

Office of Hon James Shaw

Minister for Climate Change
Minister of Statistics

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National Statement from New Zealand 23rd Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, Bonn, November 2017

Mr President, tena koe.

(Mr President, greetings)

E nga rangatira, tena koutou.

(To the assembled leaders and dignitaries, greetings)

Sir,

A little over thirty years ago, a New Zealand Prime Minister, David Lange, declared that nuclear weapons were morally indefensible and that we would no longer play any part in the arms race that threatened to extinguish all life on earth.

New Zealand declared ourselves to be a nuclear-free nation.

Mr President, our new Government took office just 21 days ago and our new Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, has already declared that climate change is the nuclear-free moment of our generation.

New Zealand's emissions are less than one percent of the global total.

But if you add up all the countries which each individually contribute one percent or less of global emissions, together we account for nearly a quarter of the total.

If all the small emitters, like New Zealand, act faster, go further, then together we can make as much of a difference as any of the largest emitters in the world.

Being small does not absolve us of responsibility.

On the contrary, being a developed country confers greater responsibility.

The Paris Agreement states that, if we are to have any hope of holding global warming to 1.5 degrees, then all Parties should aim to be carbon-neutral in the second half of this Century, and that developed countries should take the lead by undertaking economy-wide absolute emissions reduction targets.

When we are at our best, New Zealand does take the lead. We were the first country where women won the right to vote. We were around the table at the formation of the United Nations. And we became a nuclear-free nation in the face of the Cold War's deadly logic.

Mr President, our new government has committed to the goal of becoming a net zero emission economy by the year 2050 and to join with the high ambition countries leading the worldwide fight against climate change.

Our commitment to this has to be total. As we here well know, most of the time politics is the art of compromise. It's about negotiation. You come to an arrangement. You meet each other half-way.

But you can't negotiate with the climate itself. Ask the citizens of Houston if Hurricane Harvey would meet them half-way.

Ask the people of Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands, or Kiribati, or Tokelau, how compromising is the rising sea?

In an important step for Tokelau, I can today confirm the extension of New Zealand's ratification of the UN Framework Convention and the Paris Agreement to Tokelau.

And, I would like to warmly acknowledge the Government and the people of Fiji.

Fiji's leadership has highlighted the Pacific region's vulnerability to climate change, and also the conviction of Small Island Developing States to lead the call for climate action.

New Zealand is a Pacific country. We hear that call. If we want our closest neighbours in the Pacific to survive, we need to do everything in our power to hold global warming to 1.5 degrees.

Climate change is a global problem and it requires a global solution.

We are doing this together. Taking action on coal. Cooperating on agriculture. Providing climate finance.

The governments, civil society organisations, and the private sector represented here this week are proof that the momentum behind the Paris Agreement has not diminished.

The Paris Work Programme must make real progress over the next year in order to ensure the guidelines currently under development can be adopted this time next year.

New Zealand is committed to playing a constructive role in these negotiations and seeing the technical details set out across all components of the work programme.

The launch of the Talanoa Dialogue, here in Bonn, will create the foundations for all of us to collectively raise our ambition.

New Zealand's challenge – and our opportunity – is to transform our economy so it works with the planet not against it, and to raise our people's living standards at the same time.

We will establish an independent Climate Commission to set five-yearly carbon budgets and a Green Investment Fund to direct investment towards low-emissions industries.

We will work alongside communities and working people for a just transition from carbon-intensive industries to clean, sustainable jobs.

We aim to achieve 100% renewable electricity by 2035 and for the Government's own car fleet to be electric by 2025.

We aim to plant one billion trees over the next 10 years.

And, we will continue to invest in research and technology that can reduce agricultural emissions while increasing productivity and profitability for farmers, because they too do not want their children to inherit a world with more floods and droughts and fires and storms.

Sir, becoming a net-zero emissions economy by 2050 is not going to be easy.

But as President John F Kennedy of the United States said about another difficult goal, we choose to do "these things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win."

New Zealand is a small part of the world, and we are a remote part of the world, but we are still a part of the world.

It is in our interest to help save it.

No reira, tena koutou, tena koutou, tena tatou katoa.