Climate Justice Dialogue: High Level Breakfast at COP 22 to mark the first Climate Justice Day

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**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

**It is great to see you all at the start of this historic day, the first climate justice day at a COP. A day when we focus our minds on the people that motivate us all to work on this issue – vulnerable people in societies around the world, the people we serve and our own families, especially our children and grandchildren.**

**Last year, countries came together in a spirit of equity and solidarity to deliver a series of multilateral agreements that built a foundation to deliver justice. We saw leaders from around the world pull together to deliver Agenda 2030 and the promise to help the furthest behind first, the Sendai Framework with its recognition of the critical importance of resilience and of course the Paris Agreement, which not only called for ambitious action on climate change, but also incorporated human rights for the first time in a climate change treaty.**

**In contrast, 2016 has been a year of uncertainty and anxiety, revealing a fractured world which drives people to focus on their individual needs rather than the collective good. Violence, injustice and natural disasters are all taking their toll. It is hard as observers of the news and social media not to be worried and afraid as this deluge of suffering, hate and intolerance undermines human dignity. It is no wonder that people are fearful when the messages they hear from some of their leaders and in certain media outlets seem to threaten their way of life or tell them there is something to be scared of.**

**Throughout our history, challenging times have been met by a higher moral response. The horrors of World War II led to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 1 of the Declaration states that ‘all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and human rights’. Now we have a chance to put people and their dignity at the centre of the transition to a fairer and more sustainable world.**

**At times of change and anxiety such as people around the world are experiencing now, the challenge is to get people engaged, positively, for a better future, rather than to exclude them or let them withdraw. Being engaged is empowering. Being empowered to engage is critical. When people are empowered they can demand dignity and defend their rights. The right to participation is fundamental to an inclusive and healthy society and indeed climate justice. And inclusive diverse and tolerant societies are what is needed to deliver the transformation we need to sustainable development and a zero carbon, climate resilient world. Governments cannot achieve the SDGs or implement the Paris Agreements’ goals without the actions of their citizens.**

**I have heard around this venue, from many people, concern that all this work may prove ephemeral if any one country begins to unravel what we worked so hard for. But the Paris Agreement is stronger than that – it is built on the efforts of millions of people around the world and it is backed by the change that has already started in cities, communities, businesses, schools and households around the world. The transition is underway – there is no stopping it now because it leads to something better than we have now.**

**In the current atmosphere of adversity - we must rise to the moral imperatives that have underpinned our society for so long. Justice, dignity and the rule of law are the values that can shape a resilient world – able to withstand shocks and outbreaks of violence. Able to protect citizens and to uphold rights.**

**We are all here, at this early hour, at a crunch time in the COP because we share values and believe in the importance of these principles like participation, rights, equity, gender equality, just transition, transparency and accountability.**

**It is these principles that will guide us through the years to come, and it is these principles that will gain strength as we stand committed to the agreements and promises we made to the world last year. It is up to us now to hold the line we drew, and to realise the goals we have set by implementing them on the ground.**

**To build climate justice into this process, we need to hear voices like those I have been hearing this past week in side events organised by diverse groups; the Indigenous Peoples Caucus, the Global Gender Climate Alliance Innovation Forum; members of Civil Society, and at WeCAN’s event ‘Women Leading Solutions on the Front Lines of Climate Change’.**

**It is those voices that build understanding and empathy amongst delegates and governments of the impacts the decisions we make here have at the jagged edge of climate response. We are not insulated from the decisions we take or fail to take here – because their implications area real and personal to many.**

**But I also want to recognise that many Governments undertake climate action that is striving to achieve rights and justice for vulnerable people under their jurisdiction.**

**I know that many of the Government representatives here today have examples of how they have taken action that is people centred, gender sensitive and takes into account the voices of those impacted.**

**We must share these experiences, and we must listen to the local communities that bear the brunt of the action or inaction we take today.**

**Some Governments have taken this welcome step further and brought members of these communities to the COP to express their story and share their knowledge with us. For example, Minister McKenna has been instrumental in allowing us to hear from Maatalii Okalik, President of the National Inuit Youth Council. Yesterday she spoke at a meeting of women leaders on climate change, and her voice brought the impacts of climate change into the room in a way reams of data could not hope to.**

**It is direct interactions like this that I wish to encourage amongst all of us here today – to build and sustain the empathy that ties us together as human beings and that will help us to be steadfast in our efforts to achieve zero carbon and zero poverty.**

**I am not here to tell you the best actions to take to integrate climate change and human rights, or to produce positive social outcomes from climate action, I want to hear from you.**

**I look forward to our exchange over the next hour to find ways to catalyse the momentum we had in Paris and drive it forward to ensure that climate justice is at the heart of all our climate actions, from the local to the global.**