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Climate Justice – Challenges and Opportunities

Remarks by Mary Robinson

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I am delighted and honoured to be here in Glasgow to give the third Magnusson Lecture – the previous speakers (Muhammad Yunus and Will Hutton) have set a high standard for me to follow! At a personal level I am glad that Glasgow Caledonian University has inaugurated an annual lecture and a fellowship programme in honour of Magnus Magnusson. I had the pleasure of knowing him over several years and of hearing him speak so eloquently in his native Iceland. This intellectual forum is an appropriate tribute to him.

Like Al Gore I am impressed by the leadership Scotland is showing in the area of climate change. I remember participating in a side event in Copenhagen organised by the Government of Scotland, the Scottish Human Rights Commission and several other partners to highlight the steps being taken to address climate change. Central to this was a presentation of the Climate Change Act (2009) - which gives legal character to the national commitment to combat climate change. Scotland is numbered amongst the few countries in the world to adopt

climate change legislation – the most meaningful signal of a nation’s commitment to act. Enshrining your mitigation commitments in law demonstrates not just a desire to act but also a willingness to be held accountable – by your citizens and the international community.

What also impresses me is that you have not forgotten about adaptation – the need to increase our resilience to the impacts of climate change. I spend a lot of time reminding people of the need to pursue action on adaptation – particularly for the most vulnerable men, women and children in developing countries. In the developed world we need to lead by example on adaptation, just as we strive to lead on mitigation. As part of a global community, the experience we gain in adapting our lives and livelihoods to a future with inevitable climate change impacts can be shared with those even more vulnerable and with less capacity to adapt.

Given this leadership by Scotland, I would like to encourage you – or even challenge both government and civil society – to come a step further and become champions of climate justice. Ireland is moving in this direction, as evidenced by this passage in a speech by the Deputy Prime Minister, Tanáiste Eamon Gilmore at the UN General Assembly last month:

We need to act together now to provide long term sustainable solutions, which will decisively break the cycle of food shortages. We believe that a strong focus is essential on building the productivity of smallholder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa. 80% of them are women and the primary carers of children and providers of food, fuel and water. We know that

climate change is disproportionately affecting their lives and their livelihoods. Their farms and livestock are less productive. Their coping mechanisms are less effective. Over time they are vulnerable to abject poverty and despair. I believe that there is a compelling case for "climate justice" - bringing developmental fairness to bear on the climate change agenda.

This global context for climate change is the focus of my foundation – the Mary Robinson Foundation –Climate Justice. We take a human rights and developmental approach to combatting climate change. Climate justice seeks to safeguard the rights of the most vulnerable and share the burdens and benefits of climate change and its resolution equitably and fairly. It recognises that we who benefited most from fossil fuel based economic growth must act first to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, and it commits us to helping developing countries in their efforts to address climate change.

It is worth noting that there is an increasing trend towards linking the international human rights framework with the climate change framework. This day last week the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on human rights and climate change. The initiative was led by the Philippines and Bangladesh with 43 cosponsors, adopted unanimously.

The Resolution:

‘Reiterates its concern that climate change poses an immediate and far-reaching threat to people and communities around the world and has adverse implications for the full enjoyment of human rights’;

And it requests the Office of the High Commissioner to undertake further work to *'address the impacts of climate change on human rights' and to develop a 'stronger interface and cooperation between the human rights and climate change communities'*, including through collaborating with the UNFCCC.

Climate justice forces us to confront difficult questions and to make difficult decisions - both nationally and internationally. I want to start by exploring some of the challenges climate justice confronts us with and then move on to look at the opportunities.

CHALLENGES

The right to development

Critical to a human rights approach to climate change is the right to development. Recognised as a human right since 1986, the right to development acknowledges the right of every human person and all peoples to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy *economic, social, cultural and political development*, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized (Declaration 41/128). The same Declaration declares that

States have the right and the duty to formulate appropriate national development policies that aim at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals, on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of the benefits resulting therefrom.

A year later, in 1987, The Brundtland Commission defined sustainable development as *'development that meets the needs of the present*

without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'

So how do we marry the realization of this right with the need to take action on climate change – which many consider only to be possible by cutting economic activity? Can we in the North find a new paradigm for development which is not contingent upon the inequities that characterise our current systems of trade and global finance?

The countries of the world that have yet to benefit from strong economic growth have the right to do so. The least developed countries aspire to higher levels of GDP, greater prosperity and improved service provision for their citizens. The challenge they face, and that we as members of the global community have to help find a solution to, is to develop and grow without reliance on greenhouse gas emitting fossil fuels. We have some of the elements we need to achieve this (the technology, the skills, the innovators) but we need to match this with a vision and investment for the long term and a commitment to more ethical and equitable globalization.

