

Opening Statement of Senator Loren Legarda
“Inspiring the World to Care – Igniting the Will to Act for the Climate”
Summit of the Consciences for the Climate
21 July 2015 | Paris, France

Climate change is undeniably in our midst, increasing the risks of disaster in vulnerable cities and communities.

Each year, five million lives are lost due to climate change and the health impacts of its chief driver – fossil fuels. The World Health Organization estimates direct damage costs to health alone at between two and four billion dollars each year by 2030.

The world will continue to get warmer and with this comes long lasting changes in our climate system. Ordinary people have limited understanding of this, until they are painfully introduced to their impacts via extremely harsh weather events, flooding, declining fish catch, water scarcity, declining agricultural harvests, exacerbating health issues, extinction of animal and plant species, displacement of people, and even the demise of low-lying areas, among others.

These realities compel nations to work together in arresting the increase of global temperature from reaching four degrees Celsius.

Every time a disaster strikes and devastates our communities, we realize the risks and the challenges. We seek for solutions, we seek the opinion of experts; but the greater challenge is heeding the advice and taking the necessary action.

Until we have taken it upon ourselves that the key to climate change adaptation and mitigation lies in each and every individual’s effort to be part of the solution, then the greatest challenge we will have to fight to combat the warming climate and its effects is our own indifference.

Our action should enable us to revisit and rethink our current frameworks and strategies for socio-economic development. For through the centuries,

our development approaches and practices have allowed disaster vulnerabilities to grow, to spread and to pervade until today.

Poverty and gender inequality, environmental degradation, rapid urbanization, and climate change, have all conspired to create enormous risks in our communities. They have constantly challenged our human capacity to cope. This must cease.

Our action should enable us to espouse a new brand of politics – the kind of politics that has genuine regard for human development and a forceful vision for the future of humanity; the kind of politics that ushers proactive laws and policies and reforms our conventional way of thinking and doing.

Our action should enable us to institutionalize a new brand of governance – the kind of governance that ensures risk reduction laws and regulations are passed and implemented and that creates the necessary enabling environment to translate sustainable development strategies into practical and measurable gains; the kind of governance that translates political commitment into real actions and results for the people at national and local levels.

Our action should be able to engage all key stakeholders and sectors, to promote cooperation, especially in the process of mainstreaming disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into national development agenda.

Our actions should be able to promote risk awareness in communities and to increase national commitment and investment in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation for a safer and more sustainable future for all.

Now is the time for all of us to unite on all these challenges, and to transcend territorial boundaries, political persuasions, and institutional affiliations.

Climate change, along with the extreme weather events it causes, knows no boundaries and the only way forward is a united global action towards mitigation, adaptation, and resilience.

Let us all be champions of change for the future that we want. Let us all become victors instead of victims in this only living planet that we call home.

Let the lessons of past disasters be lessons well learned, and the calls for action that reverberate following every calamity be transformed into meaningful change --- change in the way we think, change in the way we live, and change in the way we pursue the development and the future we long for – for all of humanity.

The time to make that difference is now. Humanity's future depends upon us. Let us be the change we seek.

Thank you.