

STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH AND INDEPENDENT NGOS

COP 9 – MILAN, ITALY

Mr Chairman,

The Research and Independent NGOs group would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak to the plenary of Ninth Conference of the Parties.

Mr. Chairman, whether in the international negotiations or in domestic policy discussions, the issues of adaptation, mitigation and sustainable development are all too often cast as competing policy priorities. Our experience is demonstrating that instead we should pursue an approach which seeks to use adaptation and mitigation as complementary measures that should work to recognize the primacy of each nation's right to continue to develop.

First of all, what do we mean by a complementary relationship between mitigation and adaptation? Let me use a simple example as an illustration: the planting of trees in urban areas. They sequester carbon as they grow, they reduce urban heat stress in the summer and they reduce the need for air conditioning. This is but one simple example, and there are many others.

However, allow me in this brief time to get to the real issue at hand - the chasm that currently appears to exist between development and climate change. And it is by no means an issue only of concern for developing countries. Some developed country governments and constituencies see mitigation commitments as an infringement of their rights to economic development. Until we resolve this development-climate dilemma, prospects for Kyoto or some other means of effectively addressing climate change will remain tenuous. How can we break out of this box?

First of all, we must recognize that development policies can only be effective should they address economic growth, social equity and environmental security in an integrated manner. Hence, price reform, sustainable forestry and agricultural practices, energy sector restructuring – even if undertaken without any specific reference to climate change – can mitigate environmental risks while they enhance economic development and social equity. We need to look for more of those synergies.

The challenge for sustainable development in the context of climate change is the practical question of how to identify, choose and stay on a path that minimizes the local and global environmental costs of poverty relief and development for both developed and developing countries. We need to reframe the global climate change debate as deriving from and complementing development priorities. This will require global collaboration on climate change on multiple levels and from various perspectives.

Approaching climate change at multiple levels calls for responses that focus on vulnerabilities and opportunities. On the vulnerabilities side, an effective response could focus on mitigating ghg emissions, where there are issues related to urban air pollution. In other cases (such as flooding) an effective response would focus on developing adaptation strategies that would work to best protect locally affected populations. On the opportunities side, governments should be strongly urged to develop and implement policies that support the rapid and deep integration of climate friendly and climate safe technologies in their economic and development priorities.

But first and foremost, Mr. Chairman, real political will and leadership is required. And that is lacking. We can devise the most impressive scenarios we want, but without political will we will go nowhere. The RINGO constituency believes that opportunities will present themselves through broad and creative thinking. That requires, first, engaging a wider range of actors and decision makers, including economics ministries and development experts. Second, it means avoiding political rhetoric as well as attacks on the results of sound scientific research. Third, it means considering the consequences of a range of policies not only for ourselves, but also for our children's children.

Thank you Mr. Chariman.