

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Davos (Switzerland), January 2011

Remarks to the World Economic Forum Session on Redefining Sustainable Development

Ladies and gentlemen,

For most of the last century, economic growth was fuelled by the abundance of natural resources. We believed in consumption without consequences.

In the 21st century, supplies are running short and the global temperatures are running high. Climate change is showing us that the old model is obsolete and extremely dangerous.

So what do we do in this current challenging situation? How do we create growth? How do we lift people out of poverty while protecting the planet and ecosystems that support economic growth? How do we regain the balance?

It is easy to say “sustainable development”, but to make it happen we have to make changes in lifestyles, economic models, social organization, and political life. The questions that guide our discussion here are:

- How do we organize ourselves economically?
- How do we manage increasingly scarce resources?

Let me highlight the one resource that is scarcest of all: Time. We are running out of time. Time to tackle climate change, time to ensure sustainable growth, time to generate a clean energy revolution.

To implement a sustainable development agenda for the 21st century, we need your participation, your initiative. We need you to step up. To spark innovation. To invest in energy efficiency and renewable energy for those who need them most – your future customers. To expand clean energy access in developing countries – your markets of tomorrow.

But we also need you to include sustainability principles into your strategies, your operations, your supply chain. And we need government leaders sitting here and elsewhere around the world to send the right signals to build the green economy.

Together, let us tear down the walls between development and environment protection. Between global security and global sustainability. Between business, government, and civil society.

In an odd way, what we are really talking about is going back to the future. The ancients saw no division between themselves and the natural world. They understood how to live in harmony with the world around them. It is time to recover that sense of living harmoniously for our economies and our societies. But rather than simply thinking about the past, we should leap confidently into the future.

There is no time to waste.

Thank you very much.