

Address by Mr Jan Dusík
First Deputy Minister of Environment of the Czech Republic
World Climate Conference 3, Geneva, 3-4 September 2009

Mr Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We gathered here to discuss tools for identifying threats posed to us and to next generations by climate change. The 4th Assessment report of the IPCC confirms that all continents and oceans are already being affected by climate change. Scientists also indicate that least developed countries and small island developing states would remain the most vulnerable to the climate change impacts.

A recent scientific report tells us that the average global oceans water temperature in July 2009 was the highest in the last 130 years. According to the U.S. National Climatic Data Center, the average surface water temperature worldwide was 17 °C, 0.6 °C higher than the 20th-century average, and exceeding the former highest temperature record from 1998. Such warming obviously negatively impacts the ocean biodiversity, for instance the coral reefs.

Here in Europe, some effects of climate change have already been observed: the retreat of Alpine glaciers, the increased occurrence of extreme meteorological events and the consequent health implications, a prolonged vegetation period, changes in the diversity and abundance of species.

The biodiversity in the Czech Republic, for instance, is currently affected by almost 2000 invasive species. In a ranking of EU countries affected by non-native invasive species the Czech Republic has been placed fourth behind France, Great Britain and Belgium. Although many of these species can significantly damage crops and severely impact biodiversity, not much has been done so far to counter this situation. At the moment, European countries are spending around 12 billion euros a year trying to contain the invasion but this figure is only a fraction of the sums that need to be spent to efficiently address the problem.

There are two different but interlinked ways to address climate change: to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (mitigation) and to adapt to the changing conditions. With regard to mitigation, the EU adopted its Climate and Energy Package in December 2008, which represents the EU's contribution to keeping the increase of average global temperature below the 2°C limit. Adaptation appears more complex due to varying impacts on individual countries and regions, which require specific approaches. However a phased approach to the development of a comprehensive adaptation framework was agreed by the EU Environment Ministers in June 2009 as an important outcome of the Czech EU Presidency.

From the perspective of the UNFCCC negotiations, we find ourselves in the crucial year 2009 when a broad consensus on the new global climate agreement is to be reached in Copenhagen in a bit over 3 months. The adaptation measures and their financing are seen as fundamental elements of the future agreement, which should improve the climate resilience in all countries and regions, particularly in those most vulnerable.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I sincerely hope that the World Climate Conference 3 will be remembered for the establishment of the Global Framework for Climate Services, which should provide the necessary link of science-based climate predictions and information with climate-risk management and adaptation to climate variability and change worldwide.

The year 2009 is expected to become the most important one for caring for the Earth's climate. The world is waiting for the outcomes of international negotiations with great hope and expectations. Let us not disappoint it.

Thank you for your attention.