

1 May 2007



Secretary-General

SG/A/1061
ENV/DEV/929

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

SECRETARY-GENERAL APPOINTS THREE NEW SPECIAL ENVOYS ON CLIMATE CHANGE

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today announced the appointment of three Special Envoys on Climate Change.

The Special Envoys are Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Prime Minister of Norway and former Chair of the World Commission of Environment and Development; Han Seung-soo, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea and former President of the fifty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly; and Ricardo Lagos Escobar, former President of Chile.

The Secretary-General has repeatedly stated that climate change is a major global challenge, and he intends to take a leadership role in helping the international community address the problem.

The reports issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) earlier this year show clearly that the warming of the earth's climate system is unequivocal and attributable to human activities. Climate change is already having significant impacts in certain regions -- particularly in developing countries -- and on most ecosystems. Economic assessments indicate that the cost of inaction will exceed the cost of taking early action, probably by several orders of magnitude. More concerted multilateral action is essential to addressing this pressing problem.

Many initiatives are being launched and commitments undertaken by Member States, groups of States, civil society and the private sector in this respect. Very commendable as they are, these actions can only complement and not substitute for the comprehensive international response that is needed. The United Nations, its Framework Convention on Climate Change and its other competent bodies offer the institutional framework within which a global solution to this global problem can be reached.

At first, the Special Envoys will solicit the views of a representative group of Heads of State and Government, including from those countries who are key actors in the climate change negotiations. The work of the Special Envoys will assist the Secretary-General in his consultations with Governments and other key stakeholders on how he might facilitate progress in the multilateral climate change negotiations within the United Nations.

The Secretary-General looks forward to working with these three highly respected international figures on a matter that is of highest importance to the future of the planet.

In 1981, Gro Harlem Brundtland was appointed Prime Minister of Norway for the first time. She was the youngest person, at age 41, and the first woman ever to hold that office in Norway. With two other terms as Prime Minister, from 1986 to 1989 and again from 1990 to 1996, Dr. Brundtland led Norway's Government for more than 10 years.

Throughout her political career, Dr. Brundtland has developed a growing concern for issues of global significance. In 1983, the then United Nations Secretary-General, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, invited her to establish and chair the World Commission on Environment and Development. The Commission, which is best known for developing the broad political concept of sustainable development, published its report *Our Common Future* in April 1987. The Commission's recommendations led to the Earth Summit -- the United Nations Conference on Environment and

2389 004

Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992.

In May 1998, she was elected Director-General of the World Health Organization. She held that position until 2003.

A medical doctor and holder of a master's degree in public health, Dr. Brundtland spent 10 years as a physician and scientist in the Norwegian public health system. During the 1970s, she acquired international recognition in environmental circles and a political reputation at home.

Born on 20 April 1939, Ms. Brundtland is married to Arne Olav Brundtland.

Han Seung-soo was President of the fifty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly (2001-2002) when he received the Nobel Peace Prize for 2001 on behalf of the Organization. He has had an illustrious career in academic and public life in his home country, the Republic of Korea, where he served as Minister for Foreign Affairs, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Minister for Trade and Industry, Chief of Staff to the President and Korean Ambassador to the United States. He was a member of the Korean National Assembly during 1988-2004.

Before he entered politics in 1988, he had a distinguished academic career. Educated at Yonsei and Seoul National universities, he obtained his Doctor of Philosophy in economics from the University of York, United Kingdom, in 1968, and taught economics and did research at York and Cambridge before he returned home to become professor of economics at Seoul National University.

He is currently President of the Korea Water Forum. The Korea Water Forum is an active member of the Asia Pacific Water Forum, a network of concerned organizations who work towards sustainable water management in Asia.

Mr. Han was born in Chuncheon, Gangwon province on 28 December 1936. He is married to Hong Soja and has two children.

Ricardo Lagos Escobar served as Chile's President from January 2000 until March 2006.

After stepping down from the presidency, Mr. Lagos established the Fundación Democracia y Desarrollo (Foundation for Democracy and Development), of which he is President. The organization is dedicated to creating sustainable economic growth and development.

In April 2006, he formally took up his post as President of the Club de Madrid, which he led to increase its involvement in environmental issues.

Mr. Lagos studied law at the Universidad de Chile and obtained a Doctor of Philosophy in economics from Duke University (United States). During his academic career, he was General Secretary to Universidad de Chile (1969-1971) and General Secretary to the Latin-American Faculty of Social Science (FLACSO) based in Buenos Aires (1973-1974). In 1974, he moved to the United States to work as visiting professor at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

During the 1980s, Mr. Lagos played a leading role in the democracy recovery process in Chile, leading the opposition coalition Democratic Alliance and the Independent Committee for Free Elections. He was the founder and first President of the Party for Democracy and served as Minister for Education (1990-1993) and Minister for Civil Works (1994-1998).

He was born on 2 March 1938. He and his wife, Luisa Durán, have five children and six grandchildren.

* * * * *

For information media • not an official record