



**Princess of Asturias Prize  
for International Cooperation  
Oviedo, 21 October 2016**

**Acceptance speech by  
Patricia Espinosa, Executive Secretary  
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

Majesties,  
Distinguished and illustrious authorities,  
Distinguished laureates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great honor and privilege to accept the Princess of Asturias Prize for International Cooperation on behalf of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, and to have the privilege to do so alongside one person whose leadership was crucial in this process: my predecessor, Christiana Figueres.

Christiana, your optimism inspired your staff, your vision forged a universal agreement and your energy united all sectors of society in action.

We must also recognize the leadership of an important person who is not with us here today, Laurent Fabius, who was the head of the French Presidency in Paris. His excellent diplomacy, determination and political vision guided all Parties in their work, allowing the Paris conference to conclude with an ambitious agreement.

I am delighted to be also joined by the Deputy Executive Secretary, my friend and counselor Richard Kinley, who has been working in the international climate change negotiations for many years, and two staff representatives, because this is their award.

In the three months I have been working in the secretariat, I have seen your professionalism, knowledge, the quality of your work and above all your commitment in the fight against climate change. Richard, colleagues, please relay the atmosphere of this ceremony to all our colleagues.

This award also recognizes the hard work of many visionary world leaders who fulfilled their obligation to face the challenges posed by climate change, inspired the world to go beyond national differences and sought the common good; and moreover, to realize the vision that low-carbon development is not only possible, but necessary.

The Paris Agreement will stand as a lasting legacy of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and many other people from diverse social sectors, who reminded us that international cooperation is most successful when governments and civil society have the will to work together.

In the two years before Paris, we saw enormous collaboration. From the small island states to the largest emitters and largest economies in the world, they demonstrated an unprecedented leadership.

Every country came to Paris in the spirit of global solidarity and supported by cities, regions, businesses, investors, academy and scientists, activists, faith leaders and citizens who care for the future of our common home.

I am fortunate to now have the responsibility to carry this spirit of solidarity forward to the next phase of the process, into implementation. Similar to the days, months and years before Paris, this new phase will require effort from everyone to realize a sustainable future that brings hope for the youth of today and for generations to come.

Your majesties King Felipe and Queen Letizia, today is a special day that invites us to pause and reflect about the present and the future. And my reflection today about the Paris Agreement, the path towards its adoption and the next steps, bring me hope.

Indeed, the Paris Agreement is our gift of hope. If I may, today I would like to share this gift with Her Highness the Princess of Asturias, Doña Leonor, who will soon celebrate her eleventh birthday, and with all the children of the world. Today, we have in our hands the tools to work together and build not only a better future, but also a safe and sustainable present for our children and the children of all.

Thank you.

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