STATEMENT of Mr. OSCAR RIVAS  
Minister of the Environment of PARAGUAY  
United Nations General Assembly, New York, 22 September 2009

Mr. President, excellencies, Heads of State, distinguished colleagues, ministers,  
ladies and gentlemen, leaders of our Planet:

Developing nations are facing a threat of catastrophic proportions today: climate  
change. The peoples of the south are today paying for the ever-increasing additional  
costs of the necessary actions to adapt to the adverse conditions posed by climate  
change and for the mitigation of its consequences. However, those States principally  
responsible of the direct causes of global warming, are not assuming their  
responsibility for the incremental social and environmental debt they are accumulating,  
owed to the most vulnerable peoples of the world, generating an unjust situation that  
need to be urgently reversed.

In Paraguay, the recurrent droughts we suffered during the last decade, required, over  
the last 3 years, spending of some additional US$70 million per year, which we are  
mostly absorbing on our own, communities and Government, though we appreciate the  
support received in solidarity from our friends, nations and organizations.

In the meantime, we are exposed more and more frequently to powerful storms, which  
cause grave damages to our crops and livelihoods of those most vulnerable. Food  
production and water supply are held at high risk.

In the whole of Paraguay, in fact, the succession of extreme events derived from severe  
alterations in the climatic patterns, generate a social and environmental emergency  
scenario, every time more frequent and prolonged.

We recognize that changes in the climate are the result of patterns of production,  
distribution and consumption, based on the exhaustive exploitation of nature's wealth.  
This unsustainable model considers nature and the commons such as water, air, land,  
forests, seeds, as mere resources available for sheer exploitation and privatization.

The struggle against climate change is not only a struggle for the survival of our Planet,  
it is also a struggle for socio-environmental justice at the global level.

The financial, social and environmental costs of the climatic emergencies we face,  
increase exponentially in direct proportion to the unmet commitments of developed  
countries. The latest scientific reports available do not only indicate that the expenses  
for adaptation will be much higher to what was earlier forecasted by the  
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) only two years ago. They also tell  
us that atmospheric warming has determined that on our Earth, high levels of insecurity  
are being reached.

By not accomplishing their reduction targets to avoid climate change, industrialized  
countries not only negate the mandate of the Convention, but also go counter basic  
principles of international law, such as the responsibility for not causing damages to the  
territories of other States. In consequence, a great and ever-growing socio-  
environmental debt has being created, owed by the developed to the developing
countries. Recognizing and honoring this debt, will permit the sustainability of development and well-being of present and future generations of our people.

This reality includes particularly Indigenous Peoples and traditional communities, who live in areas of high ecological value, such as forests. The defense, conservation and restoration of these areas is of interest to all humanity, for they shelter great and diverse human populations, culturally irreplaceable, and because those areas and those cultures that steward them, play an essential role in strategies to combat climate change globally. In this framework, the acknowledgement of the need to provide sufficient financial resources to enable the transfer of technologies, the fair exchange of knowledge and know-how, to reach sustainable development, is in order.

The historical responsibility which generated this environmental debt requires a great effort to decarbonize the energies that sustain economic growth and the lifestyles in developed countries. For this reason, there is no more time for timid attempts to transform those countries' energy sources. In turn, what is needed is to implement courageous measures that truly allow them to drastically curve their carbon emissions.

The financial resources necessary to implement real solutions, such as the restoration of native forests, the conversion towards clean energies, the prevision and reduction of climate risks, food security, among others, must come from a public fund, democratically and transparently managed by the Parties to the Convention themselves. Carbon markets alone will not be able to replace these resources, for they are principally not stable nor equitable, nor safe. The recent financial crisis has very clearly shown us that we can not exclusively trust markets to solve the greatest challenge facing humanity today.

As long as the mitigation commitments of developed countries are left unmet, the possibilities for well-being and, even survival, of billions of human beings will remain unmet and threatened. It is a shame for the international community that the number of people suffering hunger has surpassed the billion individuals. It is the first time in human history that this happens. We know that climate change, as well as the false solutions to it, has contributed to a great extent to this dramatic effect.

The countries of the south do not want to go to Copenhagen to exchange words empty of value and empty of courage, for the Earth shouting demands real solutions. These real solutions must be built on principles. Not to damage other States and other peoples is an inalienable principle of international law. Equity, solidarity and justice amongst peoples are also inalienable principles of the ethos we need to reinstate.

I thank you.