



**Symposium: Climate Change for Coal  
Bonn, 13 November 2014**

**Remarks by Nick Nuttall, Spokesperson  
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)  
on behalf of Christiana Figueres, UNFCCC Executive Secretary**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thanks for inviting me to this symposium and to address this central, crucial topic of coal.

I have always imagined what it would be like if someone from the Stone Age was beamed into the 21st century.

I am sure he or she would marvel at space flight, a TV set or the wonders of modern medicine. But they would feel right at home with much of the way we power our planet by burning bits of wood or fossilized wood or organisms for energy generation.

And of course it all made sense in the beginning, because coal and oil are pretty amazing in terms of the energy you get out and get out easily.

Today we just have a few little snags, hiccups don't we – climate change, air pollution and damage to human health and then the associated impacts like excessive water use.

If we are to address these challenges we need to look at fossil fuels.

When you look at all the fossil fuels and when you look at prioritizing their phase-down and eventual almost phase-out the unquestionable, number one priority has to be coal.

And it is happening, despite campaigns including some quite extraordinary ones suggesting that expanding coal-fired power generation is the key to reducing poverty.

Extraordinary and concerning in the sense that the best evidence is that the fastest and cheapest way to get energy to rural Africa to lift people out of poverty is by installing solar and other renewables—not investing in large power plants and vast electricity grids that could take decades to be laid.

I suggest that this vigour and ever louder voice of the coal industry is a reflection of fear rather than of power.

The science and the risk assessment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change are clear. If we burn fossil fuels at the rates we are today then we can kiss goodbye to the internationally agreed goal—or line of defense, if you like—of staying under a 2 degree Celsius temperature rise.

I think that many, many governments have internalized that fundamental fact and are moving. The growth and penetration of renewables continues with even some developing countries installing wind and solar without subsidies.

Meanwhile, so have investors and pension funds, armed with ever more sophisticated and credible assessments by bodies like Carbon Tracker and the Carbon Disclosure Project.

They are starting to divest from coal in particular as are a growing number of universities and, for example, health institutions.

Economists are now getting better at costing coal—I refer to reports by for example Trucost who calculate that the world's top polluting sectors are externalizing to the wider economy perhaps damages of over \$4 trillion a year.

Coal, perhaps a trillion dollars in terms of climate impacts, impacts on health and water.

Indeed many coal-fired power stations would be simply out of business if they had to factor their true costs into their profit and loss.

So I think the move away from coal and fossil fuels generally into renewables and more energy efficient economies is and will increasingly happen.

The question is will it happen fast enough, and this is where I come to some remarks on the international climate negotiations.

We are at a quietly exciting moment. Governments have agreed to adopt a new, universal climate agreement in Paris in December 2015.

There is momentum for change everywhere; a growing number of national climate laws and I would suggest that the more enlightened sectors of the corporate and investment worlds are now starting to move ahead of the curve as are many local authorities and regions.

Some of this was in evidence at the UN Secretary-General's Climate Summit in September.

But it is not yet enough – emissions are at their highest for 800,000 years and growing: we are on current trajectories head for a 3, 4, 5 degrees Celsius, perhaps even hotter, world.

Over the next few months countries everywhere have agreed to communicate to the UNFCCC their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) and a draft decision on how they will do that will be on the table at the upcoming UN climate convention conference in Lima, Peru in a few weeks' time.

This week, we all had the good news from the United States and China on climate action including China's decision to peak its emissions by 2030 if not sooner, including by moving away from coal into ever greater penetration of renewables.

The EU announced its “at least” 40 per cent emission reduction target by 2030 a few weeks ago.

These announcements on their INDCs are coming well ahead of the deadline of the end of the first quarter of 2015. Key countries are not waiting until the last minute.

All eyes are now on other countries in terms of INDCs. All eyes are on all countries in terms of finance.

Next week, we have the pledging meeting in Berlin for the Green Climate Fund where many are calling for US\$10 billion by Lima.

The elements of a draft Paris agreement will also be on the table in Lima for further improvements and revisions in Geneva in early 2015.

We expect the draft to be debated by all ministers of national cabinets during the first quarters of 2015 so it is not just the environment minister carrying the flame, but all ministers.

The final agreement in Paris will not solve the climate conundrum at a pen stroke—that is certain.

But it needs to put in the policies and pathways towards peaking of emissions in a decade followed by a deep, de-carbonization of the global economy and ultimately a climate neutral world in the second half of the century.

That speaks to an agreement that is not a five-year business plan, but robust enough to serve the planet and its people for 30, 40, 50 years or more.

That speaks to an agreement where the role of coal and of fossil fuels generally is rapidly and increasingly diminished.

Thank you.

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