



Climate Vulnerable Leaders' Event "Midnight Survival Deadline for the Climate"

Statement

by

H. E. Sahle-Work Zewde

Honorable President of Ethiopia

7 October 2020

Madam chair person

Excellencies:

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is indeed a great pleasure to join you today in this crucial and urgent **virtual Climate Vulnerable Forum Leaders' Event**. Let me take this opportunity to congratulate Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for assuming the presidency of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) for the second time. Ethiopia, as a member of the Forum Troika, would like to recognize the leadership of your country, particularly at this time when the world is being confronted by unprecedented challenges due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is obvious that the CVF members have been experiencing the adverse impacts of climate change in various forms, ranging from flooding, as it is the case currently in my and severe droughts to devastating storms, all creating irreversible loss and damage. As the matter of fact, we bear the brunt of climate change, as we have very limited capacities to respond to those challenges. This is compounded by the fact that our economic activities are highly dependent on climate-sensitive sectors, including agriculture and eco-tourism.

To make matters worse, the outbreak of the COVID19 pandemic has put our most vulnerable CVF countries and its peoples under the severe social and economic pressures, as we have weak national health systems and rely heavily on subsistence economies. In doing so, the pandemic has not only exacerbated the existing challenges we have been bearing as a result of climate change and other peculiar developmental challenges such as chronic poverty, conflicts, and instability but also threatened to reverse significant economic and developmental gains we have recorded over the past few years.

In light of this fact, the recovery mechanisms from the shocks of COVID-19 must be aligned with the Paris Agreement of climate change and other Sustainable Development Goals. Parties should leverage the existing opportunities to ensure that the recovery mechanism follows a green and resilient path. In this regard, the submission of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by parties to the Paris Agreement before the end of December 2020 can be considered as a critical moment for raising ambition as well as ensuring a green recovery from COVID.

Excellence:

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Time is not in our side! Countries need to ambitiously respond to the “**Survival Deadline**” for the humankind, which is December 2020. It marks a crucial deadline for responding to the gravity of the situations faced by more than 1 billion most vulnerable people living on the frontline of a worsening climate crisis in CVF countries. It also epitomizes our only chance to keep the 1.5 degrees Celsius goal of the Paris Agreement within reach.

As a member of the CVF Troika, I would like to call upon all parties to the Paris Agreement to submit their revised or updated NDC before the “Survival Deadline”, if late by midnight of 31st December 2020. Parties should also harness this opportunity to strengthen the adaptation components in their to-be-updated NDCs. Moreover, as the pandemic is exacerbating the already precarious situations in most vulnerable countries, the developed countries must enhance their climate finance and technology transfer supports.

At this juncture, I would like to underscore the importance of pursuing bold climate actions both at national and global levels, alongside the ongoing concerted global efforts to mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Addressing the effects of the pandemic should not be a reason for not submitting ambitious NDCs. Both challenges, climate change and COVID 19, could be addressed in a green recovery way. Besides, delayed response is going to be expensive and irreversible.

My country has been at the forefront of the fight against climate change. Globally, we have been leaders in the international climate diplomacy arenas, as clearly demonstrated during our leaderships at the Meeting of the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC), the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), and the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF).

At the national level, Ethiopia has taken an exemplary leadership role by launching its Climate Resilient Green Economy (CRGE) Strategy in 2011 prior to the Paris Call. This strategy is a blueprint for pursuing its ambitious aspiration to build a carbon-neutral and resilient economy. What has been done over the past 9 years reveals that Ethiopia has achieved remarkable outcomes in its endeavor to build a green and resilient economy through putting in place appropriate national and sectoral policy frameworks and institutional set-ups to undertake practical actions at the grassroots levels. The process of its implementation has moved from a project-based approach to being fully mainstreamed into the National Development Plan with the government allocating a significant amount of national resources for both climate mitigation and adaptation interventions. It is among the six pillars of our Ten-Years Perspective plan, which runs from 2020 to 2030.

Besides, we have embarked on implementing our various national climate action plans in a COVID response way. In the just-concluded Ethiopian rainy season, we have managed to plant more than 5 billion tree seedlings under the national flagship program, called the **Green Legacy Initiative**. Designed by the overarching goal to pursue sustainable development by reducing poverty, conserving biodiversity, and promoting climate change adaptation and build the resilience of the community, the initiative has a target of planting 20 billion tree seedlings until 2022. Next year, the green legacy is planned to expand to neighboring countries.

Currently, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19, we are in the process of further enhance our first Nationally Determined Contribution, which was submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2015. Alongside this, we are pursuing the endeavor of preparing the 2050 Long-Term Low Carbon Development Strategy in accordance with the Paris Agreement.

As I conclude, I would like to reiterate the unwavering commitment of my country in the global fight against climate change, among others, by submitting its enhanced Nationally Determined Contribution (NDCs). Let me take this opportunity to, once again, call upon all parties to the Paris Agreement to submit their most ambitious NDCs before December 2020 so that we do not miss a small window of opportunity we have to limit the global temperature rise below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

I thank you!