

**Opening of the United Nations Climate Change Conference
7-18 December 2009**

**Address by Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

“My mum was holding my younger brother and my older sister was holding my younger sister. The wind and the rain became stronger and the tide level covered the bank. We dipped our legs in the mud so we wouldn’t drift away in the tide. When the water level was up to my dad’s chest, we decided to climb trees. Suddenly the tree fell because of the strong winds. Then I was separated from my mum and dad.

“I clung to a tree trunk and floated along with it. The rain was really heavy and it was painful when it hit my back. I drifted the whole night and I was terrified. I couldn’t find my mum, dad and younger sister.”

These are the words of Nyi Lay, a six-year old boy, speaking after a devastating cyclone.

A few weeks later, Nyi Lay was reunited with his sisters and grandmother through Save the Children’s family tracing programme. But sadly, there was never any news from his parents or his younger brother. In Nyi Lay’s words: “I miss them and I always wonder whether they are still alive.”

Excellencies, Ministers, ladies and gentlemen: it is repetitions of this that the world is here to prevent.

Welcome to Copenhagen.

The clock has ticked down to zero. After two years of negotiations, the time has come to deliver.

At this time of year, many people are busy preparing their Christmas cakes. To my mind, the ideal Christmas cake that needs to come out of Copenhagen has three layers:

1. The bottom layer consists of an agreement on prompt implementation of action on mitigation, adaptation, finance, technology, REDD and capacity-building;
2. The second layer consists of ambitious emission reduction commitments and actions. It also includes commitments on start-up finance in the order of 10 billion USD per year, as well as long-term finance;
3. And the third layer, or the icing on the cake, consists of a shared vision on long-term cooperative action on climate change and a long-term goal. I

hope Prime Minister Rasmussen will light the candles on this cake next Friday.

Over recent weeks and months, I have heard a multitude of strong political statements calling for a successful and ambitious agreement in Copenhagen. I have heard strong political statements calling for an agreement that offers serious emission limitation goals and that captures the provision of significant financial and technological support to developing countries.

There is a saying that goes: “one one dutty build dam”, which means: build a sturdy wall one brick at a time. Solid success also needs to be built brick by brick and from the bottom up. In Copenhagen, this needs to be done during the coming days.

Copenhagen will only be a success if it delivers significant and immediate action that begins the day the conference ends.

In the week ahead, the focus needs to be on crafting solid and practical proposals that will unleash prompt action on mitigation, adaptation, finance, technology, REDD and capacity-building.

Developing countries desperately need tangible, immediate action on these crucial issues. Much of the work that has been accomplished over the past two years can be turned into immediate action.

Solid, action-oriented proposals will give real meaning to the political commitment for success in Copenhagen that has been building momentum around the globe. Such proposals will also provide a strong foundation for further efforts.

Through the COP, the CMP, the AWG-LCA, the AWG-KP, the SBSTA and the SBI, there are six days to get it done before Ministers arrive. Ministers will have two days to take issues forward before leaders arrive. This means that there are a total of eight days to prepare a workable package that consists of both immediate and long-term components which leaders can endorse on 18 December.

The time for formal statements is over.

The time for restating well-known positions is past.

The time has come to reach out to each other.

I urge you to build on your achievements. Take up the work that has already been done and turn it into real action.

Deliver. Reach for success. Ensure that millions of children across the world don't suffer the same fate as Nyi Lay.

Thank you.
