



**How to be a “Coptimist”: Culture, Creativity and COP21
Statement by Nick Nuttall, Head of Communications and Spokesperson
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
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Deborah Bull, Assistant Principal, King’s College London;
Darren Henley, Chief Executive Arts Council England;
Patrick Degeorges, French Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy; and
All the team at Julie’s Bicycle for getting this amazing day together,

Thank you for inviting me here today.

I want to perhaps briefly outline why we should all be – following the adoption of the new UN climate change agreement in Paris – Coptimists.

But also to insert a sense of urgency and challenge so that perhaps we are not self-deluded like Jane Austin’s Emma or overly complacent like perhaps Shakespeare’s Falstaff.

Ladies and gentlemen, for the many in this room and the millions outside who, for over 20 years, have been working, sweating and bringing creativity to the question of just how does the world secure a global climate agreement, the last months have been remarkable.

Bringing every nation in the world together to address climate change had, for many, come to define the impotence of the contemporary world; the cynics of multiple self-interests over science, reason and compassion; the failure of the United Nations to be relevant in an increasingly complex world; and the certainty that humans are incapable of thinking anything more than creature comforts over a higher vision.

For some the post-apocalyptic futures glimpsed in, for example Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road*, was the path we were on and we deserved it!

But – and here perhaps I will abandon my hackneyed artistic references – What a Difference a Day Makes as Dinah Washington put it!

When the gavel came down in the French capital on 12 December 2015, it was a clear and resounding signal that the impossible was now possible. It was confirmation that every single nation on Earth had internalized the science, understood the economics of choice, discovered a common humanity and decided, decisively to act.

And there was more. The UNFCCC also recorded and registered over 11,000 climate action commitments from cities, regions, provinces, companies and investors.

In advance of Paris, religious leaders like the Pope spoke out on the moral imperative; defense experts outlined the threats to regional and global security; citizens took to the streets in New York, London, Sao Paulo, Kampala and many other places.

The days of saying, “Oh that climate thing is too big, it is a global issue, it’s just a government thing” came to an end. Climate change has become the preoccupation of the many rather than the few; of all sectors of society and across all Continents.

And we know that meeting the stated global aim of keeping a global temperature rise under 2 degrees Celsius this century – and even better to 1.5 degrees C – is doable.

As a result of all the efforts of the last 20 years under the UN climate change convention and beyond, solar power is now 80 per cent cheaper than it was in 2008, with wind power 40 per cent cheaper and far more efficient.

And there are other barometers and litmus tests that should make one a Coptimist – trillions of dollars of investment have, over the past 12 months or so, been switching out of fossil fuels, and especially coal, into clean energy investments.

The headline of 13 April was ‘Coal Slump Sends Mining Giant Peabody Energy into Bankruptcy’ because of over USD \$6 billion worth of debt. Shell pulled out of the Arctic last year after losing money. And only a few days ago, Saudi Arabia announced its Vision 2030 plan including reducing its dependency on fossil fuels.

Only a few years ago, if oil was at the price it is now, it would have been a hammer blow to renewable energy investments.

Today, renewable energy investments continue unabated and it is the oil industry that is struggling. That is simply incredible in terms of change.

I was in New York on April 22 to see 174 countries plus the European Union sign the Paris Agreement en route to it coming into force, a record for a UN treaty in terms of signatures on one day.

I could go on, but this is where I continue to be a Coptimist but where we must all be Cop-realists. Paris was like Leicester City winning the Premiership, but what happens next season and in the case of climate, the next four seasons will be key.

And where will the Foxes be in 2030 and will they still be in the Premier League in the second half of this century?

Because ladies and gentlemen, while the Paris Agreement is awesome and the achievement is unprecedented and the momentum across all sectors of society unparalleled, the scientific reality is the atmosphere.

The fact is that as a result of well over a century of industrialization based on fossil fuels, we have already put 2,000 Gigatonnes of carbon dioxide-equivalent into our atmosphere that you can't take back.

We only have space for 1,000 Gigatonnes for the entire future of humanity, for a world where we will grow from the current around seven billion people to over 10 billion by 2050.

If you want to keep average temperature rise to 1.5 degrees C – needed to give the small island nations a chance of surviving – we only have 600 Gigatonnes.

We are still spewing out 32 Gigatonnes a year – so do the maths!

The Paris Agreement knows the maths. By second half of the century, emissions have to be brought down so low that what are left can be easily absorbed by healthy forests, soils and other natural 'sequestration systems' like mangroves, sea grasses and salt marshes.

It is nothing short than restoring the balance of planet Earth to what prevailed prior to the Industrial Revolution in the context of 21st century standards of living and new technologies.

So if you then work backwards, here is what we have to do:

1. Peak global emissions fast – by some estimates by 2020;
2. Trigger a deep, decarbonization of the global economy; and
3. Basically, dramatically and forever decouple emissions, damage and degradation from growth – because we need to still lift billions of people out of poverty and maintain the quality of life for those who have escaped that misery.

Can we do that, yes! Will we do that in the timescales needed? Well it's up to you, and me and everyone in this world and it starts today, not tomorrow.

Everything we do, every action that we take, every investment that happens today in buildings, infrastructure, agriculture, transport and power in London, in the UK, in Europe in the world needs to ask – “Is this consistent with the Paris Agreement and its temperature goals and the new Sustainable Development Goals?”

If it is not, it should not be happening or must be so extraordinarily justifiable that it is permitted only as an exception rather than a rule.

As my boss Christiana Figueres put it only a few weeks ago, “The quality of our actions and investments today equals the quality of life forever”.

The good news is that we now have, with the Paris Agreement, the global framework to act; a wealth of government legislation introduced over the last decade; the enlightened self-interest of the private sector and investors, including increasing numbers of pension funds and insurers; and alliances of cities and local authorities all pulling in the same direction.

We also live in a world with literally trillions and trillions of dollars looking for investments and frustrated by rock bottom rates, even negative, interest rates.

And we have massive demand for new infrastructure in developing countries and the need to investment in aging infrastructure in developed ones.

It could be a marriage made in heaven if these two realities meet at the nexus of quality, low-carbon – decarbonized – investment and development that is also resilient to the inevitable impacts we have already stored up in the Earth's system.

There is also now abundant evidence that acting and delivering on climate is the key to innovation, new kinds of decent jobs and the most direct way of conserving this beautiful world we play, love, laugh and live in as part of a far larger play, show or musical that must respect the legitimate aspirations of those generations to come.

The creative industries have a lot they can do from advocacy – and I do not mean just celebrities – to triggering creativity and swinging hearts, minds, hands and feet towards fast tracking this journey.

You are also investors; owners and operators of buildings and infrastructure in your own right; decision-makers in terms of supply chains; influencers of government and local authority policies; and individuals in control of the choices you make.

I hope you are inspired by today's conference and I look forward to reading and seeing the implementation of your Creative Climate Coalition.

The fact is that we all have the responsibility of making the right choices and inspiring others to do so in a world where making those right choices has never been easier or more possible.

Only a few years ago we would have all been Cop-pessimists; trying to find a global agreement on climate change was seemingly running longer than the Mousetrap in London's West End with no happy ending, or ending at all, in sight – a tragic comedy of errors and misunderstandings.

Paris has ended that. We have had the coming together at the wedding at the end of Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and the heroism of Tolkein's Gandalf to overcome dark forces.

Now we need the steady energy, ambition and optimism of Pip in Dickens' *Great Expectations* and the courage, endurance and perhaps most importantly the speed of Eric Liddell, not an imaginary character but like us, a real life person clothed in glory in David Puttnam's *Chariots of Fire*.

Thank you

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