



**Opening of the China High Level Forum  
Doha, 3 December 2012**

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

Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, through you, Minister, may I express our congratulations to the new national leadership in China – you see that I have dressed in the appropriate colour – and we are delighted that you continue in your ministerial leadership because we have come through the years to very much admire your leadership, your wisdom, your perseverance and your patience, all of which are absolutely critical.

And I would also like to thank you, Minister Xie, for an invitation to again join you here at the China Pavilion. I must say I've come to look forward to that appointment at the China Pavilion, because my dear friends, China and climate change have an appointment with destiny. That destiny is a sustainable, clean energy future where the world remains in the safer zones of climate change and China is a major leader in the new energy revolution that gets us there.

Minister Xie, the plans and strategies that you have shared with us today convince me that this will be true. Yes, there is a long way to go in reaching this clean energy revolution, but China leads already in core areas of renewable energy technology and manufacturing.

Yes, China's emissions path is a challenge for your country and for the world, but you have shown the ability to raise the bar rapidly, saving almost 1.5 billion tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions in the 5-year plan to 2010, not to even speak about your new 5-year plan, where I am sure that China will not only meet, but exceed those targets.

China's policymakers understand that a sustainable future is the only possible future for that wonderful country. The most famous Chinese strategist, Sun Tzu, said, "Know your enemy and know yourself and you will not fear a hundred battles." China recognizes that climate change is its ultimate enemy. China knows it can, with the right focus and will, respond at the scale and speed required.

A major reason for China's established and growing action is that it has accepted the three criteria that drive a strong national response to climate change:

national circumstances, government policy and popular support. Let me briefly address each.

First, China understood that a green, low-carbon development path is the only choice for sustainable growth given a large population, limited resources and a vulnerable environment. Second, the government has identified environmental sustainability as a top development priority. And third, the Chinese public are very aware about the problem. A recent survey of the Centre for China Climate Change Communication showed 93 percent of Chinese people said climate change was impacting the country.

That is perhaps not surprising, given that by China's own estimate, in 2011, as Minister Shia has already pointed out, natural disasters caused by extreme weather had a human cost, which is perhaps the most important. It affected 420 million people, in addition to the economic loss that went into the billions.

So, while China is taking a clear leadership role, let me underline the major problems we face at international level. I am the first one to admit – and I believe even the distinguished Ministers present here today will agree – that this international climate change process is moving far too slowly. That is why the Doha COP must be an implementation COP.

To begin with, the agreement on the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol has taken way too long, but I am confident that it will finally be agreed here. In addition, agreements already undertaken for technical and financial support to developing countries also must be moved from their design phase into their very urgent implementation phase.

Now, turning to the future, in Durban governments agreed to work towards a new, global climate change agreement and to significantly raise ambition well before 2020, so the world has a realistic chance of staying below the agreed two degrees temperature rise.

By the end of this week, governments must deliver on that promise and demonstrate how they intend to take work forward under the new ADP collective negotiation track to meet their self-set challenge. However, the central problem is that a wide gap remains between what is required to stay below the two degrees, and what all countries have so far said they will do to cut their own greenhouse gas emissions. We urgently need to bridge that gap.

It is encouraging to note that many countries, at both national and sub-national level, are already taking action that would enable them to outperform on their pledges. And a vast array of private sector and international corporate actions are now starting to reach critical mass and can, and must, be further strengthened.

In the past month, report after report – UNEP, WMO, World Bank, IEA – they have all stressed that while the window to reaching the two degree target is very quickly closing on us, we do actually have the funding and the technology to close the gap. It is a matter of scale, it is a matter of speed, it is a matter of finance, and above

all, it is a matter of determination. Yet the fact is that nations and businesses are not yet using all the opportunities that are already available.

The opportunities actually present major benefits to an economy like China. First, because it is the second biggest in the world and still growing with the scale, capital and emerging industry and markets to deploy rapidly a national, clean energy infrastructure. And second, because in order to raise its population out of poverty, China needs to rebalance its economy further towards domestic demand, and this consumption has to be driven by clean energy or will also quickly become unsustainable. Both these aspects provide a huge chance for a further, but sustainable GDP boost in the foreseeable future.

If China not only continues, but strengthens the sustainable, clean energy path it is already on, then I believe it will be on the side of history that leads to exceptional success. The most rapid bursts of economic and social growth since the Industrial Revolution have been based on the leverage provided by pioneering new technology from the new energy systems and have been historically associated with a leading nation.

Britain pioneered coal technology into a period of supercharged growth. The United States pioneered oil technology into an era of supercharged growth. A century from now, which country will historians see as the pioneer of clean energy technology into a future of supercharged growth, and health and wealth and stability for its citizens? We don't know how that question will be answered; it could be one country, it could be several. But for sure, it will include China.

Thank you.

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