

Speech by His Excellency Mohamed Nasheed, at the Alliance of the Small Island States (AOSIS) Climate Change Summit

Mr. Chairman; Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is such a pleasure to be here today especially representing a number of small island states in such an important issue for all of us. I am told that I have five minutes to speak. I will try my best to keep at that time.

We used to think that it was a fixation of European countries to talk about the weather, but now look what has happened – this is now a serious issue. We cannot downgrade climate change and weather to small talk anymore. This is far more serious and we have to be focused on this issue.

The science is sorted. It is certain that climate is changing and we are certain that the sea levels are rising. There are climatic aberrations.

1.5 Degrees and anything above that would mean small island nations, especially low lying nations, would be wiped off the map. Climate change, therefore, becomes not just an environment issue. It is very much linked with many other human rights issues, health issues, and far more importantly security issues.

All of us here, small states, are the new front line states in this new threat to humanity. If we cannot find ways and means of adapting ourselves or mitigating against temperature rises above 1.5 Degree Celsius, we will have to face a lot of consequences arising from that. I understand that this whole argument and the whole debate has gone down to a number of very confusing numbers and acronyms. But at the end of the day we are talking about mass murder.

We had done nothing that has increased the temperature of the world. We didn't do this, but we now have to face the first brunt of it. Therefore, it is so important for us all gathered here today to have a singular voice when we go to Copenhagen and other meetings to do with this environment issue.

I understand that we have been able to have some discussions for a very long time and we have a resolution upon which, I hope that all member states can agree upon, and we can speak in one single voice on this.

To avert the disasters that we are going to face, we need to be able to come out with a solution or come out with an agreement in Copenhagen. Now, that is becoming very very difficult, especially when a number of countries feel that reducing emission would be reducing or decelerating their development activities. We feel that we may be able to find other ways and means of narrating the story and more imaginative ways of putting the message across.

Reduction in emission doesn't have to reduce jobs or it doesn't necessarily mean that development has to be curtailed or reduced or stopped.

We are in a sense, talking about another industrial revolution – more green technology and a greater usage of renewable energy. If we are able to come out with solutions where countries can have more renewable energy, countries can invest in more greener technologies – this may not necessarily mean that our development efforts or our employment levels need to come down. In our minds, climate change and renewable energy or transfer of technology stands at the very centre of this whole conversation on climate change issues – adaptations issues as much as mitigation issues.

In terms of the kind of agreements that the Kyoto Protocol and the Copenhagen efforts are trying to map out – we feel that this whole exercise revolves around an argument where we are asking nations to stop or prohibiting nations from doing things. In a sense, the Kyoto Protocol is a list of things that you should not do. It is probably possible for us to come out with another list – a list of things that we can do and we should do instead of trying to outline a list of things that we shouldn't do. When we try and come out with a list of things that we shouldn't do, it is very difficult for countries to agree upon these lists. But we believe that it is possible to come out with a list of things that you should do, countries can be asked to produce more renewable energy instead of asking countries to reduce their carbon emission. We can then be asking countries to invest more in greener technologies and start production of more renewable energy, still coming out with the same mathematics and figures, and we can still be fixed at below 1.5 degrees rise in temperature and we can still be fixed at 350 parts per million. But this can be achieved, we believe, through more investments in greener technologies.

We also feel that in this whole argument of climate change, even if countries are unable to come out with an agreement, we can request countries for us to be given an additional arrangement where small nations, more vulnerable nations are able to have adaptation measures that would fit to our own needs. We didn't do any of these things but we are now having to face the difficulties and the disadvantages arising from that. So we do hope that when we do go to Copenhagen that we can come out with an arrangement where countries can be asked to have a special arrangement for vulnerable countries such as ourselves.

I feel that one more point has to be touched upon and that is on the issue of adaptation. Adaptation is very expensive. There was in the film that the seawall around our capital island Male' is 63 million, add 200 more islands, and it is very expensive. We need to have adaptation funds for these purposes and we need to be able to call for these funds so that we can adapt ourselves for the very dire eventualities of climate change.

Again I thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and everyone gathered here.

Thank you.

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