

Youth Statement to the High-Level Plenary of UNFCCC

December 14, 2007

WHO WE ARE

I am Anna Keenan from Australia, Karmila Parakkasi from Indonesia, and Whit Jones from the United States of America. We speak today as part of the global youth climate movement. Half the world's population is under 30, and will live with the decisions you make today.

STORIES OF HUMAN IMPACT

Just last week, a young woman from Kiribati told us about her plight. Her island is only 2 meters above sea level, and as the land gets washed away, so does her people's livelihood and culture. I was filled with a deep sense of urgency, solidarity and perhaps most importantly, responsibility to speak and act. Her story moved me to tears and should move you to action.

How many stories do we need to hear before we wake up and take action? We have one climate, one future, and this is our last chance.

SCIENCE AND URGENCY

The science is clear. We call on you to acknowledge that climate change is not bounded by economics and politics, but by science. You can't negotiate with the laws of physics and chemistry.

The targets currently being discussed are not even close to protecting our future. Our best science shows clearly that 450 ppm of CO₂-equivalent gives us a 50% chance of avoiding catastrophic and irreversible feedbacks in the climate.

I have a coin here. The flip of this coin represents gambling with our future. What's it going to be?

Our future is at stake. As climate change accelerates, and your decisions unfold, we will look back at **this** moment, this conference. History will judge whether you did enough to give us a planet worth living in.

OUR VISION

The time for excuses is over. We need you to acknowledge that solving climate change will require a just transition to eliminate fossil fuels within our lifetimes.

Developed countries must mitigate now and assist those without the same financial resources. Deforestation must be addressed with strong consideration for local and indigenous communities.

The climate emergency is our best and possibly last opportunity to create a global consciousness. We are inspired by those of you taking true leadership, both at home and internationally. We are ashamed of the so-called “**leaders**” who are delaying action in this UN process and who are actively compromising our future.

THE YOUTH ARE RISING

We cannot wait any longer. If you lead us on the wrong path, we have no time to find our way back and undo your decisions. The potential effects will be devastating and indiscriminant.

Youth around the world are rising to the challenge. As emerging leaders, we are mobilizing the public, building powerful movements, and forging international coalitions.

But all this won't be enough without strong action from you. We have put our trust in you. We need a Bali Breakthrough -- now.

CONCLUSION

As you make these decisions, take a moment to reflect on why you are here. Are you here as only a delegate? Or are you also here as a mom or dad, an aunt or uncle, a brother or sister? Are you here for us, your children?

This is not a political choice – rather, a moral imperative, and a requirement for human life. We are already inheriting the consequences of your choices. The world is watching, the youth are rising. Join us.

POEM

Last week, Bambou Chieppa, a young student visited the COP, and upon her return to school she wrote a poem. She would like to share it with you now.

“It's haunting me
A crowd of he's and she's
I'm not a hero
I'm not even a big show
Every time I look cameras
as flashing me in the eye.

It would surprise them if they knew
I was only a little girl who is scared
the world will die”