

Statement State Secretary Wathelet

Distinguished scholars, stakeholders and climate negotiators, ladies and gentlemen,

I think I am not only speaking for myself, but also on behalf of my colleagues from the Nordic Council of Ministers, when I say that it is a real pleasure to welcome you here today in Stockholm to discuss the crucial issue of equity in the international climate negotiations.

Allow me to quickly look back on the year that passed since we organized the Swedish-Belgian Equity Workshop in Brussels last year.

In Doha, we adopted the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, and we achieved an agreed outcome pursuant to the Bali Action Plan. Parties stated explicitly that *efforts should be undertaken on the basis of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, and take into account the imperatives of equitable access to sustainable development*, and that the negotiations under the Durban Platform should be *guided by the principles of the Convention*.

During 2013, Parties continued exchanging views in a constructive atmosphere under the Durban Platform, under the able guidance of Mr. Mauskar of India and Mr. Dovland of Norway.

In their “Note on progress” on the state of the discussions under the ADP, which the incumbent co-chairs of the ADP handed over to the incoming co-chairs, they report that there is a broad understanding that equity should be one of the *key elements for constructing the 2015 agreement*, if it is to enable broad and deep participation, with contributions from all. Dear friends, *‘the elephant is in the room’*. Ignoring it will not make it go away. We need to face it, even if this sometimes means confronting our views with reality.

A month ago, the IPCC published the first part of its Fifth Assessment Report. It states clearly that the cumulative total of greenhouse gas emissions from human sources needs to be limited to an equivalent of 1000 gigatonnes of carbon if we want to have a likely chance of meeting the 2°C objective. We have already emitted about half this amount and based on current emission trajectories, the 1000 gigatonnes limit will be reached by around the middle of this century. Sharing out the remaining budget across parties with different levels of responsibilities and capabilities is at the heart of the equity debate.

However, the debate is not limited to abstract modeling of a faraway future. Last week, we all read in the newspapers that a family from the atoll state of Kiribati in the Pacific approached the New Zealand High Court, seeking recognition as the world’s first formal climate refugees, after the request was twice rejected by an immigrant tribunal. In their homeland, land and water resources have become contaminated by salt water and sewage, due to frequent flooding caused by sea level rise.

Indeed, impacts of climate change are affecting and will affect vulnerable individuals, communities and countries, who often have limited responsibility and capability, in a disproportionate manner. They are a major threat to the sustainable development, and even the survival of nations. We need to be aware that climate change will upset our very basic livelihoods by altering water supplies and food production, to mention but a few of many examples.

One of the questions that arises from this, is whether we are willing to address these issues upfront, seeking distributional justice through a fair sharing of efforts and impacts, or whether we would rather take our chances with corrective justice, as the one sought by the family from Kiribati.

Many parties, scholars and stakeholders have put forward proposals with a view to advancing the equity discussion. Some of them will be presented or referred to during this workshop. These proposals show that the stakes are high, and that views are still diverging. Achieving an agreement will be a major challenge. It is therefore of utmost importance that we talk to each other, to better understand the proposals and the underlying concerns.

That is where this workshop seeks to offer a modest contribution, by providing an informal space, where scholars, stakeholders and negotiators can bring proposals to the table, and have a frank exchange of views in order to build trust, enhance mutual understanding, and facilitate convergence.

Two years have gone by since Durban, two more to go until Paris. It is time to plan for the remainder of the journey. In Warsaw, parties will have to set out the milestones on the path to Paris. As far as equity is concerned, proposals on the table include, inter alia, an “equity review”, a “consultative period”, and an “assessment phase”. All of these proposals aim at ensuring that the design of the new agreement is founded on science and equity. I hope this workshop can be instrumental in finding some common ground and guiding the way forward to an agreement that is seen to be equitable by all.

Finally, may I recall that last year, at the Equity workshop in Brussels, I expressed the hope that that common initiative by Sweden and Belgium would be a precedent for further cooperation. This hope materialized in the workshop here in Stockholm today and tomorrow. Let me express my sincere gratitude to the co-organisers from the Nordic Council of Ministers, and restate that from our side, we are open to exploring further collaboration in the run-up to Paris.

I sincerely hope that this workshop will lead to a deeper understanding, and that it will add value to the on-going negotiations towards a global, equitable climate regime, capable of protecting humanity from dangerous climate change.

I wish you a very fruitful meeting.