



NEWS RELEASE: 18 DECEMBER 2009

CALL FOR SA TO JOIN NATIONS IN ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE

Cape Town – South Africa needs to join the countries that have strengthened commitments and calls for renewed global action to address climate change, says Dr Prieur du Plessis, Honorary Consul of Slovenia.

Days before the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, the Foreign Ministers of Cape Verde, Costa Rica, Iceland, Singapore, Slovenia and the United Arab Emirates issued a joint statement expounding their position on climate change.

“The challenges posed by climate change and the high risks involved if the issue is not dealt with leave us with no other option but to act together, in the most efficient and synergised way,” the six foreign ministers said in their statement.

The foreign ministers warn that the “potential risks of unmitigated climate change are enormous.” Rising temperatures will cause major crop declines and water shortages. Rising sea levels will threaten some of the world's largest cities and may even cause loss of territory and give rise to border disputes. Entire ecosystems could collapse, and many species would face extinction. Storms, droughts, forest fires and floods will cause irreversible environmental degradation and desertification, affecting the food security of millions and causing massive migration flows.

They agree that “a successful agreement in Copenhagen, with deep cuts in global emissions that limit global warming to 2°C, and taking into account the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, respective resources and national circumstances, is thus of paramount importance.”

“The fact that six foreign ministers from small countries in different regions have acted collectively in favour of the environment and sustainable development is an example for South Africa and all other nations to follow,” says Du Plessis.

“These nations’ policies include measures that address climate change and reflect the need for a concerted international effort in this endeavour. Each of these states acts as a point of green reference within its region. All points are interconnected to establish an

efficient global network as they strive for political balance, particularly regarding energy and water.”

The six countries have already made significant progress in promoting clean energy approaches, renewable energy and energy efficiency, says Du Plessis. They believe “the synergetic effect of so many different approaches and visions will be enormous.”

Cape Verde is committed to weather-dependent wind power and solar energy. Costa Rica's ‘Peace with Nature’ initiative strives for carbon neutrality through the sustainable use of natural resources. Iceland has achieved an energy transformation with the successful use of renewable resources. Despite constraints in using alternative energy sources, Singapore has taken various measures, such as energy efficiency improvement and other policy measures, to reduce emissions. Slovenia will further develop its sustainable forest management and the qualitative use of biomass. Through the multi-faceted approach of the Masdar Initiative, The UAE is committed to clean energy solutions, energy efficiency, carbon emissions reduction and human capacity building in the field of renewable energy clean technologies.

As climate change will seriously affect existing water resources, water will become a strategic asset of the future. The lack of water to meet daily needs is already a reality for one in three people around the world. According to the foreign ministers, “the efficiency of water usage can be increased through technological improvements, changes in human behaviour and better water management.”

The six nations face different challenges in providing water security, says Du Plessis. Cape Verde is entirely dependent on rainfall and desalination. Costa Rica has abundant water resources and uses hydroelectric power for over 70% of its electricity production. Iceland meets 80% of its energy needs, generating almost 100% of its electricity with clean energy. It is among the world leaders in harnessing geothermal resources for thermal and electricity production. Singapore has leveraged on membrane technology to add high-grade reclaimed water and desalinated water to its inventory of water supply. The UAE focuses its efforts on reducing water consumption and improving the efficiency of water supply. With its diverse water resources, Slovenia has developed an efficient water management system.

“As the six countries are willing to transfer knowledge, expertise and best practices to address the issue of water as one of the main global challenges,” says Du Plessis, “South Africa needs to embrace and apply these resources. However, strong commitment at governmental level is required.”

Overall, South Africa needs to join the nations that are willing to rethink and reinvent themselves, to channel imagination, creativity, ingenuity and entrepreneurship into

creating a sustainable world, says Du Plessis. Decisions taken by individuals and groups at a local and global level should also fully take into account scientific findings, be ambitious and be based on the principles of interconnectivity and synergy.

In this way, in the words of the foreign ministers, coping with climate change could be one of the bases for creating a more cooperative world, says Du Plessis. In addition to growing interdependence between nations, climate change should blur the distinction between foreign and domestic policy.

END

Joint statement issued by:

Jose Brito, *Minister of Foreign Affairs, Co-operation and Communities, Cape Verde*

Bruno Stagno Ugarte, *Minister of Foreign Affairs and Religion, Costa Rica*

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About Slovenia

Formerly part of Yugoslavia, Slovenia has been a democratic parliamentary republic since 1991. It was the first of the 'new entrants' to join the European Union (2004) as well as the European Monetary Union (2007). The so-called "jewel of Europe" is a compact country, about half the size of Switzerland, and is bordered by Austria, Italy, Hungary and Croatia. It is 20 273 km² in size and has a population just exceeding two million.

Slovenia has been dubbed many things, including 'Europe in miniature', 'the sunny side of the Alps', 'the green piece of Europe' and 'Central Europe's best-kept secret'. Although it is a small country, it is very diverse, with areas of outstanding natural beauty ranging from rugged Alpine mountains to tranquil lakes, fairytale forests, valleys with lush vineyards and even a stretch of beautiful coastline on the Adriatic.

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