



**Symposium of the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies
Tokyo, 28 February 2011**

**Address by Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

Thank you for your warm welcome, it is an honour to attend this symposium. I thank IGES for the long-standing contribution to the UNFCCC process. Thank you also for this opportunity to address you today.

Once upon a time, when the world was still young and innocent to the realities of climate change that were to emerge in the following decade or so, Japan stepped up to the plate and led the way on climate protection. As a result, the only operational multilateral protocol that binds nations to the promise of a stable atmospheric future bears the name of the city that represents the soul of Japan,

You helped shaped the mechanisms that have made it work, and they now run, to a significant degree, on your hard efforts. You have invested in 13 percent of the 2,826 approved CDM projects over the years, and more into JI. You led countries to put deep faith in technological innovation and access, in capacity-building and the transfer of knowledge, and in the market mechanisms that would help determine carbon dioxide abatement where it was cheapest and most efficient.

There is an old proverb that says, “Beginning is easy— continuing, hard.”

While the KP got off to a good start, over the years, it started to become clear that efforts were nowhere sufficient to fulfill climate protection. It will be impossible to stabilize concentrations unless all countries are on board. No international agreement has ever been perfect, ever been without loopholes and flaws - even the ones with all the favourable circumstances on their side. So we kept trying to shape something better, and to get all countries to pull their weight.

Now we have the Cancun Agreements. The Cancun Agreements are a crucial point in the evolution of international efforts to address climate change. Cancun was a big step for many nations, but it is a small step for the planet. There are three reasons why this is a big step.

First, the Cancun Agreements represent the most far-reaching collective effort the world has witnessed to reduce carbon emissions and to build a system holding all countries accountable to each other for those emission reductions.

All industrialized nations have made their reduction pledges official and have committed themselves to develop low-carbon development plans or strategies. Thirty-seven developing countries have made formal their nationally appropriate mitigation actions, or

NAMAs, which zero in on a deviation from business-as-usual emissions by 2020, and are encouraged to develop low-carbon growth strategies.

Secondly, the agreements also boast new institutions to boost technology cooperation, financing and adaptation. A technology mechanism will be fully operational in 2012 and will support the innovation, development and spread of new technologies. A Green Climate Fund will provide long-term financing to projects, programmes and policies that constitute the most far-reaching package in developing countries through thematic funding windows.

Thirdly, Cancun is also the strongest signal governments have ever sent to the private sector that the future of economies will be low-carbon, by committing to a maximum temperature rise of 2 degrees Celsius, with a review towards 1.5 degrees Celsius in the near future.

The Agreements form a solid foundation for scaled-up climate change action. However, for all its achievements, it is a small step. Cancun did not yet put the world on a safe path. No agreement was reached on the year in which global emissions need to peak, although science tells us a global peaking in 2015 and a 50 percent reduction compared to 2000 levels by 2050 is needed to achieve a 2 degrees Celsius limit. And, the level of ambition currently on the table amounts to only 60 percent of what is needed to limit the temperature increase to the agreed 2 degrees. On top of that, a 2 degree increase is, in fact, not sufficient to guarantee the survival of small island States.

Clearly, the agreements have opened up a bottom-up approach to mitigation. We have no idea if this will be enough to keep to 2 degrees, or if we need a top-down international agreement to complement the bottom-up approach.

In Cancun, countries also agreed to indicate a second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol. Most countries want the Protocol to continue, a few countries are less keen on this. Others are of the view that certain elements of the protocol, especially predictability, the compliance system, the flexible mechanisms and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, should continue to be upheld and be integrated into mitigation agreements elsewhere.

Ultimately, governments need to decide on this at the next UN Climate Change Conference in Durban, especially in view of avoiding a gap between the first and a possible second commitment period under the protocol. In this context, Durban is also the last opportunity to provide clarity on the carbon market before the end of the commitment period. Durban needs to build on Cancun, not only on the new institutions, but also in terms of increasing certainty of the international framework. The Kyoto Protocol is the only historical experience we can learn from.

Ladies and gentlemen, as I said, "Beginning is easy; continuing, hard". This is perhaps as true for continuing an international process as it is with respect to Japan's 25 percent target. It is an ambitious target, a target that shows clear leadership - but it was possibly easier set than followed through. Nonetheless, I urge Japan to stick to it, not least because it is testimony to the new direction that economic growth in Japan is set to take.

The target is premised on participation by all large emitters in a global climate change regime. Under the Cancun Agreements, all large emitters have pledged to control their emissions, although developing countries do not have the same obligations under the convention - and this will not change any time soon. However, in the context of participation by all emitters, Japan's 25 percent target is testimony to clear, strategic economic thinking which will create economic advantages well into the future.

This is true both on a domestic, as well as on an international level.

Next to the target, Japan's New Growth Strategy will clearly put you on a cutting-edge path to low-carbon growth. And this is where the -25 percent target and the new economic strategy mesh together.

Japan is synonymous with technological innovation. You are trendsetters. From fashion and music to motor vehicles, energy efficiency and clean energy technology, you hold the world's fascination. You, China and the United States are the top three ranked countries in terms of research and development for innovation.

It is technology, innovation and access to low-carbon energy sources that form the key to fighting climate change while pursuing national growth. Japan stands to gain in economic competitiveness against its close rivals when it comes to energy and environmental technology - particularly in a carbon-constrained world - and boost its position in the clean energy race.

An ambitious target and low-carbon economic growth will move Japan towards increased energy security, especially in financial terms. For example, if oil prices average USD 100 a barrel, Japan spends 3 percent of its GDP on oil imports alone. Moving forward, Japan needs to examine renewable energy as a source of energy in the face of potential energy insecurity.

And in terms of the bigger picture, the -25 percent target and the new direction for economic growth are important for international competitiveness. In 2010, all G20 economies - and others - have initiated or completed the development of long-term economic growth strategies strongly based on low-carbon growth. These go far beyond the short-term economic recovery packages of 2008/2009. Many large developing economies have also charted ambitious clean energy pathways, and are already acting on them.

Around the world, the name of the new game is low-carbon growth. With your strategies in place, you are set to take on a leadership role in this trend. Having said that, a 25 percent target may still be difficult to achieve.

So how could an international agreement help Japan achieve the full reduction? What role could the next phase of the Kyoto Protocol or an agreement that contains key elements of the Protocol play in this? You have invested a lot in the Kyoto Protocol infrastructure. With a categorical "NO" to the Kyoto Protocol, Japan risks losing those investments.

I urge Japan to build on the Cancun Agreements throughout 2011 in view of increasing the certainty of the international regime in Durban. With its stated intention of

being a bridge-building nation in Asia, Japan is well-poised to make a flexible contribution in this regard, fully in line with the Convention.

The world needs clarity on the Kyoto Protocol, its flexible mechanisms and the carbon market.

I am certain that Japan will continue to play a constructive role in this.

I said before that this is a crucial point in the evolution of international efforts to address climate change. It is also an exciting point. We are moving from heavy reliance on a finite source, owned by a few, to a better mix of harnessing the only infinitely-available energy sources on earth via cutting edge technologies. The world needs Japan to continue to be a technology innovator. Japan needs to continue to be an exporter of best available technology and a beacon of hope for all countries.

Thank you.

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