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**SMALL STATES
CONFERENCE ON
SEA LEVEL RISE
MALE, 14 - 18 NOVEMBER 1989**

CYPRUS

COUNTRY STATEMENT

Delivered by

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**UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE
CENTRE FOR TROPICAL COASTAL
MANAGEMENT STUDIES**

16. November 1989

Mr. Chairman
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates, and Observers,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am honoured and highly pleased that I have the opportunity to be among this distinguished group of policy-makers and scientists, to take part in a Conference the timing of which could not be more optimal. In this respect, I would like to convey my sincere congratulations and thanks to the President of the Republic of Maldives, Mr. Gayoom for his leadership to convene this Conference. I would also like to congratulate the organisers of the conference, for the excellent arrangements and hospitality extended to all of us.

We came here almost from every region of the world, because we share a common concern: that we are witnessing changes in our environment at levels and rates never before experienced by mankind.

Global environmental problems and in particular global warming, climate change and sea level rise have rapidly emerged as issues of great concern.

The scenarios of the main anticipated changes is apocalyptic and includes among others:

- The very probable increase in global mean surface temperature,
- Major shifts in the global patterns of wind,
- Changes in precipitation pattern and ocean currents,
- Increased incidents of extreme weather event and
- A possible rise in global mean sea level.

These changes pose enormous ecological, agricultural and hydrological threats, as well as threats to human health and the society.

Particularly menacing is the rise of sea level which may be caused, mainly, by the thermal expansion of the oceans. The likelihood of the polar Ice Sheet melting, may prove catastrophic, while coastal erosion and land subsidence may, in certain parts of the world, aggravate the problem.

Looking more closely at a possible rise in sea level, some of the implications may accrue are the following:

- Net losses of wetlands, lagoons, coral reefs, mangrove forests and estuaries with their effects on coastal fisheries, aquaculture and wildlife.

- Flooding of fertile and frequent densely populated delta areas, with its associated effects on aquifers, and loss of coastal farmlands, economic productivity and coastal infrastructure, including tourism establishments.

- The already serious problem of environmental refugees would also be aggravated.

The problem is, therefore, of particular concern to vulnerable small, low level states, due to the role coastal areas play in their socio-economic development.

Mr. Chairman,

A serious problem associated with the sea level rise is the negative effect it may cause to coastal aquifers from sea water intrusion.

In Cyprus, we are well aware of such a problem as sea water intrusion, induced by over-pumping of coastal aquifers is extending in areas as far as 6km inland. The most important potato producing area of the country, dependent on irrigation from one such aquifer, was seriously threatened with destruction. Only the expensive transfer of water from another region ameliorated the negative effects.

The Mediterranean countries are, particularly concerned and, within the context of the UNEP Regional Seas Programme, established their own Task Team to study the problem. The anticipated consequences are similar to the ones expected in other regions. The problem of global warming, climate change and sea level rise is universal, its consequences widely dispersed and the response, therefore, should involve action at all levels.

Naturally, there are uncertainties that need to be resolved, particularly on the magnitude and regional distribution of the effects and risks. Despite the uncertainties, however, the enormous implications of these phenomena make our choices obvious and policy decisions a very urgent need.

This issue has been discussed in a number of conferences over the last two years. It cannot be denied that they represent appropriate fora for sensitising decision-makers and that they

contribute to the dissemination of knowledge. It cannot be concealed, however, that we have not yet reached the desired stage of agreement.

What is, primarily, required, is political will and commitment to global and regional co-operation in all areas. The most obvious and cost effective area where we should concentrate our efforts is the mitigation of greenhouse gases emission by reducing their generation. Cutbacks in fuel consumption are imperative, and international agreements need to be vigorously pursued. In this area much more is required, as concepts such as a pact for a framework convention on climate change, currently being discussed, and for a fund to assist developing countries in their fight, are still ahead of us.

In the utilities sector, the development of low carbon dioxide producing technologies is a must. For mobile sources we need more fuel efficient vehicles. Halting the rate of forest conservation and forest reestablishment can also be utilised as a tool in climate control. In this sense, the Tropical Forestry Action Plan needs to be given the support it deserves. With regard to the other greenhouse gases, support to the Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol on chlorofluorocarbons is imperative. Also, more efficient ways need to be found to reduce nitrous oxide and methane emissions.

