



SLOVAKIA

STATEMENT BY

H.E. Mr. Ivan Gašparovič

President of the Slovak Republic

in the High-Level Event
convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations
"The Future in our Hands: Addressing the Leadership Challenge
of Climate Change"

Thematic Plenary II — Mitigation
"Reducing Emissions and Stabilizing the Climate -
Safeguarding our Common Future"

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Permanent Mission of the Slovak Republic to the United Nations

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Dear Co-Chairs,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Two and a half thousand years ago one of the most renowned ancient dramatists, Sophocles, said "Many are the mighty things, and nought is more mighty than man." Today we may say that this wise and honourable man was right. The human race has seized control over, and still wishes to control natural phenomena for the sake of improving the quality of life.

However, we must bitterly add that we are now in a situation when man's control over the nature has tied – and slowly keeps on tightening -- the rope around our neck. An ever increasing number of scientific proofs implies that we must start acting without delay in order to protect the environment. Climate change is the most apparent one. Scientists estimate that global warming at a rate of more than 2 degrees Celsius over one hundred years poses a very high risk. Eco-systems will be unable to adapt to the changed conditions and a sharp increase in the global air temperature will certainly bring about a sudden shift in climatic zones and considerable degradation of living conditions on most of the five continents' surfaces. But do we pay enough attention to this?

People consider climate changes a problem but, unfortunately, they seem to have a "poor" appetite to adapt their style of living. For three decades the world leaders have been declaring ambitious goals and making decisions to save the planet. Yet, we are still rather an observer than active player. The reason is that environmental protection requires higher and higher costs. The need to preserve economic growth puts us in a complex situation: on the one hand, we need to secure jobs and the relative economic stability of the country; on the other hand, we need to control this growth so that it is not in conflict with the principles of sustainable development.

In the global context, Slovakia is a small country with a smaller share in environmental pollution. But we do not want to be a mere "observer". We realise that such an approach is destructive both morally and physically. The air that we breathe, the sun that shines on us, and the earth that feeds us is one and the same world. We therefore urge that intensive talks be commenced at the 13th conference of the parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change on the Indonesian island of Bali, talks that would result in a global and all-embracing agreement on the future regime of climate change under this Convention. We deem it especially important that the continuity between the Kyoto Protocol and this new agreement is preserved.

After 1990, climate change was not considered a problem in Slovakia thanks to the reduction in emissions caused by a decline in industrial production faced by our economy at that time. But that decline has been replaced by rapid economic boom in recent years. Emissions of carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas, followed a similar development. Today, Slovakia as a European Union Member State subscribes

to the EU's commitment to cut by 2020 average emissions by 20 percent compared to the 1990 levels, and Slovakia is likely to fulfil its commitment under the Kyoto Protocol for years 2008 to 2012 easily.

It should, however, be noted that climate change is an environmental problem whose origin as well as solution can be found in the economy. Adapting the economy to low-emission energy generation based on low-carbon technologies, the promotion of renewable sources, more extensive energy savings, increased use of clean technologies, changes in states' priorities by means of tax policy instruments or reducing the costs for the use of internet highways to rival normal highways is key to meeting long-term objectives set with regard to emission reduction.

With respect to our ambitions, and to the necessity of further economic growth, the Slovak Republic plans to use nuclear energy to a greater extent. We have many years of positive experience with nuclear energy and extensive know-how at our disposal. Nuclear energy currently accounts for approximately one third of electricity generated in the European Union and represents an important source of low-emission energy. The Slovak Republic considers nuclear energy a reliable, economically efficient and environmentally acceptable source of energy and therefore we will endorse its further development. This we believe to be the road that to a large degree combines a solution to energy security, ensuring stable energy supply and emission limits. In our opinion, energy efficiency is the very first and vital step in a technically and financially challenging process of emission reduction.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let's together find such a solution to climate change under which all countries around the world would bear a fair and equal share of responsibility in this global endeavour. Slovakia therefore appreciates the organisation of a series of international negotiations which will culminate at a climate summit in Bali.

Dear Co-Chairs,
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In conclusion, allow me please to express my belief that climate changes will not become a nightmare for future generations and that homo sapiens will use their most effective and powerful tool – their brain – to achieve and preserve the symbiosis between nature and man.

Thank you for your attention.