

ADDRESS TO SUMMIT OF CONSCIENCE

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I am very pleased to join you all this afternoon. It is truly inspiring to see leaders here from so many faiths and secular traditions, and to hear of your impressive commitment to the simple yet deeply profound message: “why I care”.

Our lived experiences, our religious beliefs and our cultural backgrounds may be diverse – but you are showing that great traditions have a shared sense of morality and fairness, and a collective recognition of the need to act on climate change to protect people and our common home.

To me, this is an example of human solidarity at work. And I want to spend the next few minutes outlining why I believe that it is this human solidarity that is the key to igniting global will to act on the climate.

The idea of human solidarity is sometimes misunderstood. Some people say that it is a well-meaning moral guideline, but it does not help political leaders to conduct negotiations and reach complicated legal agreements – including those that will be needed to reach a climate agreement in Paris later this year.

I disagree with this view.

Because if we look past all the complex science, economics, legal arguments and political negotiations which are necessary parts of the process towards a climate agreement, we can see that acting on climate change can be summarised very simply: we can solve climate change if we care about each other, and if we act to help each other.

Passing those two tests is the challenge of our generation, and will decide whether we leave our children and grandchildren a safe world of hope and fairness, or a world where climate change is causing misery and stress.

Do we care about each other enough to act? I spend a lot of time listening to people all around the world, and I think that a lot more people care about fairness and our collective

future than we sometimes realise. All across the world, people are witnessing the damage to lives and livelihoods caused by climate change, and are standing up to say that it is time to act. You have shown today the deep level of thinking that underpins why different people care in different ways about climate action. So I strongly believe that the first component of igniting climate action is already well underway, and today is a very important milestone in that process.

So perhaps the next challenge is to move from understanding *why* we must act on climate, to understanding *how* we collectively overcome the diverse obstacles to action faced by different people in different places around the world. In other words: how can we help each other?

There are many aspects to this, but I want to focus on one - which is the role of peoples from throughout the developing world.

There is no solution to climate change without the developing world. This is because most of the energy supply, buildings and transport infrastructure that has yet to be built will be in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Most of the supply of nutritious food to feed an ever more populous world will come from the same places. And the world's major forests – including the Amazon, Congo Basin and the forests of South East Asia – are in exactly the same regions. Energy, transportation, forests, agriculture – these will either be managed in a way that over-uses fossil fuels, locks in greenhouse emissions and damages our world, or in a way that protects people and preserves our natural home.

But energy, transportation and agricultural systems are not abstract concepts. They are fundamentally about people, and their legitimate desire for development. And despite all the economic models and theoretical blueprints, we still live in a world where too many people are prevented from making a low carbon development choice. We have to change the reality where poverty means that 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 makes an enormous contribution to climate change as well as to deaths and ill-health. Forest communities must be able to work with others to protect their forests – I was very impressed that we heard the views of forest peoples this afternoon. And farmers must be free to find ways to move to more sustainable practices – together deforestation and agricultural practices are about a fifth of all greenhouse gas emissions. Indigenous peoples must be able to continue their traditional practices that help to preserve the innumerable benefits provided by our natural world. The hundreds of millions of people living in slums across the world need access to affordable, sustainable food and energy – and to be consulted in the world-wide drive for sustainable cities because they will form the majority of the population that will live in them.

I could give many more examples, but in short: the whole world needs the people of the developing world to be able to use their innovation and their energy to create a new model

of low carbon and equitable development. My foundation, which I set up to promote climate justice, summarises this new development model as zero carbon, zero poverty – and we are certain that we can achieve these dual outcomes with the right kind of international co-operation.

This includes the need for international financing for climate action – not as aid, but rather as part of the collective global recognition that while today’s rich countries built their prosperity from fossil fuels and unsustainable land use, leaders from the developing world are trying to find a way to a more sustainable model of developing without emissions.

The United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change provides the platform for advancing this international co-operation – and Minister Fabius and the French Government, as hosts of the Paris climate meeting, have been impressive in their recognition of the need for a mature discussion about the approach to international climate finance.

So the possibility is there to breathe life into the simple message I spoke of a few minutes ago: we can solve climate change if we care about each other, and if we help each other.

But this possibility will only be realized if concerned citizens, organisations and businesses from across the world build informed, respectful partnerships with those who are willing to lead in the developing world. That is why your plans to stimulate a world-wide movement for action are so encouraging.

You are not alone. There are many other individuals and organisations who are already thinking deeply about individual pieces of the climate puzzle. Women’s groups. Youth groups. Progressive businesses. Trades Unions. Grass-roots activists. In all countries, rich and poor. I strongly urge you to build from today and reach out to all these groups.

If you do, your work today can be the spark that ignites an unprecedented wave of human solidarity in the cause of climate action. You can gather into a “big tent” those who represent, and understand the lives of, billions of people. Together, this movement can truly change the world.

Everyone here today has been asked to think about what they individually can do to act on the climate. For my part, I will be happy to work with you to build this “big tent” for human solidarity up to, and post-, COP 21 in Paris, and I will be happy to reach out to others with whom I work on a daily basis from the world of business, civil society and government.

On 1st January, 2016, the Sustainable Development Goals become the new development agenda for our world. Many believe we should mark that day with special prayer and reflection to bring us together as a human family.

Together, we can show the world that human solidarity is not only the domain of religions and human rights activists. Rather it is the golden key that unlocks the collective power of billions of people. Those people can act together to build a more resilient world, stabilise our climate, and create an unprecedented attack on global poverty and inequality.

I have 5 young grandchildren who will be in their 40s in 2050. They will share the world with about 9 billion people. I hope they will look back 35 years from now and say: thank goodness they changed course in Paris in December 2015. Thank goodness they set us on a path to a safe world. That is what we must do, and it will make all the difference.

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