good substance, and through a democratic, open and inclusive process, so that the global climate talks can continue and intensify, with the needed spirit of cooperation and goodwill next year and after.

The South Centre will continue to play its part in this most critical and challenging process.