

**SPEECH BY HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES
COPENHAGEN CLIMATE SUMMIT
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Prime Minister,
Secretary-General,
Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am most grateful for your kind invitation to address this crucially important international gathering.

We live in times of great consequence and, therefore, of great opportunity. With issues of such magnitude, it is easy to focus solely on the challenges; the worst-case scenarios; the “what-if’s” of failure. But take a moment to consider the opportunities if we succeed. Imagine a healthier, safer, and more sustainable, economically robust world. Because if we share in that vision, we can share the will to action that is now required.

Over more than three decades, I have been privileged to talk with some of the world’s most eminent experts on climate change and environmental issues and to listen to the wisdom of some of the world’s indigenous people. The conclusion I draw is that the future of Mankind can be assured only if we rediscover ways in which to live as a part of Nature, not apart from her.

For the grim reality is that our planet has reached a point of crisis and we have only seven years before we lose the levers of control. As the President of Gabon said at a meeting I hosted last month, “The door to our future is closing...” This, I fear, is not an overstatement. For climate change is a risk-multiplier. It has the potential to take all the other critical issues we face as a global community and transform their severity into a cataclysm.

Reducing poverty, increasing food production, combatting terrorism and sustaining economic development are all vital priorities, but

it is increasingly clear how rapid climate change will make them even more difficult to address. Furthermore, because climate change is intimately connected with our systemic, unsustainable consumption of natural resources, any decline in the ecological resilience of one resource base or ecosystem increases the fragility of the whole.

We appear intent upon consuming the planet! It seems likely, on current patterns of use, that our global fisheries will collapse by 2050 and, already, fresh water is becoming scarcer, placing global food security at ever greater hazard. In the last fifty years we have degraded thirty per cent of global topsoil and destroyed thirty per cent of the world's rainforests. All of these issues are linked to each other and to climate change - a truly vicious circle – and the climate crisis is the mirror in which we see reflected the combined ecological impact of our industrialized age. However, it is these links, together with our common humanity and the unprecedented connections of today's global community, which might, perhaps, provide us with a solution. Moreover, in our increasingly precarious situation – on a small, unique and precious planet – this is not a problem resolvable in terms of “them and us.”

For when it comes to the air we breathe and the water we drink, there are no national boundaries. We all depend on each other – and, crucially, on each other's actions - for our weather, our food, our water and our energy. These are the “tectonic plates” on which the peace and stability of the international community rest. The inescapable conclusion, therefore, is that a partial solution to climate change is no solution at all. It must be inclusive and it must be a comprehensive approach – one that strengthens the resilience of our ecosystems. Crucially, it must be embraced by the public, private and N.G.O. sectors, as well as by local communities and indigenous people, while also encouraging individual responsibility.

One example that has been high on my agenda for the last two years is that of tropical rainforests. These ecosystems have been described as the planet's lifebelt, and with good reason. Not only do they harbour about half of our terrestrial biodiversity and generate much of the rainfall that is vital for farming, they also absorb and hold vast quantities of carbon that would otherwise be in the atmosphere. Unfortunately, as you know better than I, the forests are being cleared at a terrifying rate. The simple truth is that without a solution to tropical deforestation, there is no solution to climate change. That is why I established a Rainforests Project to try to promote a consensus on how tropical deforestation might be significantly reduced.

In early April, I was able to host a meeting of Heads of State and Government at which it was agreed to establish an Informal Working Group to look at this issue. As it turns out, it seems the quickest and most cost-effective way to buy time in the battle against catastrophic climate change is to find a way to make the trees worth more alive than dead. The Project has been exploring the drivers of deforestation and how innovative financing mechanisms could provide Rainforest Nations with financial rewards for positive performance. One example of such a performance-based approach is the recent agreement between Guyana and Norway. The Project is also working with the World Bank on an Emergency Package to stimulate private sector finance for Rainforest Nations.

It is critical to find ways to prevent forests being converted to agriculture. I have been heartened by my conversations with some of the world's largest agri-businesses which have told me that, through more effective use of vast areas of degraded land, we could feed and fuel a growing population and keep the forests. But, Ladies and Gentlemen, it must be genuinely sustainable agriculture that helps to empower local communities and small farmers. We thereby create a truly virtuous, not a vicious, circle and one, because of its understanding of the relationship between agriculture and forestry, that can only improve the lives of many of the poorest people on the planet while simultaneously benefitting Nature. It also builds what seems to me to be the absolutely critical chain which links ecosystem resilience, adaptive capacity, poverty reduction and sustained economic development. This is the chain that we have broken... And it is the chain that we must now re-make.

The need fully to engage the private sector reflects not only the growing determination of business to act in a sustainable way but, crucially, its determination to listen to customers. And what customers are saying ever more loudly is that they want their investment choices to make a positive difference to climate change. One practical result of my work with the private sector on corporate, social and environmental responsibility for the past twenty-five years is that growing numbers of pension funds have made a commitment to set climate solutions at the heart of their long-term investment decision-making. To ensure a large-scale deployment of capital, these pension funds need clear long-term policies to be agreed here this week. This request is supported by the 191 financial institutions with assets of over \$13 trillion which signed the International Investor Statement on Climate Change. A further practical contribution is a statement by the international Corporate Leaders Group,

of which I am patron – comprising over 900 of the world’s most prominent companies drawn from more than sixty-three countries, including all the G20 members – on the significant business opportunities which a robust, effective and equitable global climate agreement could deliver.

In helping to facilitate these initiatives, my simple aim has been to show that we can all make a difference if we are determined to do so. Above all, I am convinced it is these kinds of global partnerships – between Government, business, N.G.O.’s, civil society and even individuals – that will provide the global solutions needed to secure our future.

Subsequent inflows of private sector investment would do much to reinforce the credibility of all those, particularly in the poorest countries, who have had the courage to believe in the positive outcome of this meeting. Several of their leaders, while being only too aware of the immediate economic benefits of monetizing their countries’ natural capital, have still chosen to follow the difficult path of turning their economies towards sustainable development. Such visionary people have a vital role to play in helping the world to find the strength needed to address its problems. But they desperately need our support, for without it they may not have a second chance...

Surely now, then, is the time to recognize that we cannot have capitalism without Nature’s capital – we cannot sustain our human economy without sustaining Nature’s economy?

I know that so very many of you here today have been negotiating the unbelievably complex details of a potential agreement for a very, very long time, and you must be profoundly weary.

But this is an historic moment. I can only appeal to you to listen to the cries of those who are already suffering from the impact of climate change. Just as Mankind had the power to push the world to the brink so, too, do we have the power to bring it back into balance. You have been called to positions of responsibility at this critical time. The eyes of the world are upon you and it is no understatement to say that with your signatures, you can write our future...

One final thought.... As our planet’s life-support system begins to fail and our very survival as a species is brought into question, remember

that our children and grandchildren will ask not what our generation said, but what it did. Let us give an answer, then, of which we can be proud.

ENDS