

*‘FAST FORWARDING THE INCLUSIVE GREEN GROWTH AGENDA’*

Jeju, Korea

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*Address by Mary Robinson, President, Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice*

Good morning. It is a pleasure to be back in Korea, and to have the chance to join you here in Jeju.

It is now approaching two years since I was last in Korea for the GGGI conference that took place in Songdo. I attended in my capacity as the United Nations Secretary-General’s Special Envoy on Climate Change, and I recall speaking then of how 2015 had the potential to go down in history as the year when we lifted our sights towards achieving a vision of immense scale – to eradicate extreme poverty from our world, to generate sustainable economic growth for all, and to combat climate change.

Today, we can look back and assess what was achieved in 2015.

From the perspective of the international system, a lot was achieved. In July, the international community reached the Financing for Development outcomes in Addis Ababa, which helped to crystallise both agreements and outstanding challenges for development finance. In September, the Sustainable Development Goals articulated an agreed vision of poverty eradication and equitable, environmentally sustainable development up to 2030. Then in December, the Paris Climate Agreement completed the year’s achievements through an unprecedented statement of global resolve on climate change.

I believe it was, and is, right to characterise the SDGs, Paris and the other achievements of 2015 as unprecedented successes.

After years of painstaking work - and many hard-fought arguments – over 190 countries came together to face common challenges. They also showed how multilateralism, dialogue and respect for the other’s points of view can lead to common positions for the benefit of all.

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But we must also recognize that the international agreements of 2015 do not in themselves change much for the billions of people around the world who are most in need of the commitments set out in the agreements.

If your daily life is dominated by the search for clean water so that your children can be healthy and strong enough to go to school; if you are an expectant mother who needs access to qualified medical personnel to help your newborn survive; if you are an unemployed youth seeking a job that can provide you with the means to live as well as the personal fulfilment that comes with making a contribution to your family and community's wellbeing; if you are a migrant fleeing war or the ravages of increasing climate change – you are unlikely to yet see the Sustainable Development Goals or the Paris Climate Agreement as being relevant to improving you or your family's wellbeing, or to making the world a better place.

Recognising this reality does not mean that we should not take pride in the achievements of 2015 – but it should compel us to remember that we have a lot of work yet to do.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for an approach that “reaches the furthest behind first”, and the Paris Agreement commits us to prioritising the most vulnerable countries and people. These calls should be our guiding principles. They can help us to remember why 2015 mattered - not because we have yet guaranteed the future we want for people everywhere - but because we created foundations on which we now need to build.

The foundations are fragile – even though the Sustainable Development Goals have been in effect for several months now, there are still huge questions over how their implementation can be financed. The Paris Climate Agreement commits us to staying “well below” 2 degrees Celsius of warming above pre-industrial levels and to working for 1.5 degrees Celsius, but without strong, legally-enforceable measures to achieve these goals.

Moreover – while one of the very positive outcomes of Paris is that we now have a framework of Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, or INDCs, analysis concludes that they require conditions, including on finance, that are not yet in place. And that even if they are all successfully implemented, they lead us to global temperature increases of more than 2.7 degrees above pre-industrial levels.

So we have fragile foundations and we need to construct far-reaching solutions. Quickly. I suspect there are many engineers in this room who shudder at the image this creates.

That is why I am pleased to see the orientation of this week's inter-locking meetings and conferences here in Jeju. And I am particularly pleased to see how you put the need for inclusive, pro-poor approaches right at the centre of the week's work.

Because I believe that inclusiveness and pro-poor approaches directly address the challenge of fragile foundations and the need to act at pace and scale. These approaches can create the golden

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thread that joins the efforts of individuals, businesses, communities and governments by enabling people to act separately, but in alignment.

Inclusiveness and pro-poor approaches are sometimes represented simply as moral imperatives. And they are moral imperatives. Indeed, it was the moral dimensions of climate change that inspired me to set up my foundation on climate justice, because for me, climate justice embodies both being on the side of those who are suffering most, while also ensuring that they don't suffer again as the world moves to act on climate. It would be a very cruel and unfair double-blow if those who were suffering from climate change were then excluded from the many benefits that can come from climate action.

But inclusiveness and the pro-poor approaches you are talking about this week are not just moral imperatives. They are also hard-headed pre-requisites for building and aligning solutions to eradicate poverty, address inequality and combat climate change.

