

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

New York, 23 September 2014

Secretary-General's remarks at Private Sector Forum Lunch

Distinguished Heads of State and Government and leaders from the private sector,

I really appreciate the strong commitment and leadership which have been shown, demonstrated, during this morning's session of the Summit meeting, and I really appreciate the many, many leaders from Governments and the business community.

This is the largest ever meeting which has been gathered for the one single purpose of climate change.

Normally during the General Assembly, two weeks, the Presidents and the Prime Ministers – they come and leave. If we gather all the numbers for two weeks it comes to about 130, 140 maximum. But it would be extremely difficult to have 125 Heads of State and Government in one place at one time in one single day. That is a strong demonstration of their leadership, and I am very grateful to all the Heads of State and Government who are here today and also business leaders. Thank you very much.

In that regard, today is a great day for climate action. As Secretary-General, I am very moved, very touched. I was very moved when I was marching among almost 400,000 people – not only New Yorkers but people from all around the world. [Former United States] Vice President Al Gore was linking [arms with us], and Leonardo DiCaprio, the famous celebrity was also among the crowd, and I really appreciate it.

In January, the World Economic Forum – known as the Davos Forum – devoted a full day to climate change, helping to lay the groundwork for the ambition we are seeing today.

Then, in May, the United Arab Emirates organized the “Abu Dhabi Ascent”, which was a critical milestone in helping to forge partnerships and raise ambition even further.

Today, we have already heard significant announcements. President Hollande has announced one billion dollars for Green Climate Fund. I was expecting that should be announced as one billion Euro. I would welcome it if you would change [this to Euros]!

As you know, the German Chancellor has already announced one billion dollars.

I have also heard many business leaders committing themselves and announcing to mobilize their funds for the Green Climate Fund as well as wise investment in renewable energies. This is quite a moving day. Some [announcements] will be truly transformational.

Governments and the private sector are uniting behind the message that there is no competition between economic growth, business success and fighting climate change.

Indeed, the opposite is true.

All people, communities and sectors stand to benefit from the vast opportunities presented by the transformation to climate-resilient, low-carbon economies.

More and more companies realize this, and are acting – individually and in partnership with governments and civil society.

And I also appreciate the UN Global Compact for your UN Caring for Climate Initiative. I never told them to do that. They did it voluntarily. There was no pressure; I will make it clear. This is the largest business coalition on climate, with 400 companies from around the world.

But corporate emissions reductions are still small compared to their overall carbon footprint.

It is time for business, governments, to go much further, much faster.

To meet the target of [global temperature rise to] 2 degrees Celsius, we need emissions to peak by 2020. That is why I have convened a UN principals meeting, so the UN system will become carbon neutral, completely, by 2020. That is my firm commitment, and I applaud Mayor [Bill] De Blasio who announced on Sunday that New York City will have an 80 percent reduction by 2050 and public office buildings will be carbon neutral by 2020 or 2025.

We must then reduce emissions aggressively and attain carbon neutrality before the end of the century, but if we can do it by 2050, it will be much better.

We need to do a list of three things:

First, we must put a price on carbon.

This is one of the most powerful and necessary instruments for reducing emissions and generating innovation and finance for low-carbon, resilient growth. Since you have already heard from Dr. Jim Yong Kim, President of the World Bank, I will not repeat.

Nearly 40 countries and more than 20 cities, states and provinces already use carbon pricing.

Now, 340 global [institutional] investors representing over \$24 trillion in assets have called on government leaders to provide stable, reliable and economically meaningful carbon pricing.

I welcome calls by leaders at this Summit for a price on carbon and intensified efforts to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies.

To integrate carbon pricing into corporate long-term strategy, business wants and needs to see a level playing field.

The World Bank's "Put a Price on Carbon" Statement is also calling for governments and the private sector to become advocates for the cause.

More than 300 companies and 50 Governments have signed up.

And today, a group of 30 companies have stepped up as carbon pricing champions.

Each has endorsed the Business Leadership Criteria on Carbon Pricing set out by the UN and partners.

Their pledge entails three key dimensions: first, pricing; second, responsible policy advocacy; and third, reporting publicly on their efforts.

These last two criteria – policy advocacy and reporting publicly – are essential complements to progress on carbon pricing.

Companies must walk the walk and talk the talk, advocating for smart regulatory policy.

The third component is public reporting. I commend all of you in this room who are pioneering progress on reporting. We need everyone to follow suit.

Thank you to all of you who will make major commitments today with your supply chains, your business models, and your investments. Let us work together to make this world environmentally sustainable and to leave this planet earth, our only planet earth, to our succeeding generations in a responsible way.

I count on your leadership. Thank you very much.