



Conference on Climate Change and Official Statistics

Oslo, Norway, 14-16 April 2008

Opening remarks

Eric Swanson

The World Bank

Good morning. I would like to welcome all of you on behalf of the World Bank and my director, Shaida Badiee, and my colleague, Misha Belkindas, whom many of you know. I would also like to thank Statistics Norway for hosting this important meeting.

The World Bank is actively engaged in the global effort to address the issue of climate change, because climate change is a major development issue. Consider:

1. More than 1.6 billion people lack access to electricity in their homes and 2.3 billion rely on traditional biomass for heating and cooking. Meeting their needs while reducing the impact of greenhouse gas emissions is both a challenge and an opportunity for sustainable development.
2. During the 1990s, 200 million people in developing countries were affected by climate-related disasters. During the same time, only 1 million people in high-income countries were affected. And many hundreds of millions more are at risk of rising sea levels, increasing surface temperature, water shortages, and climate variability.
3. Three of the top 5 emitters of CO₂ are low- (India) or middle- (China, Russia) income countries. The two largest high-income emitters are the United States (first) and Japan (fourth), although the EU economies, taken together, would be third.

4. These estimates do not include the additional 20 percent of GHG emissions resulting from deforestation, other land use change, and agricultural activities.

The World Bank is developing a Strategic Framework for Climate Change and Development, which will be presented to its Board of Executive Directors next September and discussed at its Annual Meetings in October 2008. The approach advocated by the Bank combines mitigation and adaptation. It is multisectoral and it recognizes that the appropriate strategy depends upon the situation of each country.

In the near term the World Bank is working with other multilateral development banks and bilateral donors to establish two new climate investment funds (CIF) to mobilize additional resources for the development of new climate technologies and for building climate resilience in developing countries. (In fact, these discussions are going on in Washington while we are meeting here.)

But much greater resources will be needed to implement and sustain the long term effort to halt climate change. The UNFCCC estimates that annual investments of 100 billion dollars a year in developing countries are needed to support mitigation and an additional 28 to 67 billion dollars are needed for adaptation efforts.

A few years ago, I participated in an exercise to estimate the cost of reaching the Millennium Development Goals in developing countries. Our estimate was a little over 50 billion dollars a year through 2015. Others have placed the cost of reaching the MDGs at around 100 billion dollars. Those amounts have still not been forthcoming from donors, and the much of the investment in climate change must come on top of that.

These are large sums of money, even if we recognize that they are small in comparison to the size of the problem. Neither the MDBs, nor bilateral donors, nor private investors will be willing to provide those amounts unless there is a reliable, reportable, and verifiable results framework in place, which specifies the time horizon, and measurable milestones. And for that we need better statistics, which brings up to the point of this conference. We urgently need to improve our knowledge base and our data base, so that we can tackle these huge issues with confidence. Official statistics have a large role to play.

Therefore, along with research on the causes and effects of climate change and investments for mitigation and adaptation, we will need investments in statistical systems to support data collection, analysis, and dissemination of statistics. I hope that at the end of these three days we will have a clear view of the steps ahead.