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Agenda item 11 (a)

**DRAFT REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES ON ITS SIXTH
SESSION, HELD AT THE HAGUE FROM 13 TO 25 NOVEMBER 2000¹**

Rapporteur: Mr. Gao Feng (China)

CHAPTER I: OPENING OF THE SESSION

¹ Subsequent sections of the draft report will be issued in addenda to the present document.

I. OPENING OF THE SESSION

(Agenda item 1)

A. Opening of the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties

1. The sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, convened pursuant to Article 7.4 of the Convention, was formally opened at the Netherlands Congress Centre, The Hague, Netherlands, on 13 November 2000, by the President of the Conference at its fifth session, Mr. Jan Szyszko, Secretary of State for Climate Change of Poland.

B. Host Government welcoming ceremony

2. The formal opening was preceded by a welcoming ceremony organized by the host Government, and attended by Her Majesty Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands.

3. At the ceremony, the Minister of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment of the Netherlands, and President-designate of the Conference, Mr. Jan Pronk, made an opening address, and the Mayor of The Hague, Mr. Wim Deetman, welcomed participants to the city.

4. Also at the ceremony, a video message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations was shown, and a presentation was made by Mr. Robert Watson, Chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in which he described the current state of scientific understanding of the earth's climate system, highlighted the vulnerability of ecological systems, and underlined the need for effective policy and technological responses.

5. The ceremony concluded with the projection of the climate change-related IMAX film "The Straw that Breaks the Camel's back...?"

C. Statement by the President of the Conference of the Parties at its fifth session

(Agenda item 1 (a))

6. The President of the Conference at its fifth session, said that he regarded the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change as the world's greatest economic convention, and as an opportunity for the world to start developing in accordance with the principle of sustainable development.

7. When he had assumed the presidency of the fifth session he had resolved to adhere to several principles, namely: fulfilment of all imposed obligations while observing the principle of equal treatment of Member States on all issues; propagation of knowledge of the Convention's importance to sustainable world development; tapping the wealth of experience amassed by his predecessors and cooperating with them; cooperation with his successor in the conviction that a stable, long-term policy was the best chance for the success of the Convention; close cooperation with the secretariat, Bureau and the chairmen of the subsidiary bodies.

8. After describing the events he had attended and countries he had visited during the year, he said that in every State he had sensed a great will to put the Kyoto Protocol into effect as soon as possible, preferably before the end of 2002, but had been informed of the existing economic

difficulties, and of threats to the economies of certain States should the Kyoto Protocol be imprecisely introduced.

9. One particular achievement in the course of his term in office, he felt, was the considerable narrowing of fields of discussion, as exemplified by the text on land-use, land-use change and forestry, where only 10 pages remained of a document that had originally been 600 pages.

10. He recalled that the Kyoto Protocol would enter into effect once it had been ratified by 55 Parties, incorporating Annex I Parties accounting in total for at least 55 per cent of their total carbon dioxide emissions for 1990. Therefore, a mutual area of understanding must be found between the developed and the developing countries. This might include agreement to count as the reduction of developed countries a part of the emissions absorbed by sinks, and for the developing countries, creation by the developed countries of effective and efficient financial assistance. That would allow the developed countries to regenerate their natural resources, and the developing countries to protect their natural resources, especially the renewable ones, through new production technologies.

11. But it would be necessary to win public support and also to create proper implementation programmes. One such regional implementation topic might be 'Sustainable human development and global change-landscape management in rural areas and greenhouse gases'. He also expressed the hope that one 'public awareness' day a year might be devoted directly to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

D. Election of the President of the Conference of the Parties at its sixth session

(Agenda item 1 (b))

12. At its 1st plenary meeting, on 13 November 2000, on the proposal of the outgoing President, the Conference of the Parties elected by acclamation Mr. Jan Pronk, Minister for Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment of the Netherlands, as its President.

E. Statement by the President

(Agenda item 1 (c))

13. On assuming office, the President paid tribute to the work of his predecessor. If the present session of the Conference was a success, that would be due in no small measure to the preparatory work done in the inter-sessional period, as a result of which the sixth session would be able to proceed with no time wasted.

14. In an opening address, delivered at the welcoming ceremony, he had indicated that a formidable task awaited the Conference at its sixth session. There were plenty of reasons to take on climate change at the present juncture, since the climate had never changed as fast as it was changing at present, and the evidence was mounting to suggest that greenhouse gases were having a visible impact on the environment. The effects of climate change were irreversible – for ecosystems, agriculture, water supply and health. Ironically, developing countries, which were least to blame for the situation would suffer the most devastating consequences – yet they had the least economic resilience. Moreover, there were important links between climate change and other global environmental issues, such as the recovery of the ozone layer, desertification, and biodiversity.

