

## **CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

**The Institute of International and European Affairs**

**New Climate Economy Report Launch in Ireland:  
Protecting Food, Forests and People from Climate Change**

**Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2015**

**Speech by Mary Robinson**

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

**As always it is a pleasure to be at the IIEA. I am delighted to be part of the Irish launch of the New Climate Economy Report here today. Considering the significance of the events and negotiations ahead of us this year, the release of the report is timely, and is helping to change the narrative on climate change and make it more positive. This is also the message of climate justice, in making the case that those who suffer disproportionately from climate change must be prioritised in getting the benefits of clean renewable energy.**

**Protecting Food, Forests and People from Climate Change - this year provides us with a significant opportunity to ensure that we can do this. We will see deliberations conclude on a new set of Sustainable Development Goals for all countries, which will be adopted at the Special Summit on Sustainable Development in New York in September 2015. Following this**

**will be the signing of the new climate agreement in Paris in December. Equally important will be the Financing for Development discussions which will take place in Addis Ababa in July. These three processes are mutually supportive, and cannot be de-linked. The outcomes of all three processes require progress on the other two. The coming together of these processes creates a unique opportunity to stabilise climate, and transform the lives of billions of people.**

**2015 is a historic year in which a robust set of agreements must be adopted which guarantee a pathway to end extreme poverty, to reduce inequality and to minimise the risks posed to development from climate change. The need for climate action and sustainable development to go hand in hand is undeniable. Left unchecked, climate change has the potential to wipe out the development gains of recent decades. We can't place it to one side and say we will deal with it once we have alleviated poverty worldwide, nor can we leave it to future generations to deal with.**

**To ensure that these processes truly protect Food, Forests and People from Climate Change we must ensure that human rights are the cornerstone of all sustainable development, poverty eradication and climate actions. A human rights framing for the post 2015 development agenda and the 2015 climate agreement would significantly increase the potential for equitable and effective results. It is not possible to end extreme poverty without improving access to rights. Until there are genuine steps taken to hear the voices of the marginalised, to enable participation and to empower the powerless, a significant portion of the world's people will continue to be excluded.**

**Recently at the annual Conference of the Parties under the Climate Change Convention, COP20, in Lima, Peru, my Foundation held a high level event on Human Rights and Climate Change that brought together human rights experts, community leaders and Ministers of the environment, energy, climate change and foreign affairs. The meeting highlighted the real potential for human rights standards and commitments to inform more effective and inclusive climate actions. This is a conversation the Foundation hopes to continue between human rights experts and climate change negotiators at the next meeting on the design of the 2015 climate agreement, which will take place in Geneva later this week.**

**The next 5 years are critical for building bridges between climate change, development and human rights actors and processes. We need to raise awareness of the links between these areas of work and strengthen the capacity of climate and development policy makers to use rights-based approaches in the design and implementation of all climate and sustainable development actions.**

**We are all aware that climate change is a serious threat which forces us to consider a completely different way of doing things – a complete transformation. Business as usual with a little added ‘greenness’ won’t be enough. That approach will lead to a world which is 4°C warmer than pre-industrial levels and would mean increasing extremes of temperature, heat waves, rainfall and drought.**

**The New Climate Economy report makes the point strongly that business as usual is not an option – and that economic growth is contingent upon climate action. It concludes that countries at all levels of income have the opportunity to build lasting economic growth at the same time as reducing the immense risks posed by climate change. The report acknowledges that the transition to low carbon development will not be easy and will require strong political leadership. The challenge ahead will be to ensure a fair and just transition to this new climate economy. We need to use the opportunity of the transition to a carbon neutral world to improve the lives of all people on our planet not just a few.**

**Considerable progress has been made globally in reducing extreme poverty, with the MDG target of reducing extreme poverty rates by half being met five years ahead of the 2015 deadline. There were seven hundred million fewer people living in conditions of extreme poverty in 2010 than in 1990. However, at the global level 1.2 billion people are still living in extreme poverty, and seventy per cent of people live in countries where economic inequality has increased in the last 30 years. According to a recent Oxfam study almost half the world's wealth is now owned by just one percent of the population. The rich are getting richer and in many cases the poor are increasingly disenfranchised and getting ever poorer.**

**Addressing the justice and equity aspects of the transition is critical if all people, regardless of where they live or how rich or poor they are now, are to reap the benefits. I would encourage the Calderon Commission, as it holds consultations for phase two of its work, to gather information and**

**promote dialogue on how to make the actions it sets out for the next 15 years equitable and inclusive.**

**I welcome the fact that the past year has seen increased calls for a phase out of carbon emissions by 2050. Research recently commissioned by my Foundation investigated how such a phase out might be achieved equitably. The research shows that actions by all countries are needed to save the planet for humanity. In designing the global response to climate change we have an opportunity to eradicate extreme poverty, ensure access to clean energy for all and achieve equitable access to sustainable development. To deliver this action on the scale and in the timeframe required to avoid dangerous climate change, the global community must act in solidarity and invest in the transition to zero carbon and zero poverty in all countries.**

**A low carbon, climate resilient pathway to prosperity for developing countries is more likely to support the right to development than business as usual. Carbon will ultimately constrain development in the least developed and most vulnerable nations of the world as climate impacts lead to more poverty and greater inequality. In a transition to zero carbon and zero poverty on the other hand the benefits outweigh the risks, with opportunities for developed and developing countries in terms of energy security, greater competitiveness, decreased mortality, job creation and greater resilience. The research identified three actions required by the global community to realise this just transition to zero carbon.**

