

Opening Speech by Patricia Espinosa at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP23)

**Twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 23),
thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting
of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 13) and second part of the first session of the Conference
of the Parties serving as the meeting of the
Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA 1.2)**

Bonn, 6 November 2017

Opening address by

Patricia Espinosa, Executive Secretary

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

H.E. Mr. Frank Bainimarama,

H.E. Mr. Salaheddine Mezouar,

H.E. Ms. Barbara Hendricks,

Honourable Mayor of Bonn,

President of the IPCC,

Director General of the WMO,

Honourable guests,

Distinguished delegates,

Dear friends,

Ladies and gentlemen.

Welcome to Bonn, and welcome to this year's United Nations Climate Change conference.

Let me begin by thanking our COP 22 President from Morocco, Mr. Salaheddine Mezouar, for your leadership and service to the process.

Your contribution is particularly important, as you took on the challenge to preside over the first Conference of the Parties to the Paris Agreement just two weeks after its entry into force.

Let me also thank the Governments of Germany, North Rhine-Westphalia and Bonn, and especially the people living in this region, for their extraordinary support to be able to hold this conference here in this historic, beautiful area.

My gratitude extends to your ongoing support to the Climate Change secretariat.

I also want to thank my team, the secretariat, for all their efforts in preparing for this conference.

Last, but not least, I thank our incoming COP President, Prime Minister Bainimarama, and his team, for their willingness and dedication to take up this major challenge.

I must commend Fiji and Germany for the spirit of cooperation that you have shown to ensure this conference is a reality. It is, indeed, an example of how nations can work together to accomplish great things.

Ladies and gentlemen...

Twenty-five years ago, governments came together at the Earth Summit in Rio with this very spirit.

They began with the idea that the world needed to change the way it was treating its environment.

And from that single idea, our Convention was adopted and a movement began.

A movement that, two years ago, resulted in the Paris Agreement.

Today, in record time, 169 countries have ratified it, making it possible that we go from the era of hope... to the era of implementation.

And together with the Sustainable Development Agenda, we have a clear path forward to truly address climate change and sustainable development.

Yet, it is an incomplete journey.

This is the 23rd COP conference, but never have we met with a greater sense of urgency; just as the Prime Minister has expressed, as our COP 22 President has expressed, and as the beautiful children and their beautiful song have reminded us.

Millions of people around the world have suffered – and continue to suffer – from extreme weather events.

We have compassion for them, their families, and their suffering.

But the fact of the matter is that this may only be the start – a preview of what is to come.

As the World Meteorological Organization reported just a few days ago, 2017 will likely be one of the hottest three years on record.

And long-term indicators of climate change, such as carbon dioxide concentrations, sea level rise, and ocean acidification, among other disturbing phenomena, will continue unless we act.

UN Environment reports we face similar challenges with respect to global emissions levels: national pledges only bring a third of the reduction in emissions we need by 2030 to meet climate targets.

The message cannot get any clearer. We no longer have the luxury of time. We must act now.

This – right here, right now – is where we begin.

We have some very specific goals we must achieve while we are here in Bonn.

We expect these negotiations to be the next essential step that ensures that the Paris Agreement's structure is completed, its impacts are strengthened, and its goals achieved.

We also need to move forward to fulfil the commitments that are due in 2020. In this regard, finance and mitigation pledges are essential.

We are excited about the enthusiasm of the non-Party stakeholders: around ten thousand people are here to have conversations and look for solutions that apply to our practical lives.

It is truly inspiring to see how, for the first time in history, these groups are aligning themselves with a multilateral agreement.

Dear friends; I have outlined the importance of our tasks, the urgency with which we need to complete them, and the increased ambition that we need from all of you.

Let us go forth.

Let us complete our work.

Let us act with a renewed sense of ambition.

And let us fulfil not only the promise of Paris, but the promise of hope and the promise for all of humanity that was set out 25 years ago at the Summit in Rio.

Thank you.