Energy to develop

This brings me to the need for energy to power development. Energy demand increases in countries as they develop and increase their productivity. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA) world primary energy demand will increase by 36% between 2008 and 2035, based on cautious implementation of policy commitments and pledges made nationally and internationally. This is an average of 1.2% per year on average and compares with 2% per year over the previous 27-year period. Under this scenario, non-OECD countries account for 93% of the

projected increase in global energy demand, reflecting mainly faster rates of growth of economic activity. China, where demand has surged over the past decade, contributes 36% to the projected growth in global energy use, its demand rising by 75% between 2008 and 2035. By 2035, the United States remains the world's second largest energy consumer behind China.

An effective response to climate change demands that we find ways to meet this energy demand – which is essential to enable the development of countries in the south – without reliance on fossil fuels. The IEA predicts that in the coming decades fossil fuels will continue to play a role on meeting this energy demand – but so too will renewables. The challenge is therefore, to develop the renewable alternatives – as you are doing so successfully in Scotland – and then to make them accessible and affordable in the developing countries where demand will be greatest and where the potential to 'leap frog' the fossil fuel based model of economic growth is most evident.

A message from the work we are doing on climate justice is the need to find innovative ways to provide low carbon energy to the 1.4 billion people worldwide who lack access to electricity. Nearly three billion people rely on coal, charcoal or firewood for their basic cooking and heating. Their productivity and their potential to develop and to have a better quality of life is linked to access to electricity. But these are the people with least ability to pay for these services, and although large in numbers, they are not attractive to the market as the risks are high and the operating environment is difficult.

I have been following some of the discussions on **fuel poverty** in Scotland in the media – a local manifestation of climate justice linked to the need to provide energy services. In this case the question is how can we price carbon appropriately and move away from a reliance on fossil fuels while protecting those least able to pay? With one million households in Scotland facing fuel poverty (households spending more than 10% of their net income on energy to keep warm), commentators believe energy risks becoming a luxury only some can afford. Clearly with the severe winters you have in Scotland – energy cannot be something only the well-off can afford.

Looking at this from a more global perspective – low income households around the world spend significant portions of their income on energy. In India and Vietnam low income households spend 12% of their income on energy – and this is often higher in urban areas where even traditional forms of energy, such as firewood, must be purchased at considerable cost. Clearly, making renewables affordable and available at scale is a challenge which we will be addressing for many years yet – and one in which I am pleased Scotland is fully engaging.

Feeding the world

Another challenge is feeding the world – the FAO report (2009) *How to Feed the World in 2050*, estimates that by 2050 the world's population will reach 9.1 billion, 34% higher than today. Nearly all of this population increase will occur in developing countries. Urbanization will continue at an accelerated pace, and about 70% of the world's population will be urban (compared to 50% today). Income levels will be many multiples of

what they are now. In order to feed this larger, more urban and richer population, food production must increase by 70%. In developing countries, it is predicted that 80% of the necessary production increases would come from improvements in yields and cropping intensity and only 20% from expansion of arable land.

The report goes on to state that '*Climate change and increased biofuel production represent major risks for long-term food security. Although countries in the Southern hemisphere are not the main originators of climate change, they may suffer the greatest share of damage in the form of declining yields and greater frequency of extreme weather events. Studies estimate that the aggregate negative impact of climate change on African agricultural output up to 2080-2100 could be between 15 and 30%.*' In addition the use of agricultural commodities to produce biofuels has an impact on the availability of food, and the rapid increase in the use of agricultural land for biofuel production has led to a re-examination of policies in this area.

Although we have the resources and technology to grow enough food to feed the world – food insecurity is a persistent problem, which climate change threatens to exacerbate. In July I travelled with several Irish aid agencies to Somalia to see the terrible situation facing people there. Conflict, high food prices and drought combined to cause the UN to declare a famine - and as with the floods last year in Pakistan - signalled what a world impacted by climate change will be like. I felt a sense of anger and outrage that famine was being declared anywhere in the world in the 21st century. I also had a sense of foreboding – that it won't

be 19 years until the next severe crisis in the Horn of Africa or indeed until the next devastating flood in Asia.

We have unequivocal evidence that global temperatures are increasing. There is evidence that recent warming has been especially strong in Africa. Temperatures for the 2001-2010 decade averaged 0.85 degrees Celsius above normal, and the five hottest years on record for the continent have all occurred since 2003. East Africa, which had never had a year as much as 1 degree Celsius above normal prior to 2003, has now reached this threshold in eight successive years.