**Firstly, we must act now – a carbon phase out must begin quickly and extend globally in order to avoid the worst impacts of climate change and keep warming of the earth's atmosphere as far below 2°C above pre-industrial levels as possible. The Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change indicates that achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050 will greatly increase the likelihood of staying below 2°C. If this is to be achieved a peak in global carbon emissions must take place as soon as possible and no later than 2020. This requires all Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to adopt a goal of an equitable carbon phase out by 2050 in the Paris agreement and to hopefully undertake , in all climate actions, to respect, protect, promote and fulfil human rights.**

**Secondly, all countries must be enabled to take part in the transition to zero carbon on the same timescale. Climate change has five main causes: dirty energy, dirty transportation, deforestation, unsustainable agriculture and bad waste management. We have solutions to address all these root causes - but in all cases, the world needs emerging and developing countries to lead. This is because most of the energy supply that has yet to be built will be in Africa, Asia and Latin America. These countries cannot delay or stall their development, but neither can they lock themselves into fossil fuel based development which will in due course require carbon proofing. Ensuring this will take place requires financing from public and private sectors in the developed world, but also access to the necessary low carbon technologies to enable it to happen.**

**And thirdly, we must ensure that democratic processes at all levels are respected and enabled so that a just transition which leaves no one behind is realised. A human rights framing with a focus on equality and inclusivity can deliver a successful and orderly transition to zero emissions and zero poverty. We know that the risks to human rights from climate change are far more significant than the risks associated with a rapid phase out of carbon emissions. However this does not negate the need to ensure that all actions seek to address human rights, in particular the right to participation as espoused in Article 6 of the UNFCCC. This should be accompanied by increased investments in education, access to information and capacity building in all climate related activities.**

**Let us keep in mind that development requires energy but not carbon emissions. The right to development of people in developing countries requires that they have access to alternative sources of energy to develop and lift themselves out of poverty. It is unreasonable to expect developing countries to reduce emissions on their own at an equivalent stage of development to when rich countries were dramatically increasing theirs. The only feasible way to achieve this is through the provision of support, both financial and technological, from those countries with greatest capacity. Only with this support will the phase out be achieved on a timescale which avoids dangerous climate change.**

**Businesses have a very important role to play in mobilising finance through investment and by engaging with climate funds, such as the Private Sector Facility of the Green Climate Fund. Obviously, businesses also have a role in achieving this just transition outside of funding. While at the World Economic Forum recently in Davos, I participated in B-Team discussions. I**

**was encouraged by the positive response and indeed enthusiasm of these business leaders to take on the zero carbon messages and commit to achieving net zero emissions by 2050.**

**Let me turn to the section of the New Climate Economy Report that Chris Delgado worked closely on, and which identifies agriculture and land use systems as a critical area. The Fifth IPCC Assessment Report found that all aspects of food security will be threatened by climate change. This includes production, access and price stability, all elements which will undermine people's right to food. This in turn will threaten public health, with an increased likelihood of under-nutrition resulting from diminished food production – undermining, if not reversing, the significant strides made by the Millennium Development Goals. This is of particular concern in the African context where the population is expected to double by 2050.**

**Ireland is recognised as having given leadership in tackling hunger at the global level, and Tom Arnold's role in this has been exemplary. For this to continue we will need both at government and civil society level to give leadership on climate justice.**

**Ireland and other developed countries should also give more recognition to the contribution forest countries are making to addressing climate change by committing to preserve their forests. One of the highlights of the COP in Lima was the Lima Challenge posed by 14 forest countries – setting out their commitments to do more in forest preservation and looking to developed world for greater support and resourcing to enable this.**



**One area my Foundation has been following, which is also highlighted by the New Climate Economy report, is Climate Smart Agriculture. If implemented appropriately Climate Smart Agriculture has three positive outcomes for development and climate: firstly, it has the potential to sustainably increase agricultural productivity and incomes; secondly, it supports adapting and building resilience to climate change; and thirdly where possible it reduces greenhouse gas emissions.**

**I moderated a very interesting policy dialogue session on agriculture at the United Nations Climate Summit in September last year with my fellow Special Envoy on Climate Change, John Kufuor. Climate Smart Agriculture was highlighted as an important intervention that should be promoted. I was particularly interested to hear about the work of the African Climate Smart Agriculture Alliance, which brings together NEPAD, International Non- Governmental Organisations – including Concern – and Research Institutions to support the rapid scaling-up of Climate-Smart Agriculture across Africa. The Alliance aims to reach 6 million farming households over the next 7 years. Given the population increases the continent will face, sustainably improving agricultural productivity will be essential to meet the increasing demand for food.**

**We know women are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change - this is especially true for poor rural women. The IPCC's conclusions emphasise that the impacts of climate change are felt disproportionately by societies' poorest and most vulnerable, and that future impacts of climate change will be most damaging for female-headed households and those with limited access to land, modern agricultural**

**inputs, infrastructure, and education. We also know that women are being excluded from decision making and from making their full contribution to society by an absence of rights. We need to ensure that women are empowered to participate in all interventions including Climate Smart Agriculture. Enhancing women's land rights would increase yields and increase resilience to the impacts of climate change. Respecting the right to participation would enable women's voices to be heard and result in more equitable policies.**

**We have very little time left. We are the last generation to be able to do something about climate, and the first generation to understand how serious it is. We have a great opportunity this year. We need to ensure the decisions we make and the agreements we come to are truly Protecting Food, Forests and People from Climate Change. Human rights are the foundation upon which equitable and inclusive solutions to extreme poverty, under development and climate change must be built. We must ensure that Human rights are central to the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement. We have the opportunity to make this year count and ensure a just transition for everyone, leaving no one behind.**

**Let me end with the prophetic words of a wonderful friend who taught me a lot about climate justice, and who knew how to protect food, forests and people from climate change: Wangari Maathai, who said,**

**'In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called upon to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground'**

**That time is now.**