

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

United Nations Brussels Team
CLIMATE CHANGE/ENVIRONMENT POLICY GROUP¹

KEY MESSAGES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In addressing the European Parliament in Strasbourg on Tuesday, 19th October, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon called on the European Union to “be the locomotive driving the train forward”. Adhering to the Secretary General’s words, the United Nations Brussels Team (UNBT) is ready to support the EU in its efforts to protect the global environment.

As Nagoya showed in the context of biodiversity, a consensus around climate change requires a fully legitimate process that is based on international standards, norms and values. The UN, as the guardian of international conventions and agreements, can bring this legitimacy to any deals regarding these subjects. Further and above all, the UN architecture provides a human-rights based approach to address climate change.

Believing in the potential and the power of the European Union to take a lead in international negotiations and developments on climate change, the UNBT provides the following key messages on important aspects that should be integrated in future developments of climate change policy:

1. **MDGs:** Combating climate change can contribute to the international efforts on the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals, including the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, the empowerment of women, the combat against diseases, environmental sustainability and the development of a global partnership for development.
2. **Vulnerable Populations:** In the process of combating climate change, it is important to identify and address the needs of vulnerable populations, including women and children, single female headed households and HIV impacted households, the elderly, refugees and migrants.
3. **Ownership:** Priorities should be identified by developing countries themselves in accordance to their specific national conditions and needs. It is essential that any new financial instruments and funds to support developing countries take their point of view into account.
4. **Food Security:** Climate change adaptation should incorporate programmes aimed at ensuring food access and safety for the most vulnerable and at risk of hunger. These should focus on diversifying livelihoods and adapting agricultural, industrial, fishing and forestry practices by encouraging better water management, soil conservation, use of resilient crops and reforestation.

¹ The UN Brussels Team (UNBT) has put together a Climate Change/Environment Policy Group, which is an-interagency group chaired by UNEP with fifteen other agencies participating (FAO, ILO, UNDP, UNFPA, UN-HABITAT, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNIFEM (part of UN WOMEN), UN-OCHA, UNOPS, UNRIC, WFP, WHO, World Bank and IOM). Its main objective is to coordinate a common UN message to be delivered towards the EU in the field on environment and climate change.

5. **Health:** There is urgent need for additional investment to strengthen key functions of public health systems including emergency preparedness and response, surveillance and control of infectious diseases, primary health care as well as forward planning to address the new challenges posed by climate change.
6. **Economy:** It is necessary to decouple economic growth from material and energy consumption and to work in the direction of a low and finally zero carbon society. Greening trade, investment and industry is part of the solution to climate change and biodiversity loss. The transfer of environmentally sound technology and know-how is a key element of a renewed industrial policy.
7. **Employment:** An equitable and employment-intensive approach to climate change adaptation and mitigation can boost local, regional and global economy and provide a solution to reduce poverty. Making employment creation central to any investments in sustainable infrastructure and energy production, waste management and reforestation will strongly contribute to both greening the economy and to green jobs.
8. **Women:** In combating climate change, the international community would be a lot more successful if policies, programmes and treaties consider the needs, rights and potentials of women. Investment in women and girls – particularly in education and health – boosts economic development, reduces poverty and benefits the environment.
9. **Technology:** Using science and technology to develop climate and climate impact models is necessary to give a better understanding of how climate change may affect farming, forestry and infrastructure at a local level and prepare for oncoming impacts and disasters. Technology transfer and solutions should be locally appropriate and incorporate stakeholder participation for their adoption and sustainability.
10. **Biodiversity:** Building resilience through ecosystem-based adaptation is central to combating climate change. The inter-linkages between climate change and biodiversity loss run both ways: biodiversity is threatened by a changing global environment, but proper management of biodiversity can reduce the impacts of climate change. A holistic and comprehensive approach is therefore required to address these issues.
11. **Security:** Climate stressors and concomitant ecosystem degradation are a growing threat to global peace through an increase in pressure on food and water availability. An integrated ecosystem management project enhancing the resilience of local communities to climate change could contribute to preventing conflict over scarce natural resources at local and regional level.
12. **Disasters:** Efforts to reduce vulnerability to natural hazards, especially addressing ecosystem degradation as an underlying driver of disaster risk, should be made an immediate priority. Regional and national platforms building on already existing institutions, tools and capacities for Disaster Risk Reduction would support knowledge sharing, good practices, capacity building and technology support.
13. **Migration:** There is a pressing need for more data and field-based studies on patterns of human migration induced by environmental change. The migration and displacement implications of climate change and ecosystem degradation need to be systematically addressed in adaptation policies and programmes, in order to prevent and reduce forced migration or displacement, address it coherently when it occurs and demonstrate the potential benefits of planned migration as an adaptation response.