Continued warming on this scale will have an impact on crop yields. Farmers in the region report that it is already affecting the seasons, making it almost impossible to know when to plant precious seeds. There are long periods of drought, and the rains when they come are too heavy, resulting in flash flooding.

So the challenge is how to feed the growing world population while the impacts of climate change threaten to cripple yields. And how to combat climate change when in order to grow more food more land needs to be brought into agricultural production - often resulting in the destruction of tropical forests. This can result in the worst possible outcome from a climate change perspective – the loss of forest and therefore of a carbon sink and at the same time the expansion of agriculture – a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. But decisions on how best to solve these linked problems have a human face too – and climate justice demands that we consider the impacts of climate change and responses to climate change on people, their rights and their livelihoods.

OPPORTUNITIES

Green growth

Now I don't want you to think that these challenges are overwhelming – they aren't and the opportunities are considerable. But we will have to make tough decisions, there will be trade-offs and we will have to change how we do business, how we live and how we operate as a global community.

Globally, we are re-examining the concept of sustainable development – having now experienced the results of unsustainable development. Rio+20 next June offers us the opportunity to embrace a new kind of growth. The new buzz words are green growth and the green economy – recasting sustainable development in economic language with jobs and economic recovery as key incentives.

This transition to a low carbon future is possible. We have many of the elements needed to make it successful – technology, innovation and investment – what remains is the political will and conviction to make it a reality. At a meeting some weeks ago convened by my foundation, Mohamed Nasheed, President of the Republic of the Maldives, said we need to give people positive reasons to take action on climate change. Some of these reasons are moral - the need to protect the vulnerable – some are environmental – the need to avoid catastrophic climate change – and others are social, the need for cleaner air and a more equitable global society. But the most convincing are economic – why it makes sense to invest in a low carbon future.

In Scotland you are investing in the transition from oil to renewables. You are showing what can be done and you are carving out a future for your industry and your citizens. When I apply my climate justice lens to these endeavours I see you leading by example, and I see the potential to share these advances with those in the developing world that have yet to benefit from a life with electricity. Making the technologies and know how you develop available to governments, businesses and citizens in the developing world – and this will often be through profitable ventures – can ensure that the world makes an effective transition to a low carbon future.

I am impressed by the steps Scotland is taking to embrace low carbon, climate resilient development. Your climate change legislation lays the ground work for this approach – but this is complemented by initiatives from government including the Low Carbon Economic Strategy, the Energy Efficiency Action Plan and the Public Engagement Strategy. It is also impressive that these efforts are supported by Scottish Enterprise through its Low carbon Implementation Plan which works with business to exploit low carbon opportunities. These experiences will make you a valuable partner to developing countries as they strive to put in place similar policies and strategies. I encourage you to be as generous as you can in sharing the experience that you gain and the lessons that you learn.

Lungs or logs – the future of forests

Other opportunities are developing internationally which Scotland may wish to engage with. One I have learned something about in the last year is the potential of REDD+. It has a very long title – reducing

emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries. Basically it is an approach which allows developed countries to reward forested developing countries for protecting and sustainably managing their forests. When I spoke about agriculture and the challenges of feeding the world, I mentioned the threat to tropical forests from conversion to agricultural land. Forests are major carbon sinks (they soak up lots of carbon) and deforestation accounts for 17% of global GHG emissions - more than the entire global transport sector or the emissions from the whole of the European Union.

REDD+ is still being developed as a mechanism under the UNFCCC, but real world trials and pilots are showing some encouraging results. If we want developing countries to forego the economic opportunities afforded by cutting down their forest resources for logging, for mineral extraction or for agriculture – because we, the global community, place a value on those resources as a valuable carbon sink – then we have to make keeping the forest intact a viable development option. This involves the transfer of funds from developed countries to developing countries as an incentive to avoid deforestation.

Although in its infancy, and not without controversy and teething problems, this approach – payment for ecosystem services – offers immediate opportunities for public sector climate finance and in the longer term, potential for the private sector through the carbon market.

Adaptation

As I said in my opening remarks – I am impressed at the attention you are giving to adapting to climate change in Scotland. Adaptation is the

first priority for most developing countries and as Parties to the UNFCCC developed countries have obligations to provide support for adaptation in the form of finance, technology and capacity building. Inherent in capacity building is the sharing of experiences and lessons learned – and pursuing your own national strategies and actions in the field of adaptation gives you valuable experience to share. While we on these islands may not experience the extreme impacts of climate change, the experience we gain in adapting our economy, our society and our communities to a future with climate change is valuable knowledge when documented and shared.

