

COP21 Summit Paris 30 November 2015
Statement by Sigmundur David Gunnlaugsson
Prime Minister of Iceland

Mr. President, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

It is good to be here in Paris, this historic city which is treasured worldwide.

We extend our condolences to those affected by the tragic events of November 13 and express our solidarity with the people of Paris and France.

Today Paris is at the centre of global attention as a beacon of hope. We have gathered here to give support to a new Climate Agreement which will benefit all of us, future generations and our common home, planet Earth.

It is my hope that Paris will bring us an agreement that will avert catastrophic climate change; an agreement which can fulfill the hope - that humankind can indeed unite in tackling a grave common threat.

Climate change is already visible in Iceland. Our glaciers are retreating. We have decided to improve the monitoring of our glaciers and to make the results – and the glaciers themselves – more accessible for visitors and the public.

Iceland will become in a way a real-life classroom on the effects of climate change. With no action on emissions, the ice in Iceland could largely disappear in 100 years.

Indeed, ice on land and sea is retreating in the Arctic region as a whole. Rising temperatures and acidification affect the oceans. The marine ecosystem is at risk and the only way to avert this is by cutting carbon dioxide emissions.

Iceland has made great progress in this regard. We have decarbonized our energy production sector. We get almost 100% of our energy for electricity and heating from renewables – a big step towards a carbon neutral economy.

But we need to do more. My government has announced projects aimed at speeding up the decarbonisation of transport, fisheries and agriculture – in cooperation with the industries concerned, which we think is crucial for success.

We will also increase efforts for afforestation and revegetation, to soak up more carbon from the atmosphere. Globally, we need to halt desertification. That benefits both mitigation and adaptation to climate change. The UN Conference to Combat Desertification can join forces with the UNFCCC in this effort.

Iceland wants to set a good example at home, but also to help build a greener future globally. We will contribute to the Green Climate Fund.

Iceland has for decades supported capacity building in geothermal energy in developing countries. At COP21 we are proud to take part in the launching of the Global Geothermal Alliance under the auspices of IRENA.

Iceland strongly supports geothermal as a viable, sustainable energy resource that can bring power to hundreds of millions of people in most parts of the world.

Mr. President,

We are now hopefully only a few days away from reaching a historic moment: A climate deal that will cover most global emissions and provide assistance for adaptation and green growth in developing countries.

Decarbonizing our economies is a huge and complex task, but we need to approach it with a positive can-do attitude.

The goal is within our reach. Iceland supports an ambitious Paris agreement that will keep us within the 2°C goal.

We will do our part in a global effort for a low-carbon future.