However, the message is for energy efficiency, particularly in energy end-use, production and transport. Energy-efficiency has been characterised as "the cutting edge" of any policy aimed at mitigating global warming. There are enormous opportunities for increased energy efficiency, such as better consumer behaviour, efficiency standards and energy-efficient appliances.

Other areas, where international co-operation could concentrate, are the development of alternative energy generations systems, waste minimizations and recycling, and process control technologies. The use of lower carbon fossil fuels, development of sources of renewable energy as well as clean coal combustion technologies, are also areas where research should concentrate.

We also need to rally commitment into a research programme in scientific assessment and impact analysis. More adequate worldwide monitoring networks, such as an improved tide gauge network, are also needed. It is my hope that the support of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the World Climate Conference to be convened next year, will provide the grounds for properly agreed upon action.

Although the aforesaid programme of action needs concerted efforts and the response of every country, the industrially developed countries have a particular responsibility in reducing

trace gas emissions, and can greatly contribute in the research and sustainable development efforts. The results of such research and access to technology and resources need to be shared with developing countries.

Cyprus, on its part, pursues a number of measures directly aimed at combating the problem.

A study of methods for reducing pollution from power plants was undertaken, and recently the Council of Ministers has decided for signing the Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol. The Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution is, also, under consideration for signing.

The establishment of a policy regarding a goal for carbon dioxide reduction is also being considered. Energy policy is crucial for Cyprus, as the country is almost totally dependent on imported fuel.

The main measures pursued refer to the preparation of a long-term energy master plan and energy audits. Energy conservation in electricity production, distribution and end-use, in petroleum refining, and energy conservation campaigns directed to alter user behavior, are also undertaken. Cyprus is, also, participating in the Regional Projects of UNIDO, UNDP, World Bank

and ECE for Industrial Energy Conservation, Energy Planning and Energy Building Design.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite the sectoral measures, that should be applied, we need to stress that their quick implementation is hampered by a number of underlying causes, which maintain underdevelopment and make the aforesaid problem more acute. Such causes among others are: the lack of financial resources associated with huge budget deficits, the staggering debt burden of many developing countries; the unequal world trade situation; the shrinking foreign aid and technical assistance; and the international tensions that maintain military expenditures at high levels, despite the progress made in the disarmament negotiations.

In Cyprus, we are particularly sensitive to this last issue. The military Turkish occupation, in 1974 of 37% of my country and the continued presence of Turkish troops in the occupied areas, created a multitude of problems. Among others, the loss of productive resources has imposed great strain on the urgent need for socio-economic development and environmental protection.

Apart from co-operating in the collective efforts it would also be desirable to proceed further in considering management measures under specific conditions.

Mr. Chairman,

In order to encounter successfully and find solutions to the problems we discussed, I would like to stress the need for two fundamental requirements. The first one refers to the need for strengthening at local and regional level our own institutional and professional capacities and our science and technology basis. In this respect, I welcome the proposals for co-operation, exchange of information and dissemination of knowledge, notions included in the Draft Conference Declaration.

The second requirement is the need to develop a "trans-national ethic" of mutualism at an international level. It should recognise the interdependency between economic sustainable development alleviation of poverty and protection of our environment.

Mr. Chairman,

The trends are obvious, and they are alarming. The greenhouse effect is real, despite the uncertainties. The risk at stake could prove disastrous and irreversible.

I believe, therefore, that the problem argues for immediate action, an act that should have been done yesterday and we cannot evade the necessity for far-reaching measures, particularly so as all of them make sense, by themselves.

The importance of our conference is underlined by (a) the great number of participating countries, represented by the relevant ministers, (b) the great number of observers mostly from developed countries, (c) the great number of an elite panel of experts in relevant fields and (d) the presence of representatives from international organisations. We need to work together to put an end to the war we have mounted against our environment.

In concluding my statement I would like to express our sincere hope that the Small States Conference of Sea Level Rise will not be the first and the last one, but all participating countries will do their best, in keeping the momentum created here in this lovely and hospitable country - The Republic of Maldives.

Let us work to rise up to the challenges of our age, for the sake of our children, and the future generations to come.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.