



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



United Nations Environment Programme



**A Commitment**

**to ACT  
NOW**



**Broadcast Media &**

**CLIMATE  
CHANGE**



Published in 2009  
 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization  
 7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 PARIS 07 SP

Graphic design & layout : Anja Mortreux

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Printed in France

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# Broadcast Media and Climate Change:

## A Commitment to Act Now

**CLIMATE CHANGE IS UPON US.** There is an unequivocal scientific consensus that the challenges of climate change are real, but are populations capable of undertaking the necessary actions to limit its consequences?



*“Change will come about only if people understand the scientific realities of why we need to fight climate change. If you don’t get that message clearly, then obviously you are not going to see any change whatsoever.”*

**R. K. Pachauri, Chairman,  
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate  
Change (IPCC)**

**TELEVISION AND RADIO** are amongst the most accessible sources of information. Broadcast media have brought the reality of climate change impacts directly into our homes, helping to raise public attention to climate variability. International and regional broadcasting unions are committed to increasing the quality and quantity of programmes on climate change and building capacities of national broadcasters, especially in developing countries.



*“Broadcasters play a vital role by informing and educating the public about the realities of climate change and the costs of inaction. Armed with information, citizens are better equipped to push for meaningful and responsible follow-through from their elected representatives”.*

**Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General,  
United Nations (UN)**

# UNESCO organizes the first international conference on broadcast media and climate change

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and regional broadcasting unions, organized an International Conference on 'Broadcast Media and Climate Change: A Public Service Remit' on 4 and 5 September 2009 at its headquarters in Paris. This event brought together more than 250 representatives of national broadcasters from both developing and developed countries, scientific organizations, regional broadcasting associations and unions, and climate-related agencies. They explored current coverage of climate change issues in different regions of the world and the challenges being faced by broadcasters, in particular those from the developing countries.

*"Climate change will affect not only us but generations to come. It is therefore essential that we lay the groundwork for future generations to understand and effectively confront this challenge".*

**Koïchiro Matsuura,**  
**Director-General, UNESCO**



As a result of this conference, international and regional broadcasting unions as well as other stakeholders have decided to increase cooperation, with the support of the UN, and step up their efforts to give media exposure to climate change so as to help mitigate its impact and avert potential human suffering. This decision is part of the Paris Declaration on Broadcast Media and Climate adopted at the UNESCO Headquarters on the 5<sup>th</sup> of September 2009. A number of broadcasting organizations have already started launching follow-up actions.

*“Painting a dismal picture in its true colors, [broadcast networks] have brought attention to the growing dangers of climate change and the factors that have contributed to its global impact. In no small measure, this global awareness of the perils of climate change has positively influenced the debate”.*



**Hamadoun Touré, Secretary-General, International Telecommunication Union (ITU)**



UNESCO Headquarters • PARIS • Siège de l'Unesco

Media & Climate: RadioTélévision & CHANGEMENT CLIMATIQUE: UNE MISSION DE SERVICE PUBLIC

4-5 septembre 2009 CONFERENCE INTERNATIONALE

# Paris Declaration: A Commitment for an Increased Public Awareness of Climate Change

**We, the participants of the UNESCO International Conference on Broadcast Media & Climate Change (Paris, 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> September 2009),**

*Emphasizing* that an increased public understanding of the urgency of climate change is essential to mitigate its negative impacts and to avert human suffering,

*Underlining* that access to relevant information on climate change is vital to sustain a living planet and for the survival of human beings,

*Acknowledging* that there are significant social, economic and environmental benefits in taking action to combat the effects of climate change,

*Recognizing* that the information provided by broadcast media plays

a critical role in stimulating policy debate and in mobilizing knowledge to empower societies to make informed decisions on options for mitigation and adaptation,

*Agreeing* that dedicated collaboration among broadcast media to share and disseminate climate change information that incorporates both global and local perspectives would encourage individuals and policy-makers to undertake timely action,

*Welcoming* UNESCO's initiative to organize the first International Conference on Broadcast Media and Climate change,



**Invite the international community and relevant agencies and programmes of the United Nations, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to support all broadcasters, regional broadcasting unions and international broadcasting organizations in meeting the following objectives:**

