

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE NEXUS BETWEEN THE
CREATIVE ECONOMY AND GREEN GROWTH**

Keynote Address by HE Mary Robinson

United Nations Secretary General's Special Envoy on Climate Change

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Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be in Korea, and to be in Songdo for the first time. Korea's development over recent decades has been truly impressive, and Songdo is a remarkable example of how Korea continues to focus on the future. I would like to commend the Mayor and people of Incheon for your efforts in making this city work, and in particular, I want to thank you for your example in finding solutions to the inter-linked challenges of combatting climate change and continuing Korea's development. The scale of the vision you have for this city is truly an inspiration to the world.

Such vision at scale is what the world needs at this point in history. Over the coming years, we need to summons new strength and deploy new knowledge to eliminate poverty, generate sustainable economic growth, and combat climate change.

Each of these is a challenge of immense proportions, but one stands out because of its ability to undermine progress on all the others – and that is the fact that we are rapidly running out of time to avoid irreversible climate damage.

So I would like to spend the next twenty minutes or so, outlining to you why I think we can rise to this challenge, and also why the topics you have chosen to address at this conference today are so crucial to the world's efforts to combat climate change.

It is true that the scale of what we need to achieve is daunting. We meet just after the publication of the IPCC Synthesis report, which crystallises both the climate problem and the fact that working to solve it now will be far more achievable than waiting.

This report is the culmination of many years of patient work by experts, and presents us with a clear call to action. Everyone in this room will be familiar with its messages. Everyone here will also know from their own lived experience that rising sea levels and increasingly severe weather events are creating new problems across the world. Here in Asia, we see with all too much frequency the horror that has been experienced in recent years from landslides, typhoons and forest fires. Sadly this horror is shared with millions of others across the world where these events are causing death and injury; destroying people's homes and livelihoods; damaging social and economic infrastructure such as hospitals, schools and roads; requiring more and more money to be diverted from productive expenditure to dealing with the aftermath of extreme weather; and steadily eroding people's chances to advance their human rights.

Everyone here also knows that as well as creating new problems, climate change is also making old problems re-appear - by putting development into reverse. Progress across the world towards alleviating poverty, improving gender equality, expanding education and health care, catalysing inclusive economic growth, and achieving many other positive development outcomes – this progress is at risk if we don't rapidly re-set the world's climate trajectory onto a less-than-two degree pathway.

For some, the challenge is existential. The President of Kiribati has spoken of the very real possibility of having to move his entire population from their country, and the challenge of

ensuring “migration with dignity”. But he has also bluntly reminded us that what is happening in Kiribati, and places like it, today will be happening in the rest of the world more and more as the years progress.

So yes, the climate challenge is immense. To borrow a phrase used by US President Obama, we need to stop the oceans from rising. Just to say those words is to give a sense of the enormity of what needs to be done – and if we look at it as individual people, it is only human nature if the scale may sometimes seem overwhelming.

But the IPCC Synthesis Report did not just dwell on the problems of climate change. It also highlighted that we have the collective capacity to solve those problems, and reminded us that we know – and have known for many years – what the broad contours of the future we want looks like. We have known for some time that we must construct a future society where inclusive, low carbon growth advances development and human rights. That means fostering decent jobs and livelihoods, improving equality including gender equality, expanding people’s access to sustainable energy and affordable, nutritious food; supporting sustainable cities; maintaining forests and other vital eco-systems; and enhancing the health of both people and the planet. We also know that we must construct a future where vulnerable countries, communities and households are sufficiently resilient to deal with the impacts of climate change.

So what is holding us back?

If we know all this, why are we not on the pathway to a less than two degree world, which is what the science tells is the maximum safe limit that avoids climate catastrophe?

I believe that there are two elements that we have still not managed to create in a way that matches the scale of what we need to do.

This first element is global political leadership that will enable the international community to reach a climate agreement in Paris next December. I am pleased to say that this is starting to emerge in a way that has never happened before. At times, the leadership is tentative, and it is often inadequate – but it is there. We saw some of it at the Secretary General’s Climate Summit in New York in September where many of the most compelling visions were laid out by leaders from the world’s smallest countries. We saw it in October, when all the Heads of Government of the European Union agreed to some of the most ambitious greenhouse gas emissions cuts in the world by 2030. Last week’s climate announcement from the US and China was a remarkable culmination of about a year of dialogue between the world’s two most powerful economies. Against all odds, the G20 focused on climate change a few days ago. And tomorrow, we will hopefully see pledges to the Green Climate Fund reach US\$10 billion.

This is not a bad landscape for leadership thirteen months in advance of Paris.

