

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**REMARKS AT HIGH-LEVEL OPENING OF COP21**

**Paris, 7 December 2015**

Your Excellency M. Laurent Fabius, President of COP21,  
Distinguished ministers,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ever since I became Secretary-General, nearly nine years ago, I have called climate change the defining issue of our time.

It places our very future in jeopardy.

Yet, here in Paris we have the unique opportunity to define our own destiny.

In rising to the climate challenge, we can set the world on a sustainable footing for generations to come, and lay the foundation for prosperity and security for all.

A week ago, 150 world leaders stood here and pledged their full support for a robust global climate agreement that is equal to the test we face.

Never before have so many Heads of State and Government gathered in one place at one time with one common purpose.

Leaders have assured me they will work to remove any roadblocks.

They have called for strong ambition and re-affirmed their support for curbing greenhouse gas emissions and strengthening resilience to changes to come.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your task is to translate this historic call for action into a durable, dynamic, credible and fair climate agreement.

Outside these negotiating halls, there is a global ‘tsunami of support’ for a strong, universal agreement.

Hundreds of mayors from around the world are here.

So are hundreds of business leaders and investors representing trillions of dollars in assets.

More than half a million people took to the streets last week in cities spanning the globe.

Pope Francis and the world's faith leaders have stressed the moral imperative to act.

All of us have a duty to heed those voices.

Here is what the people of the world expect from you.

First, we need an agreement that will limit temperature rise to less than 2 degrees Celsius.

For many, including low-lying and least developed countries, even a 1.5 degree rise will have grave consequences.

Current ambition must be the floor not the ceiling for efforts.

That means the agreement should include regular, five year cycles, beginning before 2020, for governments to review and strengthen their commitments according to science.

Second, the private sector needs a clear signal that the low-emissions transformation of the global economy is inevitable, beneficial and already under way.

Third, developed countries must agree to lead, and developing countries need to assume increasing responsibility in line with their capabilities.

Fourth, the agreement must ensure sufficient, balanced adaptation and mitigation support for developing countries, especially the poorest and most vulnerable.

That means technology transfer and credible climate financing.

Developed countries must uphold their historical responsibility to lead on pre- and post-2020 finance, mobilizing \$100 billion dollars a year.

The issue of loss and damage must be also addressed.

Fifth, the agreement must provide a single framework for measuring, monitoring and reporting progress in a transparent manner on a full range of actions.

Excellencies,

Centuries of human endeavour and innovation have given the world great gifts.

Yet we have also sown the potential seeds of our own destruction.

The clock is ticking towards climate catastrophe.

The world is expecting more from you than half-measures and incremental approaches.

It is calling for a transformative agreement.

Paris must put the world on track for long-term peace, stability and prosperity.

The decisions you make here will reverberate down through the ages.

The eyes of the world are upon you:

Seven billion people want to know that you, the world's leaders, have their interests at heart – and those of their children.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

In all my travels as Secretary-General, I have talked to young people, and I have been inspired by them.

In Kiribati, which faces being inundated by rising seas, a young girl named Tamauri asked “What will become of us? What can the United Nations do for us?”

Yesterday I met four young Norwegian scientist explorers who visited the Arctic this year.

These young boys and girls have seen the rapidly melting ice, and they are sounding the alarm to the world.

They appealed for this conference to succeed.

One of them, a young woman named Erika, said: “We are the future. Your decisions today will be our future.”

Her colleague, Johanne, said: “We challenge you to promise to put children first when you are making climate decisions.”

So today I speak for Tamauri, Erika, Johanne, and all the young people of this world.

I say to you that your decisions can lay the foundation for a sustainable future where both people and planet can thrive.

Your work here this week can help eradicate poverty, spark a clean energy revolution and provide jobs, opportunities and hope for tomorrow.

There can be no mistaking the peril before our eyes.

But far more than that, we can see the new world that can be ours.

I call on all Ministers and negotiators to cooperate, united by common purpose and common sense, to secure our common home and shared future.

I count on your leadership and wise decisions for humanity.

Thank you.

Merci beaucoup.

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