- To strengthen regional and international collaboration of all broadcasting organizations and concerned professional organizations to optimize the quality and relevance of programming and reporting on climate change;
- To encourage the production and dissemination of relevant audiovisual content at a local level to give voice to marginalized populations affected by climate change;

- To collaborate in raising the skills of broadcast media professionals through training, the exchange of knowledge and best practices, and by facilitating access to relevant scientific information;
- To promote opportunities for media professionals to build information-sharing networks;

**And invite the broadcasting unions and other international associations of broadcasters:**

- To encourage their members to make quantifiable commitments to increase the availability of content on climate change through the exchange of audiovisual material and the broadcast of programme items at local, national and international levels,
- To request their members to dedicate the resources and broadcasting space needed to comprehensively report on the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference in December 2009 and on follow-up actions,
- To develop and promote broadcasting industry standards in environmental management and to urge their members to set quantifiable targets for a reduction in their own carbon footprint.



*"I encourage and echo the call for bridges to be built between public service broadcasting, community media and commercial broadcast media. This integration will increase the collective effort to bolster the involvement of those who are most vulnerable to climate change".*

**Abdul Waheed Khan, Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information, UNESCO**

# Broadcast Media and Climate Change: A public service remit

The International Conference on 'Broadcast Media and Climate Change: A Public Service Remit' was organized around the seven following sessions:

## 1. What Broadcasters Are Doing and What They Can Do

The role of broadcast media in educating audiences and setting the agenda in order to raise public awareness on climate change, stimulate the public debate and shape national policies, is fundamental. The aim of this session was to make a general assessment of the current levels of programming and reporting on climate change issues in different regions of the world, and existing perceptions and capacities.

*"Broadcasters look for inspiring stories but they can also inspire change among the population".*

**Satinder Bindra, Director,  
Division of Communications and Public Information,  
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**



## 2. Perspectives on Climate Change: What the Media Need to Know

What elements are required to make climate change understood by audiences? This session's purpose was to break down the main elements of climate change, outlining what journalists need to know regarding its origin, impacts and mitigation options.

*"There is a certain degree of uncertainty in the knowledge on climate change; this uncertainty does not imply that the knowledge is inaccurate or incorrect. But the media needs to understand the perspective from which people are speaking and to present climate change as a manageable problem".*

**Joyeeta Gupta, Professor of  
Climate Change Law & Policy, Vrije Universiteit**





### 3.

## Global Issues, Local Voices: The Social Dimension of Climate Change

Climate change poses challenges at many levels, enabling coverage on the subject from several different angles. This session examined the social impacts of climate change and the importance of raising public awareness of local adaptation practices.



*“Climate change has been considered mostly as an environmental and distant threat rather than a human issue. But over 300,000 lives are claimed each year because of climate change. Over 300 million people are seriously affected. And there are 26 million climate displaced people today, with one million new cases every year”.*

**Walter Fust, Chief Executive Officer,  
Global Humanitarian Forum Geneva, and Chairman of the UNESCO  
International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC)**



*“Community media are the frontline reporters on climate change. Community media have multiple roles to play: providing a platform for discussion and debate, facilitating the appropriation of knowledge and information, inter-local context and cultures, and facilitating influence and advocacy. They are enabling local communities to hold decisions-makers accountable and to call for action where it is needed”.*

**Steve Buckley, President, World Association of  
Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC)**

4.

## The Challenges of Reporting on Climate Change

This session consisted of several presentations that examined the challenges faced by broadcasters when reporting on climate change issues. Lessons and trends were discussed, focusing in particular on Least Developed Countries.

*“Some of our main challenges are to improve the ability of reporters to break down climate change information to the level of a layman and to focus our reports on the causes and possible solutions to the problem rather than only on the raw facts”.*

**Claudie Tsheya Iikela, General Manager,  
Namibian Broadcasting Corporation**



5.

## Raising Skills to Further Quality Programming: Know-How and Training Opportunities for Journalists

This panel discussed the options available to help media professionals in less developed regions to access information and learning resources, in order to guide them in reporting on climate change issues.

