

From: Mission of Lebanon [lebanonun@nyct.net]

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Subject: [SPAM]Climate Change

Statement by
H.E. Dr. Nawaf Salam,
Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations
at the
Fourth Thematic Debate of the 61st Session
of the United Nations General Assembly
on
“Climate Change as a Global Challenge”

New York, August 2, 2007

Madame President,

My delegation wishes to express its deep appreciation for this informal thematic debate on climate change as a global challenge. We are quite confident, Madame President, that under your able leadership, this august body of the United Nations will shed more light on such an important subject.

My delegation also wishes to associate itself with the statement made by H.E. Mr. Mukhdoom Faisal Saleh Hayat, Minister for Environment of Pakistan, on behalf of the G77 and China.

Madame President,

The Swedish Chemist, Svante Arrhenius, observed in 1896: “... if the carbonic acid content of the atmosphere (i.e. atmospheric CO₂) rises to 2 (i.e., double) the average value of the temperature change will be ... +5.7 degrees Celsius.”

This scientific observation represents the first early warning about the potentially looming catastrophe tied to the increase in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the troposphere. It was further corroborated over the years by additional scientific evidence that testifies in favor of the cause-effect relationship between human induced greenhouse gas emissions and climate change.

Actually, recent scientific research indicates that the concentration of CO₂ had increased

by 31% above its pre-industrial level by the end of the 20th century. Allow me to insist that the implications of this trend, which reflects itself in an increase in global temperature, will be negative on more than one front. Although it has already been mentioned, allow me to stress that this trend will lead to an increase in the frequency and severity of tropical storms, floods, and droughts. It will also lead to a rise in the sea level. It will make the damage to agriculture and food security more pronounced. It will decrease the availability of freshwater resources, intensify desertification, and eventually lead to the gradual destruction of the natural habitat of many species. It will also affect the biological diversity, the diversity of genetic resources, and the richness of flora and fauna.

Caution is required, since the cost of repair exceeds the cost of precaution by far. In fact, numerous studies indicate that the cost of repairing the ecological and health damages caused by climate change would soon exceed 300 billion dollars per year.

It took about one century to recognize the cause-effect relationship between human induced greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. It should not take us another century to curb the impacts of climate change. Concerted efforts and international cooperation are mandatory to achieve tangible results.

Climate change also adversely affects the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development goals. They can set back the development agenda of all countries, particularly developing countries, and can increase poverty and hunger.

Madame President,

My delegation considers that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the 1997 Kyoto Protocol are the key instruments for addressing climate change. My delegation further considers that the achievement of the objectives of the aforementioned documents through mitigation and adaptation should occur, taking into account the Rio Principles on environment and development, especially Principle 7 of common, but differentiated responsibilities.

My delegation further underlines that the attention given to climate change should not be at the expense of the achievement of other pillars of sustainable development — i.e., economic development and social development. The debate on this issue should remain an integral part of the larger debate on sustainable development which is taking place in the framework of the United Nations.

Madame President,

Lebanon, like many developing countries, is adversely affected by climate change. In fact, the average yearly precipitation has decreased over the years, which will lead, in turn, to

a shortage in freshwater resources. Also, the adverse impacts of climate change are witnessed in the annual rise of 4mm in the sea level, the contamination of the freshwater aquifers by sea saline water, the erosion of Lebanese shores, the gradual destruction of the natural habitat of certain species, and the decrease in fishery resources. The costs of the impacts of climate change on Lebanon are estimated to be equal to 75 million dollars per year. The adverse impacts of climate change on the Lebanese agricultural sector are even higher.

In 1994, Lebanon ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and submitted its first national report to the Secretariat of the Convention. It is now in the process of preparing the second report. Also in 2006, Lebanon ratified the Kyoto Protocol. This allows my country to benefit from the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). Lebanon welcomes assistance by developed countries and multilateral organizations, whether technical or financial, aimed at enhancing its capacity-building and at supporting its efforts in facing the challenges posed by climate change. In this regard, my country is in the process of preparing several clean energy project proposals in consideration of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM).

My government has adopted some adaptation and mitigation policies and measures which include, among others, the implementation of programmes aimed at reducing the consumption of electricity, reforestation and afforestation 305 hectares of land, and setting new thermal standards for buildings.

Lebanon also is in the process of preparing a national strategy and an action plan for adaptation.

Madame President,

Two days ago, in his concluding remarks, Mr. Jeff Sachs said to this audience that the good news is that the cost of solving the problem of climate change is estimated at less than one half of one per cent of world income. We look forward for this to become "News."

Thank you, Madame President.

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