But we need to be very clear that it is still far from enough to generate the action and investment that will be needed to get us onto a less-than-two-degree pathway. We should welcome the political signals from the United States of America, China, the European Union and others - but we must also stay firm in our resolve that science, not politics, has to be our ultimate guide.

That is why I do not agree with those who say a global climate agreement is unnecessary - because without such an agreement, we risk being satisfied with progress that is not at the scale we need, rather than generating new economic signals to incentivize progress at the scale to solve the problem.

But this is not to say that we should not be simultaneously striving for ambitious action everywhere we can in the run up to an agreement in Paris. In fact, political leadership is more likely in an environment of action and progress – where businesses, individuals and communities are showing what vision at scale can look like.

And that is why catalyzing action at scale is the second over-arching element that we must create to meet the climate challenge – and it is exactly this element that you will be discussing today. The three topics you aim to cover –finance, technology, and inclusiveness – are therefore crucial to success.

Of the three topics, it is quite straight-forward to understand why finance and technology are important – and it is no co-incidence that these are the two topics that have bedeviled climate negotiations for many years.

Despite all the modelling of the benefits of renewable energy and sustainable land use, too many people continue to be forced to make day-to-day decisions that perpetuate a high carbon economy. Whether it is the woman who cooks on charcoal because she cannot afford to buy a clean stove, or whether it is the electricity company who cannot modernize or replace their fossil-fuel-powered electricity generation plants, or whether it is the developing country that is trapped into making choices between balancing their books today and investing for the future – fundamentally, these all boil down to the difficulties of financing green growth. While individual green economy projects are becoming increasingly attractive for finance, and we are seeing growth in the low carbon energy and sustainable land use sectors, it is also true that these are not yet catalysing the national-scale or industry-wide transitions that we need to see in every country and industry in the world. So I hope that you will explore these realities as you look at the challenges of finance – and in particular the need to move beyond thinking about individual investments and projects, towards understanding how to achieve transformational impact.

But if finance and technology are at least easy to understand, I think the third topic you are covering today - inclusiveness - is a principle that is often mis-understood. So I would like to ask you to think of it a little differently than you might normally do.

Usually, people understand inclusiveness as a moral imperative, and I strongly believe that it is. At the UN Secretary General's Climate Summit, one of the most impressive speeches of the day was when Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner from the Marshall Islands addressed the gathered world leaders and recited a poem to her baby daughter, Matafele Peinam. Her poem concluded with the words "We deserve to do more than survive. We deserve to thrive." Think of what our generation is saying to Matafele Peinam – and to our own children and grand-children – if we fail to act on climate change. If we have any comprehension of responsibility, we must understand why bequeathing them a world free of climate threat is a moral imperative.

It was the moral dimensions of climate change that made me decide to set up my foundation on climate justice. This decision came after many years of working on development and human rights issues, mainly in Africa – where so many conversations started with the phrase "Oh but it is so much worse now". And when I explored why people were saying this, again and again, the reason was the dramatically changing climate.

Rainy seasons that failed to come some years, and in other years came with a frequency and ferocity that destroyed crops. Storms that destroyed already fragile infrastructure. Events that forced people with already limited finances to pay for damage caused by the weather. I saw with my own eyes how these people were being hit hardest by climate change, despite doing the least to cause it.

I also became alert to the very real possibility that they could get excluded again when the world woke up to the need to act on climate. I saw that there was a risk that the international community would unintentionally create a situation where we end up imposing climate solutions that would make the most vulnerable suffer again. For example, I believe that we must be permanently vigilant about the risks from putting up the price of food and fuel as a climate action. While this may pay climate dividends in decades to come, it may cause immense hardship and worse in the short term.

So for me, climate justice embodies both parts of the moral argument: 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.

But today, I want to ask you to think about inclusiveness beyond its moral dimensions – because inclusiveness is not just a moral imperative. It is also a hard-headed reality that we need to be inclusive if we are to meet the climate challenge.

Even if people are not moved by a moral argument, they must recognize that there is no solution to climate change if up to three billion people, mainly women, still cook using dangerous and dirty energy sources – the black carbon that comes from this use of coal, charcoal and wood is responsible for over a quarter of all global warming. There is no solution if the communities of forest countries are unable to work with others to protect their forests, or if small holder farmers are not helped to find ways to move to more sustainable practices – together deforestation and agricultural practices are about a fifth of all greenhouse gas emissions. There is no solution if the hundreds of millions of people living in slums across the world cannot get access to affordable, sustainable food and energy – or if the drive for sustainable cities means that those cities are designed without any input from the vast majority of the people who will be expected to live in them. I could go on and provide examples from all elements of the future we want – but my fundamental point is that inclusiveness is an absolute necessity if we are to forge effective climate solutions.