*“Some of the challenges of climate change reporting include having specialized journalists and making information resources more accessible. It is necessary to make climate change understandable”.*

**Patrick Luganda, Chairman, Network of Climate  
Journalists in the Greater Horn of Africa**



## 6. Making Climate Knowledge Accessible: Networks and Available Resources

Networking is a key tool to enhance the work of broadcasters. In this session, participants explained their experience in reporting on climate change and outlined possible modalities for sharing relevant contacts, knowledge, and rights-free content on climate change.



*“Weather broadcasters have a professional responsibility to keep up-to-date with climate science. We need to interact regularly with climate scientists to strengthen the communication of science, reach out to other communities - especially those of education and health -, and publicly support research that will help us to know more”.*

**Gerald Fleming, Head of Forecasting, Met Éireann, Ireland, Rapporteur for the World Climate Broadcasts Forum**



*“In what we believe is the largest network-to-network news exchange - outside broadcasting unions -, our service demonstrates that with goodwill, expert planning, and a sophisticated delivery system, the daily exchange of news programs is easily achievable and at very little cost”.*

**Paul Cutler, Director of News & Current Affairs, Special Broadcasting Service Corporation, Australia**

## 7. Towards a Global Partnership for Climate Change Content Exchange

This panel session focused on the role of the regional broadcasting unions and international broadcasting associations in facilitating North-South and South-South cooperation for the exchange of audiovisual items relating to climate change. Representatives of the most important broadcasting unions and associations provided perspectives on how their organizations can help to address the challenge of accessing essential content needed to effectively raise awareness on climate change issues.

*Salah Eddine Maaoui*



*Gary Allen*



*David Astley*



*Lawrence Atiase*



*Jean Réveillon*



*Elizabeth Smith*



*"The role of media would be more effective if they were supported by regional and international broadcast unions".*

**Salah Eddine Maaoui, Director-General, Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU)**

*"At this stage we have to increase our action. It is time to increase productions on climate change, the flow of contents and access to information on these issues".*

**Gary Allen, Board of Directors, Caribbean Broadcasting Union (CBU)**

*"We need a global partnership for content exchange".*

**David Astley, Secretary-General, Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU)**

*"Content production implies availability of funds and that can be a challenge in some of the broadcasting unions in Africa".*

**Lawrence Atiase, Chief Executive Officer, African Union of Broadcasting (AUB)**

*"One of the functions of public service broadcasting is to discuss about climate change because it is a general interest issue".*

**Jean Réveillon, Director-General, European Broadcasting Union (EBU)**

*"Ensuring quality programming on Climate Change should be an interactive process, rather than a top-down approach ; hence the importance of reaping the benefits of user-generated content".*

**Elizabeth Smith, Secretary-General, Commonwealth Broadcasting Association (CBA)**

# Promoting content exchange

The International Conference on Broadcast Media and Climate Change also aimed at improving the quality of information and programmes in this area. In this view, UNESCO established successful partnerships with a number of organizations - including the BBC, France Télévisions Distribution, the Global Humanitarian Forum and the production companies Dansk AV Produktion and Ki productions - to provide a range of quality audiovisual material and resources rights-free to national broadcasters from developing countries.

These materials include:

- “The Climate Game and the Poor” (Dansk AV Produktion & UNESCO)
- “Earth : The Climate Wars” (BBC)
- “Here to Stay” (Ki productions, distributed by France Télévisions Distribution)
- 30-minute selection of rushes on various aspects of climate change (BBC)
- Series of one-minute clips on climate change (Global Humanitarian Forum)

## Useful links

- UN Climate Change Conference 2009 - Seal the Deal!

UN global campaign for a fair, balanced and effective climate agreement at the Copenhagen climate conference from 7 to 18 December 2009.

[www.sealthedeal2009.org](http://www.sealthedeal2009.org)

- UNESCO Intersectoral Platform for Action to Address Climate Change

The Intersectoral Platform for Action to Address Climate Change is tasked to oversee UNESCO’s Strategy for Action on Climate Change as approved at the Organization’s 179th Executive Board in April 2008.

[www.unesco.org/en/climatechange](http://www.unesco.org/en/climatechange)

- The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) provides leadership and encourages partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.

[www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org)



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