I know that SCIAF, the Scottish aid agency, is working hard to raise awareness in Scotland of the impacts of climate change on the poorest and most vulnerable people in developing countries and to mobilise funds to support adaptation actions. I also know that DfID is involved in research and actions in many developing countries to assist its partners to adapt to climate change. These positive actions feed back into the UN climate change negotiations and help to foster positive dialogue between developed and developing countries as they work to agree a new climate agreement.

International process

I remain convinced that a legally binding agreement is critical for climate justice. Without a legally binding international agreement there is no obligation to act. Only internationally binding rules can ensure that greenhouse gas emissions reductions at the scale needed to avoid dangerous climate change are adhered to. Only a fully multilateral

instrument can ensure that there is equal focus on protecting the vulnerable and agreeing actions by major emitters.

While COP17 in Durban this December is unlikely to conclude this new legally-binding regime – it can set the stage and prepare the way for a meaningful agreement a few years from now.

A major priority for COP-17 should be to make progress in addressing the legal form, perhaps by agreeing a transitional arrangement to bridge the increasingly unavoidable gap between the end of the first commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol and a new agreement. What is important at this stage is that Parties go to Durban prepared to negotiate – and that means prepared to find common ground and to compromise.

I am optimistic that a deal can be done which sees the Kyoto Protocol continue in a transitional phase during which time work continues on a new legal agreement, converging potentially in 2015 in a new legally binding instrument. Why 2015? Firstly because any later than that the risks of catastrophic climate change become too great. And secondly because by then we will have the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and we will have completed the first review of the global goal of keeping warming to within 2°C of pre-industrial levels. This time window may also allow for a new political mood in the US and would see China about to embark on its next 5 year plan...all factors which could facilitate a more ambitious international agreement.

What we need now is political leadership, those who are prepared to advocate and develop this middle ground package and pave the way for a convergence phase during which the Kyoto Protocol continues to operate (e.g. in a transition phase facilitated by political commitment) and steps are taken to work towards a new legally-binding instrument through agreement on milestones, rules and accounting mechanisms. The EU will have a significant role to play in this process – for better or worse it holds the future of the KP in its hands. This imperfect instrument is of great significance to developing countries and from it we are learning and can continue to learn a great deal about accounting, compliance and the role of the carbon market.

Gender

A climate justice approach also highlights the gender dimensions of climate change impacts, and requires the energy and resourcefulness of women's leadership to tackle it. When communities living in poverty are impacted by weather shocks – drought or flooding – it is women who try to hold them together and cope. When subsistence farmers are affected, we must remember that the vast majority of them are women. Women are also agents of change at local and national level. Hillary Clinton put it well in a recent speech at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) on Women and the Economy:

“The case for unlocking the potential of women and including them more fully in the economic life of our nations begins with the accounting of how women already are driving growth.”

Later, she continues

“Close the resource gap holding women back in developing economies, and we could feed 150 million more people worldwide

every year, and that's according to the Food and Agriculture Organisation, and that's in addition to the higher incomes for families and the more efficient markets and more agricultural trade that would result."

Her message is well taken. It is not a case of adding a gender perspective to be politically correct, or gender needing to be 'mainstreamed'. The evidence shows that women's economic contribution is central to the development of countries, as it is central to tackling climate change.

Given the transformative change which will be needed, MRFCJ has begun to harness the power of women's leadership on gender and climate change. We are building on work done over many years by the Global Gender Climate Alliance (GGCA), Gender CC and other international and local networks, and encouraging the women Ministers in the forefront of climate negotiations to join forces to ensure that the gender dimensions of all aspects under discussion; mitigation, adaptation, financing and transfer of technologies – are fully recognised and addressed in COP 17 at Durban, RIO+20 and beyond.

Conclusion

In conclusion, let me return to my friendly challenge to Government and civil society in Scotland to become champions of climate justice. This involves advocating and demonstrating the value of a fair and equitable approach to adaptation and mitigation, a commitment to provide access to clean energy for the poorest, and an ethos which values the different roles of men and women in combating climate change. For me, the greatest guarantee that climate justice can be achieved is a legally

binding agreement at international level which cuts emissions, avoids dangerous climate change and protects the most vulnerable.

I hope I have persuaded some of you to become allies in encouraging the Government and civil society here in Scotland to adopt a climate justice approach to what is possibly the greatest challenge of the 21st Century.

Thank You.

ENDS