

Statement by Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson
Prime Minister of Iceland,
23 September 2014

Secretary General, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Secretary General, today you have called upon us to deliver a set of actions and a vision to reach an ambitious and binding Climate Change Agreement in Paris next year and, ultimately, the post-carbon economy; a vision that needs to inspire while promising a better world for us all.

Iceland is aiming to become a fossil fuel free economy, with almost all of our stationary energy coming from renewables, and our efforts towards reaching this goal are underway. We stand ready to work with you on this important issue and Iceland fully supports the statement – Putting Price on Carbon.

The core of Iceland's climate policy rests on the fact that my country lies within the Arctic. Recent studies, including by the Arctic Council, suggest that climate change is the most serious threat to Arctic biodiversity and ecosystems, including ocean acidification as Arctic and sub-Arctic waters can be especially vulnerable to acidification, which again can only be stopped by halting carbon emissions.

Globally, Iceland is amongst leading contributors of expertise on geothermal energy and fully supports, Mr. Secretary General, your initiative on Sustainable Energy for All by 2030. Through the United Nations University Geothermal Training Programme we have for over three decades strengthened geothermal development capacity in more than 50 countries. Our most recent initiative is an Open Compact with the World Bank, which aims to enhance geothermal development in East Africa, along the Great African Rift Valley.

There is still work to be done for a greater geothermal deployment as untapped capacity can still benefit hundreds of millions of people around the world, including in the world's energy poorest regions.

With that in mind, Iceland calls upon Member States to join us in a Global Geothermal Alliance. An Alliance that brings together all stakeholders in the geothermal sector to co-operate for the main purpose of identifying new opportunities and support mechanisms to scale-up geothermal efforts. The Alliance will also work to ensure that geothermal energy receives appropriate attention in discussions on future energy supply and climate change. Furthermore, this initiative will strengthen the development of the African Clean Energy Corridors, an IRENA initiative that aims to accelerate deployment of renewable energy in Africa and in other regions.

To this end, Iceland pledges to increase its financial support for the Global Geothermal Development Plan of the World Bank, an instrument set up as part of the Open Compact.

Another area where Iceland has taken the lead and demonstrated best practices, including through its United Nations University Land Restoration Training Programme, is in halting soil erosion and restoring lost and degraded land. Iceland, together with Namibia, has launched a 'Group of Friends on Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought'. This is a forum for discussion with the aim to build on the momentum generated by Rio+20 and address desertification, land degradation and drought in the Sustainable Development Goals.

Last but not least, in order to ensure an effective and equitable response to climate change we need participation and leadership of all members of society, men and women. This is a key priority in Iceland, where gender perspectives form an integral part of all policies and financing.

Secretary General, Distinguished Delegates,

Iceland is committed to a new Climate Change Agreement, which should mark a turning point for sustainability and security on our earth. The momentum is now and my country pledges its full support to this joint global effort. Thank you.