15. The Kyoto Protocol had been the first instrument in which industrialized countries had committed themselves to quantified agreements on targets for limiting emissions of greenhouse gases. But it would be much more difficult to agree on instruments than it had been to agree on targets. The Conference would need to take hard decisions. If negotiations could not keep pace with climate change; if decisions only took into account the interests of rich countries, neglecting those of the poorest countries; and if the commitment to tackle the dangers threatening the quality of life on earth, recently reaffirmed at the Millennium Summit, was not made good – then the credibility of the Conference would be in question.

16. He was well aware that there were many difficult issues on which decisions were needed: adequate financial support for developing countries; the Kyoto mechanisms; the role of carbon dioxide sinks; the compliance regime; and others. But for all of these, reasonable compromises were available. What was required was to make a principled, balanced and credible choice: by reducing greenhouse gas emissions; by supporting developing countries as they developed a sound policy for the future; and by protecting them from the consequences of unsustainable policies from the past. In this task, the political credibility of the Conference was at stake: negotiations were not an end in themselves, there must be a willingness to give and take, and this would require confidence-building, and a willingness on the part of all to cooperate rather than compete.

F. Message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations

17. In his pre-recorded video message, projected at the welcoming ceremony, the Secretary-General of the United Nations sent his best wishes to all at the Conference, especially to the young who had come as part of their national delegations. Their involvement was crucial. The Conference was about the world they would inherit. And their generation must look after it better than his own. The tasks before the world were enormous. If greenhouse gas emissions were to be brought down to a sustainable level, radical changes were needed in the world economy, and in the way all people lived.

18. The Conference could make a substantial contribution: first, by drawing up a credible rule book of measures that industrialized countries must take, since at present they produced most of the emissions; secondly, by helping to chart a new path of development - all peoples had an equal right to development; but measures to reduce global warming in industrialized countries would be in vain if, meanwhile, developing countries were following the same wasteful and noxious pattern of industrialization; thirdly, by giving a convincing signal to the private sector that reducing greenhouse gas emissions would pay. Once businessmen and women were convinced of that, they should come up with new, eco-friendly technologies, which in turn would generate jobs and other opportunities. Hitherto, corporations had profited by polluting the environment: in future, they must have an incentive to clean it up.

19. Two months previously, at the Millennium Summit, world leaders had resolved to adopt a new ethic of conservation and stewardship, and, as a first step, to make every effort to bring the Kyoto Protocol into force by 2002. If that first step was achieved, the hopes of a sustainable future would be greatly strengthened. All must do their utmost to make it happen.

G. Statement by the Executive Secretary

Agenda item 1 (e))

20. The Executive Secretary paid tribute to the outgoing President's commitment to keeping the negotiating process on track since the fifth session, and assured the incoming President of his support in meeting the challenges ahead. He also acknowledged the investment of the President's personal time in the preparations for the Conference, and expressed his thanks for the generosity of the resources made available by the host Government.

21. Recent preparations for the Conference had been intense. National positions had been reviewed; numerous contacts had taken place among delegations; and informal consultations had helped to refine negotiating texts. Thanks to the special efforts of the Convention secretariat, and with the cooperative efforts of United Nations colleagues in Geneva and also in Nairobi, the Conference documentation was in good shape, with all recent texts available in all languages in time for the opening day.

22. The remarkable presentation by the Chairman of the IPCC at the welcoming ceremony had given all food for thought: in particular, that the Conference could not afford to delay action to deal with climate change; and that the Conference was building for the long term and must build soundly. Thus, the Conference must work towards a comprehensive success without resorting to any "quick fixes" that would be regretted later. The goal of action must continue to be to modify long-term trends in emissions of greenhouse gases.

23. Success at the Conference should be twofold. First, developing countries should leave it feeling significantly better off in terms of support for their efforts to address climate change and its impacts, their genuine efforts to play their defined and proper part in the emerging global strategy in pursuit of their sustainable development. Secondly, delegations from all Parties should be convinced that the Kyoto Protocol could be effectively implemented, and be ready to launch domestic processes towards ratification, where this had not already been done. A fitting result of the Conference would be for Annex I Parties whose ratification would bring the Protocol into force to state that, in their judgement, the outcome of the Conference had made the Protocol "ratifiable".

24. The Kyoto Protocol had been a heroic achievement, but had left many loose ends. What was needed now was an agreement using clear and unambiguous language that could be put to work by economic operators as soon as the Protocol entered into force – or even before entry into force, if there was an early start for the clean development mechanism. Thus the sequencing of the work of the Conference was extremely important: substantive results must be achieved in the first week, and the main political agreements in the middle of the second week, leaving enough time for the consequential technical drafting to be completed before closure.

H. Other statements

25. At the 2nd plenary meeting, on 13 November 2000, statements were made by the representatives of Nigeria (on behalf of the Group of 77 and China); Samoa (on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States); Canada; United States of America; France (on behalf of European Community and its member States); Burkina Faso (on behalf of the African Group); Brazil (on behalf of the Latin American Group); Saudi Arabia; India; China; Switzerland (on

behalf of the Environmental Integrity Group); Morocco (on behalf of the League of Arab States); Vanuatu (on behalf of the Least Developed Countries); Kuwait; Central African Republic; Kazakhstan; and Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.
