

**Statement on the Occasion of the Signing Ceremony
of the Paris Agreement COP21**

New York, 22 April 2016

Alexander De Croo, Deputy Prime Minister (Belgium)

-- Check against delivery --

Dear Secretary-General,
Distinguished Heads of State and Government,
Distinguished Ministers, Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We made history last year.

During three important meetings, in Addis, New York and Paris, we agreed on an ambitious and pioneering agenda. To end poverty and hunger. To achieve sustainable development. And to protect our planet.

This new agenda is a true turning point.

For the first time, we have an international action plan tailored to today's world.

It is a unique chance – probably the only chance of our generation – to change the lives of millions and to protect the planet we live on.

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement. All three reflect our common commitment to build a better, more prosperous and more stable world.

That was the challenge that brought us together. That was what we have decided. That is the work that lies ahead.

Belgium is fully committed to make this change real. Let me briefly highlight four actions we will take.

First, we will put in place legislation that will double our existing greenhouse gas reduction targets into at least 40% reduction by 2030.

This will improve air quality, better collective health and build a low-carbon economy.

Second, our regional governments will bolster a strong clean energy economy. New technologies and scientific evidence will be our guides to make our economy cleaner, greener and more sustainable.

Third, we will focus hard on lowering energy consumption. The cleanest energy is the energy you do not consume.

And fourth, our horizon will be broad. Belgium will make important efforts to assist developing countries in tackling their climate challenges. That is why we have pledged 250 million euro of climate financing for the next five years.

Belgium is specifically committed to the group of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and fragile states. We have set the objective to commit 50% of our ODA to LDC's. And we call upon other donor countries to do the same.

LDCs have least access to development and climate financing. Yet, climate change hits them the hardest.

When natural resources are degraded, people in LDCs have no other option than to flee their homes.

Without water, food, plants and wood they find in their direct environment, they cannot survive.

We refuse to leave the world's most vulnerable people behind.

Yes, the Paris Agreement is about hard figures, about the 2° and 1,5° targets. But it is – above all – about lives at stake.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To make this Paris Agreement a success, we have plenty of follow-up work to do.

Governments of all levels will have to act in a spirit of common purpose. There are no excuses left.

Economic and monetary institutions, development banks, will have to step up their climate investment efforts.

And the private sector will have to deliver on the economic opportunities of this green revolution, tapping into the promising possibilities new, innovative and clean technologies.

Belgium is fully committed to do its share.

We owe it to our children and grand children. So that we can leave them a world that is greener, cleaner and more sustainable. We can do this.

Thank You.