

PRESS RELEASE



United Nations Development Programme

The Human Development Report calls for deep cuts in carbon emissions.

Kigali, 25 January 2008: The global Human Development Report 2007/2008 was launched yesterday in Kigali, urging countries in the world to cut significantly carbon emissions. Entitled “Fighting climate change: Human solidarity in a divided world”, the report provides a stark account of the threat posed by climate change to human development.

The report argues that the world is drifting towards a “tipping point” that could lock the world’s poorest countries and their poorest citizens in a downward spiral, leaving hundreds of millions facing malnutrition, water scarcity, ecological threats, and a loss of livelihoods.

“Failure to respond to that challenge will stall and then reverse our concerted national and global efforts to eradicate poverty”, said Anthony Ohemeng-Boamah, UNDP Rwanda Country Director. He added that the implications of climate change take many forms but for Africa it could have serious negative impact on agricultural productivity – the one occupation which employs many of our citizens and supplies the most of our export earnings.

According to the Secretary General in the Ministry of Land, Environment, Water and Mines, Mr. Emmanuel Nsanzumuganwa who officially launched the report, the threat posed on humanity by climate change is global, multidimensional, not always visible, often unpredictable and goes beyond national boundaries.

The current situation of global warming is a real threat and a challenge to human development with particular impact to the poorest countries. “The earth’s climate warming today already produces its negative effects and we have no other choice but to mitigate climate change and adapt”, said Nsanzumuganwa.

Our success in addressing climate change challenges will depend on collective and sustained action. It will require all stakeholders looking for ways to work together and finding shared solutions that will benefit humanity. “It is only through collective awareness and action that we will tackle the threat of climate change and create the conditions where governments can commit and take tough decisions to switch to a cleaner, low carbon future”, said Moustapha Soumaré, UN Resident Coordinator. “The challenges ahead are daunting; but we can make a difference”, he said.

Among the threats identified by the report we have for example the breakdown of agricultural systems as a result of increased exposure to drought, rising temperatures, and more erratic rainfall, leaving up to 600 million more people facing malnutrition. In fact, semi-arid areas of sub-Saharan Africa with some of the highest concentrations of poverty in the world face the danger of potential productivity losses of 25% by 2060. The report also warns of an additional 1.8 billion people facing water stress by 2080, with large areas of South Asia and northern China facing a grave ecological crisis as a result of glacial retreat and changed rainfall patterns. It further predicts displacement through flooding and tropical storm activity of up to 332 million people in coastal and low-lying areas. The Report goes further warning of emerging health risks,

with an additional population of up to 400 million people facing the risk of malaria and other diseases.

The authors of the Human Development Report call on governments to set a collective target for avoiding dangerous climate change. They advocate a threshold of 2°C (3.6°F) above pre-industrial levels (the current level is 0.7°C, 1.3°F). They in particular point out that rich countries carry overwhelming historic responsibility for the problem, have far deeper carbon footprints, and have the financial and technological capabilities to act. The northern governments have therefore to initiate the deepest and earliest cuts.

Rwanda has experienced droughts and floods in the recent years, leaving hundred of families displaced and food insecure especially in the eastern and western provinces. It is expected that the report will stimulate debates around the subject and that positive actions will be taken by all stakeholders to stop global warming and ensure human development for all.

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About the Report:

The Human Development Report continues to frame debates on some of the most pressing challenges facing humanity. It is an independent report commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Human development refers to the expansion of choices and capabilities facing people to live the lives they choose. The strength of the human development approach is its ability to place people in the centre of analysis, and to move beyond focusing only on income or economic growth. For more information, please visit <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2007-2008>

About the UNDP:

UNDP is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. We are on the ground in 166 countries, working with them on their own solutions to global and national development challenges as they develop local capacity, they draw on the people of UNDP and our wide range of partners. For more information, please visit <http://www.undp.org.rw>.

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