

Thank you Mr President,

My name is Wael Hmaidan, and I am the Director of Climate Action Network, a network of more than 700 NGOs from more than 90 countries that closely follow the international climate negotiations. I am also from Lebanon, and as part of the Arab civil society, I strongly welcome the Qatar Presidency.

Unfortunately, the Arab region, my region, is not historically recognized for being constructive in the climate negotiations. So CAN is delighted to see in the past couple of years some Arab countries showing a more progressive approach, such as Lebanon and UAE; and this year, Qatar.

CAN also believes that Qatar has the potential to be a global climate leader not only for COP18, but also well beyond. As a low-lying, small, semi-island state, with all its developments along the coast makes Qatar an extremely vulnerable to climate change impacts. Therefore, we hope that climate change would become a top public political priority for the Qatari government, and that Qatar will play a similar role on climate change as it is playing in the various democratic movements across the Arab region and globally. The climate change challenge is a threat to the sustainable existence of civilizations everywhere.

Although there is very little time between now and the COP in Doha, CAN would like to humbly suggest a few ideas that can help Qatar in its preparation to COP18, as requested by your Excellency at the beginning of this session.

In previous COPs, the direct involvement of the COP Presidency's head of state has proven to be necessary to ensure a strong outcome. We saw this with the effective work of President Calderon both before and during COP16. CAN believes that the direct involvement of the Qatari Royal Family in the climate change debate would send a strong positive signal to the international community.

Also, CAN encourages Qatar to be the first Arab country to put a meaningful mitigation pledge into the international process, as many other developing countries have already done, as well as help other Arab countries to also submit NAMA pledges to the UNFCCC by COP18. Many Arab countries already have national targets and are in a strong position to submit this target to the international community.

Finally, we strongly encourage Qatar to maximize the outreach to other governments from the available opportunities in the months remaining before COP18, to become more familiar with both the substantive and political issues that will play a role in the success of COP18, such as during the UN General Assembly, the Pre-COP in South Korea, and any other global or regional political event possible.

As it has done with previous COP presidencies, Climate Action Network stands ready to provide further ideas and advise to the Qatari Presidency at all the previously mentioned opportunities, and therefore we welcome your support for a meaningful participation of civil society in them.

Thank you your Excellency