

Statement by Iceland

Mr. Guðmundur Ingi Guðbrandsson, Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources

President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the Central Highland of Iceland – in the middle of nowhere, some would say – two glacial tongues form a beautiful heart-shaped mountain. When first seeing this twenty years ago as a biology student, I instantly fell in love. Now, with the melting of the glaciers the form of the mountain has changed. The heart is fading away.

We meet here amid dire warnings from wise people that we are facing an existential threat to civilization. The new IPCC-report has given us a sobering view of just how damaging climate change can be.

I want to thank the IPCC for its excellent report and for helping us to concentrate our minds. This has given us yet another wake-up call. I ask: How many more will we need? Iceland welcomes the report and believes it is a vital guiding light for the task ahead.

Here at the COP we think globally, but we must act locally. The Icelandic government has recently announced a new climate action plan. The centerpiece of it, is energy transition. In Iceland, we have already achieved a complete transition to renewable energy in electricity production and heating. And, we may ask: Was it complicated? Yes. Did it pay? Oh, yes. It is hard to think of other investments that have brought more benefits. And now we are launching our third renewable energy revolution – the one of transport.

The other main pillar of our action plan is greatly increased carbon sequestration – simultaneously combatting desertification, the fight for biodiversity and climate change.

Iceland will honour its Paris pledges for 2030, but we must also look further ahead. Iceland's long-term objective is to reach carbon neutrality by 2040. It is an ambitious goal but essential. We need a carbon-neutral Planet Earth in the second half of this century. That means that some of us must get there sooner. Developed countries should set an example and be at the forefront of becoming carbon neutral.

Climate change is already here. Abnormal weather events are becoming the new normal. Still, a much bleaker future awaits us if we do not follow the guidance of science and the

Paris Agreement. The Arctic as we know it would disappear. We are dangerously close to triggering an irreversible melting of the Greenland ice sheet.

Ocean acidification is especially rapid in Arctic seas, including in Icelandic waters. The threat of carbon emissions to the marine environment is severe. Iceland applauds the initiative of Fiji and others to increase the role of the ocean here in our considerations in the climate process.

Are we, the nations gathered here in Katowice, ambitious enough for our planet and the good of future generations? No, we are not. We need to do better. Let us prepare for increasing our efforts and enhancing our goals, using the newest and best scientific guidance.

We need a Katowice success to realize the promise of Paris – a strong, comprehensive and transparent Rulebook.

Fighting climate change is also fighting for human rights. We must put heart, humanity and responsibility at the center of our joint efforts. We must change the way we think, act and consume.

The heart-shaped glacial mountain I saw at the turn of the century may soon be gone. But we have so much to save. We still have time. Together, we must put our heart in it.