

OPEN LETTER TO THE ENVIRONMENT MINISTER ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

December 5th, 2007

To: The Hon. John Baird, Minister of the Environment

Dear Minister Baird,

Canadian environment, humanitarian and development organizations have consistently expressed their growing concerns about climate change and its impact on human development. As critical UN negotiations begin in Bali, we are once again calling on the Government of Canada to take emergency action. Climate change is an ethical and moral issue. It is a global justice issue. We urge the Government to reflect on its international commitments to social justice and human rights, not least Canada's commitment to human development as outlined in the Millennium Development Goals. Canadians have a long and proud tradition of good global citizenship, from the first peacekeeping missions to our leadership in securing an international ban on landmines. They do not wish to see this tradition compromised in Bali.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has made clear in its *Fourth Assessment Report* volume on *Climate Change Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability* the myriad means by which climate change is very likely to hinder and even reverse progress on human development. Already, multiple stresses and low adaptive capacity are combining to increase the vulnerability of poor communities to climate change.

The links between climate impacts and human development are inescapable. The frequency of weather-related disasters such as drought and flooding is already rising. Water stress threatens up to 250 million people in Africa alone, and millions in the mega-deltas of Asia are increasingly affected by a combination of flooding and sea level rise. One sixth of the world's population will face decreases in fresh water availability as glaciers recede in major mountain ranges. Agricultural production in many areas will be severely compromised. The incidence and range of diseases such as malaria are growing. Women and girls are most affected by climate change.

Not surprisingly, the UN Development Programme responded to these dire projections in its most recent Human Development Report by stating that climate change is the defining human development challenge of the 21st century.

On two fronts, we believe that action to date by the Government of Canada is inadequate. First, the government must start helping those already experiencing the impacts of climate change. We believe the government must recognize its responsibility to provide adequate support to the adaptation efforts of those communities and populations most vulnerable to climate change.

While the government has honoured its commitments to both the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) and the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF), Canadian pledges total only 16 *million* dollars. By contrast, The UNFCCC Secretariat has recently estimated that adaptation will require financing on the order of \$28–67 *billion* in developing countries per year by 2030. In addition to increasing Canada's official development assistance to the target of 0.7% of Gross National Income, it is critical that the government act on its responsibility to ensure Canada takes on its fair share of closing this massive adaptation financing gap, and that these new commitments be viewed as *compensatory* financing.

Secondly, the government must stop doing harm. We are distressed that several independent reports have outlined how the government's own climate change plan will fail to meet its stated emission reduction targets, targets that are (in light of the IPCC's analysis) insufficient. The continuing failure of past and current governments to put in place the means to achieve the emission reductions necessary to avoid dangerous climate change is simply not acceptable.

In light of this, we urge the Government of Canada in Bali to:

- **advocate the objective of limiting global average temperature increases to 2°C above pre-industrial levels,**
- **treat adaptation as a priority in the negotiations by supporting the efficient, fair, and accessible operationalization of the Adaptation Fund,**
- **support a mandate for negotiating a post-2012 international regime that includes adequate funding for adaptation as a priority, as well as deeper cuts in absolute emissions for industrialized nations, and**
- **announce a substantial strengthening of Canada's domestic emission reduction targets and policies.**

Canada must not, in Bali, abandon the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities," previously accepted by Canada in both the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol. The government must recognize that developed countries such as Canada, with far higher per capita emissions and wealth, and with a greater share of historical responsibility for climate change than the largest emitters among developing countries, must take the lead in emission reductions. Requiring the burden of emission reductions to be shared equally with developing nations, which are already struggling with poverty, violates this fundamental principle of equity.

Above the 2°C limit, climate change impacts may become irreversible, and the consequences of inaction on the livelihoods, health, water and food supply in poor communities will be catastrophic. There is still time to avoid the worst of climate change and its impacts on development, but bold action must be taken immediately. By simultaneously committing to deep emission reductions, implementing the strong policies essential to achieving them, and increasing support for adaptation in the global south, developing countries and the poor will be

able to reduce their vulnerability to climate change and continue vital progress towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

For our part, we are working together to educate Canadians about the impact of climate change on development, to increase our capacity to support adaptation efforts of our partners in the global south, and to find ways to reduce our own emissions.

We ask that you act on these suggestions in Bali and beyond.

Sincerely,

Signatories

Gerry Barr, President-CEO, **Canadian Council for International Co-operation**

Stuart Clark, Senior Policy Advisor, **Canadian Foodgrains Bank**

Kevin McCort, Interim CEO, **CARE Canada**

Karl Nerenberg, Communication Director, **CUSO**

Kevin Perkins, Executive Director, **Developing Countries Farm Radio Network**

Robert Fox, Executive Director, **Oxfam Canada**

Pierre Veronneau, Executive Director, **Oxfam-Quebec**

Matthew Bramley, Director, Climate Change, **Pembina Institute**

Omega Bula, Executive Minister, Justice, Global and Ecumenical Relations, **The United Church of Canada**

Faris Ahmed, Director Canadian Programs, **USC Canada**

Mara Kerry, Director of Conservation, **Nature Canada**