

COP 18/CMP 8, Doha, Qatar
Statement by Iceland at High-Level Segment, 6 Dec 2012

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Arctic is far away from the warm Gulf waters bordering our host city of Doha. Events in the Arctic will, however, have an impact here, and all over the globe. The Arctic Ocean sea ice is shrinking faster than predicted and hit a record low this fall. A brand new study of glaciers around the North Atlantic finds almost all of them in retreat. Iceland's glaciers, covering one-tenth of our island, are losing one meter in thickness per year and may largely vanish in the next century or two. Melting glaciers mean higher sea levels. The signals we are receiving from the High North are distressing, and a wake-up call for us all.

Retreating ice is a highly visible sign of climate change, but less obvious impacts should concern us just as much. Ocean acidification may be an existential threat to coral reefs and many other marine organisms in the long run. This issue deserves our utmost attention. We need to improve our knowledge on ocean acidification and its impacts, but the only effective mitigation measure in this regard is to limit net emissions of carbon dioxide.

Iceland welcomes the progress made in recent years in the UNFCCC on gender equality and increased role of women in decision-making. Doha is set to become a notable milestone in this respect, by the adoption of the draft decision on promoting gender equality and the participation of women in climate negotiations. Now we need to translate intentions into action, and support concrete projects that empower women to tackle the climate challenge.

Iceland is proud to contribute to a pilot initiative in Uganda, which aims to empower women in their everyday livelihood challenges, that are exacerbated by climate change. Women carry a disproportionately heavy part of the burden of climate change, but are underrepresented in decision-making. We need to tip the scales here and find a more equitable balance.

Iceland has pledged one million dollars in Fast Start Finance, and is finalizing the delivery of the funds allocated. Iceland plans to increase climate-related development effort in the near future. Most important in that respect is support for a project on geothermal research and development in 13 countries in East Africa; the single largest development project that Iceland has participated in. The project is an open Compact between the Government of Iceland and the World Bank, aiming at accelerating geothermal utilisation in the African Rift Valley, which could benefit millions of people. Iceland and the Nordic Development Fund will each contribute 10 million euros towards this project over the next five years. Simultaneously, the World Bank has initiated a Global Geothermal Development Plan, which aims at raising 500 million dollars for its purpose. Utilising geothermal energy in developing countries is important for climate mitigation, but also has benefits for adaptation, by increasing energy security and community resilience.

Iceland is here in Doha to announce its intention to take on a commitment within the framework of the Kyoto Protocol in the 2nd Commitment Period. It will be a challenge for Iceland to meet its obligations, as almost all stationary energy production comes from renewables. Every country must, however, contribute and use its mitigation potential. Iceland intends to fulfil its commitment by reducing emissions particularly from mobile sources and by sequestering carbon from the atmosphere in vegetation and soil. Iceland is hopeful that mitigation action will be guided not only by the Kyoto Protocol, which will cover only some 15% of global emissions next year, but by a truly global agreement, which we have started to build here in Doha.

Thank you,