This is because solutions cannot come from international agreements and the halls of global power alone. They won't come through global approaches created in think-tanks or academic institutions. And as I am sure everyone here recognizes, they won't come just from conferences like this one.

The solutions will only come once we recognize the leadership that is coming from people everywhere, and especially from the peoples and governments of the developing world.

In my work as President of the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice, I see this reality every day. As well as seeing the impact of changing weather on vulnerable communities and countries – including how the impacts of El Nino are being exacerbated by climate change - I also see how the key to combatting climate change is in today's developing world. This is because most of the energy supply, buildings and transport infrastructure that has yet to be built, as well as most of the world's agriculture and major forests, are in the developing world.

I have just come from Vietnam, where I travelled two hours outside Hanoi to visit a community project which captured beautifully the message I want to convey here.

A local NGO, CERDA, led by a visionary woman, Vu Thi Hien, had encouraged local self-help groups in Thai Nguyen province to form, and persuaded the local authority to grant them the rights to protect and then sustainably exploit the benefit of the local forest.

The approach was explicitly rights-based, with a strong gender equality dimension, including local indigenous DAW women in their traditional costumes.

Six co-operatives have been formed and protect about 4000 hectares of forest. Illegal logging is a real problem in Vietnam, but not in this district.

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One woman spoke about what the project meant to her. She had been too shy to speak initially, but now she feels empowered and strengthened because she is involved in the decisions that are being made. The trees will be allowed to grow for another four years, but already the communities are benefiting from fruits and traditional medicines, and the forest cover is helping local agriculture and livelihoods.

It is in everyone's interests that the developing world is able to build low carbon energy, transport and urban infrastructure, while also pursuing sustainable agriculture and forestry practices – otherwise, these activities will become unacceptably high sources of emissions.

That is why the international community needs to act, with rich countries de-carbonising their own economies while also providing international climate finance to help the developing world. Everyone benefits when developing countries are able to turn their visions into action.

And as many of you here know well, developing countries are already showing leadership.

When I visited Samoa to attend the Small Island Developing States Summit in 2014, I was struck by the leadership on climate change - and on sustainable development more broadly - from so many of the SIDS. I saw how those who lived and worked in SIDS are witnesses to the human impacts of climate change, and know how lives and livelihoods can be damaged, how human rights and development gains can be undermined. This impression was reinforced when I was in Fiji just over a year ago for the Pacific Islands Development Forum. It was clear how impossible it would be for the leaders of those islands to return home after Paris without a commitment to keep open staying below 1.5°C.

I also saw how they and other developing countries – large and small - are working out how to transition to low carbon economies. Despite its climate challenges - which were made so tragically clear by Cyclone Winston which came just weeks after Fiji became the first country to ratify the Paris Climate Agreement - Fiji has confirmed its determination to become carbon neutral. Ethiopia aims to be middle-income, achieve ambitious greenhouse gas emissions reductions and invest in renewable energy by 2025, despite its backdrop as one of the world's poorest countries, with 74% of its population currently living without access to energy. Costa Rica is also transitioning to a low carbon economy- in 2015 it achieved 99% renewable energy.

Shortly after I speak with you this morning, I will be attending the Colombia Focus Session elsewhere in this building, and I will then be meeting with the Colombian delegation who have travelled to Jeju. Like so many others around the world, I was delighted to see the conclusion of the Peace Process between the Government of Colombia and FARC just over two weeks ago. After decades of conflict, thousands of lives lost, and millions of people dis-placed, long-lasting peace in Colombia is now within grasp. I know from our experience in Ireland that building peace requires immense national resolve, and huge reservoirs of compromise and forgiveness. It is very, very hard work. But look at how Colombia is trying to build peace. Not only are they trying to unravel decades of war, help internally displaced people and deal with the ravages caused by the illegal narcotics

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industry. They are trying to do so by also building sustainable, equitable economies as set out in their Amazon Vision and Sustainable Colombia plans. No peace process anywhere in the world has ever tried to do this.

These are just some examples. I could make similar points about many more countries in Africa, Asia, South America, the Pacific.

But perhaps the most profound conclusion in every case is that all these countries are seeking to do something that has never been done before: to develop and grow their economies, sustainably and without greenhouse gas emissions. It is very important that we remember that there is literally no advanced economy in the world that has done this.