Without recognizing this, we end up relying on theoretical blueprints, and we will design 50% solutions at best – and this is not enough. Instead, if we are to meet the climate challenge, all of it, we need new innovation and imagination, and that is only possible if it draws on the perspectives and ideas that emerge from the people, businesses and governments of the developing world.

This will not only generate the vision at scale that I spoke of at the start. It will also generate new markets for business, new opportunities for jobs, and increased public awareness that acting on climate change can be done in a way that is fair and therefore worthy of political support. So inclusiveness – and what I would call climate justice – can become an empowering

narrative of expanding opportunity, which acts as an accelerator for climate action, and not some kind of brake on progress.

Yesterday, I had the pleasure of attending part of the Global Green Growth Institute's Council meeting where we discussed how the experiences of GGGI's members show how developing and emerging countries are showing the way to the kinds of innovative solutions we need.

Korea's support for green growth in recent years has the potential to build from the country's earlier rapid transformation from a developing country to a developed country, and move onto a second transformation which places it on a green economic trajectory. Ethiopia is aiming to become a middle income country by 2025 through the achievement of green economy objectives, and we heard yesterday of its work to move to carbon neutrality. Guyana will cut energy-related emissions by 92% by 2017- more than any country in the developed world - while maintaining 99.5% of its forest. There are many other examples which show how home-grown visions, coupled with the right kind of international partnerships, can deliver impressive results.

As more and more examples emerge, this can improve the chances of securing greater political ambition – and with increasing political ambition, there is more certainty and opportunity for businesses and national governments to invest more in green growth. This virtuous circle can be powerful, and is to be welcomed - but there are some essential outcomes that can only be achieved through global agreement - and that is why next year's meeting in Paris is so important to getting us onto a 2 degree trajectory or less.

I also want to highlight that there is another milestone before Paris which is very important. In September, the international community must agree on the post-2015 development agenda – to act on the recommendations of the High Level Panel of Eminent Persons, which was chaired by President Yudhoyono, alongside Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and British Prime Minister David Cameron. The post-2015 development agenda will set some of the parameters

for economic development across much of the world, so it is vital that it creates opportunities for those who are least responsible for climate change to share in some of the upsides of climate action. It can also provide a momentum and positive context for Paris and the task of stabilizing our climate.

So the challenge is a big one. But we are capable of solving big challenges.

This was brought home to me earlier this year, when I took part in some of the commemorations around the seventieth anniversary of the Normandy Landings towards the end of the Second World War.

In a speech I made the day before the actual anniversary, I took the opportunity to highlight how following D-Day and the Overlord Operation on the beaches of Normandy, world leaders were faced with challenges that must have felt insurmountable. They needed to rebuild regions devastated by war, they needed to maintain a hard won peace and they needed to somehow ignite economic growth.

In 1944 and 1945, those leaders did not shy away from these mammoth tasks – but instead they summonsed a driven sense of purpose to transform the world around them.

Look at what they achieved. The Charter of the United Nations. The Bretton Woods institutions. The Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe out of the wreckage of war. And they laid the foundations for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Thanks to their will and power to act, they laid foundations for peace and prosperity that many people of the time thought impossible.

Fast forward to today, and climate change presents us with a challenge of a similar magnitude. As the French Foreign Minister, Minister Fabius has said: we are the first generation to

understand the problem of climate change, but we are the last generation with the chance to fix the problem.

Over the next thirteen months, we will see if the international community can rise to the challenge in Paris.

I am often asked if I am an optimist about climate change. I usually answer by quoting my good friend and fellow Elder, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who describes himself as a “prisoner of hope”.

I am a prisoner of hope when it comes to climate change – and I have felt emboldened in this belief over the past three months since the United Nations Secretary General asked me to act as one of his Special Envoys on Climate Change - along with John Kafour, the former President of Ghana. As part of this role, I have spoken with leaders from countries all around the world. It is clear that they are increasingly informed and they know they need to act – and they are engaged in intelligent searches for solutions that can work. I have also spoken with leaders of global businesses, trades unions and civil society organisations who can see that there is no future in high carbon development.

But the moment when I felt the greatest sense of hope was two days before the Climate Summit in New York, when I joined 400,000 people on the streets to take part in the Climate March. Thousands of others marched in cities all over the world. The Secretary General of the United Nations marched in New York, as did senior political leaders from countries all over the world. They were joined by left-wing environmentalists and right-wing business people who would not normally agree on very much. People were there from the rainforest, from cities, from farms. They all wanted urgent action on climate change. But – perhaps surprisingly – the march was not just about a demand for action. The spirit of the march showed that there was also a real belief in the possibility of action.

So I realized then that there are perhaps more prisoners of hope in the world than we think.

The challenge before us now – in the words of a great Irish poet, Seamus Heaney – is to make “hope” and “history” rhyme.

Thank you very much.