And I believe that supporting this leadership is one of the most valuable contributions that GGGI and its partner institutions are making – by putting country-led efforts at the centre of your work. Collaborative action, ensuring that all countries and all people are treated fairly and with dignity, is not only the right thing to do – it is the only approach that will work.

So what more can be done to fast forward these types of activities in the years ahead? I know that your extensive agenda over the days here in Jeju is looking at many important innovations and topics. But I would suggest that there also are two over-arching ways in which those of you present today can continue to act.

Firstly, you can ensure an inclusive and rights based process to advance sustainable development and climate action, and secondly, you can continue to support innovative solutions on development finance, including climate finance.

By facilitating an inclusive process, I mean ensuring that genuine debate and problem-solving is taking place, which gathers in the viewpoints of those giving leadership in the developing world. The nature of the grouping gathered here in Jeju means that you can make a unique contribution – because you recognize the power of home-grown solutions even when they don't adhere to theoretical models created elsewhere. You can also ensure that inclusiveness and pro-poor approaches – like I witnessed in Vietnam – can create an empowering narrative of expanding opportunity, which acts as an accelerator for achieving the SDGs and effective climate action, and not some kind of brake on progress.

On finance, you can help to break through the reality that discussions about international finance often become politicized. In particular, when talk turns to Financing for Development, or the US\$100 billion in climate finance that the developed world has committed to mobilizing, this can become a negative conversation about accounting or a defensive conversation about ensuring that climate finance is not simply international public finance that is taken away from other Sustainable Development Goals, such as education or health. These perspectives should not be ignored – because they come from the real experiences of developing countries. For example, despite strong action from some developed countries on overseas development assistance, global ODA decreased

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in real terms in the run up to 2015. So we must understand why developing countries reacted negatively to being told, as they were told in the run up to Paris for example, that climate finance from ODA has increased.

Global commitments on ODA and climate finance must be met.

But instead of being a continual argument about ODA, the sustainable finance conversation can also become a positive conversation about finding genuinely new ways to support public and private leadership. Issues such as debt sustainability, the financing challenges created by achieving middle income status, and the practical challenges in attracting low cost private capital – all of these issues impact on the ability of developing countries to take ambitious action on sustainable development, including climate change. But they are not always fully addressed internationally, despite being issues that would enrich the international conversation in a very practical way. They are, however, areas where GGGI, and the partner organisations included in the Green Growth Knowledge Platform, are already making meaningful contributions, and designing solutions in response to the needs of developing countries. So I encourage you to continue with this work, it is a vital part of the global breakthroughs we need to see.

To conclude, let me acknowledge one very important point: what everyone in this room is aiming to do is tough and daunting work. I know very well that the calls to action from global figures - including from people like me - can sometimes seem very challenging indeed. I speak all the time of the need for a people-centred approach to development and climate action. But at the same time, I call for the elimination of extreme poverty everywhere, the creation of more equitable societies everywhere, action to combat climate change everywhere – issues which by their nature are enormous, planetary-scale problems.

I understand that these calls for simultaneously addressing individual and global challenges can sometimes seem too big to address, and that some people struggle to understand why they are compatible, and not contradictory, calls to action.

But the daunting nature of aligning the need for individual and global action is exactly why your focus on inclusiveness and pro-poor approaches is so important. Because as I said at the start, these approaches are the golden thread that brings global and individual needs together. In so doing, they can create the durable foundations and ambitious action the world needs to turn the aspirations, vision and potential of 2015 into the realities of 2030 and beyond.

I have five wonderful grand-children – ranging in age from 2 to 12. They and their peers around the world will know whether the vision and potential of 2015 became reality, or whether it was a false dawn.

They will share their world with about 9 billion people by 2050. I often ask myself: what will those 9 billion people think about the SDGs and Paris Climate Agreement? Did these international agreements improve the lives of all those 9 billion people?

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Their answer is not automatic or pre-determined – it requires all of us to work very hard in the years ahead. But if they conclude that the agreements started us on the pathway to eliminate extreme poverty and inequality, and transition to a zero carbon economy, that will be a legacy of which we can all be proud.

I am sorry that I cannot spend longer with you, but I need to return to Europe tonight. But let me wish you good luck in all your efforts for the remainder of the week – it is vital work that can improve the lives and livelihoods of people in your own countries and elsewhere.