

COP26 President addresses UN Member States

Excellencies, Secretary General, friends.

It is a real pleasure to speak to you all again to provide this regular update. And as you all know I am now devoting all of my time and energies to the role of COP26 President Designate, whilst continuing as a full member of the UK Government Cabinet.

I hope this tells you how seriously Prime Minister Boris Johnson and the whole of the UK Government are taking our role as incoming COP Presidency.

It recognises the stark facts in front of us. The facts as the Secretary General has just outlined. And the urgent need to increase our collective ambition across all elements of the Paris Agreement.

2020 saw record temperatures.

We saw fires raging across the world.

We saw storms intensifying.

In short, my friends, the climate crisis is closing in.

But, as the Secretary General noted, we are seeing some acceleration in climate action despite the pandemic, and of course at the Climate Ambition Summit the UK held with the UN and France in December, we heard from 75 leaders.

Who announced between them 45 Nationally Determined Contributions, 24 net zero pledges, and 20 adaptation commitments.

With many of the countries most vulnerable to climate change leading the way.

So I want to thank you, every one of you, who took part.

By the end of 2020, net zero was firmly established as the norm.

If you take into account President Biden's recent announcements, over half of G20 countries and around 70 per cent of global emissions are now covered by net zero targets.

And I hope I speak for all of us when I say: welcome back to the USA in our shared fight against climate change.

As I said at the Climate Ambition Summit. All this commitment is welcome. But it is not enough to meet the ambitions of the Paris Agreement.

Ambitions which we have collectively agreed.

So let's be frank with ourselves, we still have some way to go. We are, as the Secretary General said, way off target.

We need to do more, and we need to do it urgently.

So, in my speech to the Summit, I outlined four goals, I want us to work towards together, to get the world on track to make Paris a reality.

Today, I want to say a bit more about how we can do so.

First, we need to secure that step change in emissions reductions.

We all know what we need to do here:

This isn't new. This is about net zero targets; with aligned NDCs that keep that 1.5 degrees within reach; and policies like phasing-out coal power, to show that we are serious.

Secondly, we must strengthen adaptation.

I really welcome the Secretary General's leadership here.

And the Climate Adaptation Summit, held by the Netherlands last month.

Where the UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson launched the new Adaptation Action Coalition.

This has been developed by the UK, and our friends in Egypt, Bangladesh, Malawi, the Netherlands, Saint Lucia and the UN.

With our Group of Friends on Adaptation and Resilience in New York.

The aim is to convert the political commitment generated through the Call to Action – which I was part of launching in 2019, at UNCAS – into practical reality.

I urge all countries to join this Coalition.

Please sign the Call to Action if you have not already done so.

As well as to focus on effective adaptation planning and setting out progress in Adaptation Communications.

Our third goal – a vital one – is to get finance flowing – both public and private. Particularly to developing countries. And especially to adaptation.

My message could not be clearer. Progress on public finance has sadly been too slow.

Woefully slow, say our friends in countries on the frontline of having to deal with climate change.

My fellow donor countries need to step-up and deliver the \$100 billion a year in international climate finance that we have promised. As I've said before,

this is a matter of trust and we must deliver.

Last month, the UK COP Presidency published our public finance priorities.

We want to work with all of you to make progress on these vital issues.

And I am also working to get both public and private finance moving.

And to make further progress in this area, the UK's COP26 Presidency will hold a Climate and Development Ministerial at the end of March.

We will bring together Ministers representing donor countries and countries vulnerable to climate change.

To establish how we can remove barriers to climate action and development.

Together, we will look at four vital issues: access to finance; quantity & predictability of finance; the response to impacts; and fiscal space and debt.

And we will plan how to make progress on each of these areas, through events like the G7, IFI Spring Meetings, and the UN General Assembly.

Discussions will be informed by experts and civil society groups.

We will be working with regional chairs to make sure all regions are represented.

The event will also be open to observers from countries who are not directly participating.

The fourth and final goal is to enhance international collaboration around critical challenges and sectors. To make progress faster.

Our COP26 campaigns have established new forums.

Like the Energy Transition Council, and the Zero Emission Vehicle Transition Council. Which met for the first time last year.

We also have the Forest, Agriculture and Commodity Trade Dialogues, which were launched publicly last week.

And I have to say we have seen a real appetite for cooperation. So I thank all countries involved.

On all of these four goals, major economies must show leadership.

Let me confirm to you that the UK will use its G7 Presidency to urge them to do so, as our Italian partners will with their G20 presidency.

Of course, the multilateral negotiations are at the heart of our plans.

They underpin each of the four goals I have outlined, and are absolutely key to fulfilling the Paris Agreement.

We must test solutions, and prepare the ground, ahead of COP26, so that we arrive in Glasgow ready to close a deal.

Last year, we did make progress virtually despite the pandemic. We had events like the UN Climate Change Dialogues and others.

But this year cannot simply be a repeat of the last.

As the Secretary General has outlined, we may not all be able to meet in person for some months.

But we know that we need to make progress faster. And so we need to seek creative ways of conducting our discussions that have inclusivity at their heart.

I am therefore consulting with the chairs of all the UNFCCC negotiating groups. And meeting international partners. To understand their positions.

As Ambassador Woodward pointed out, I have recently visited Ethiopia and Gabon and I will continue to travel where possible.

With our friends in Chile, we have initiated new monthly meetings, bringing together Heads of Delegation from every country, to chart the course to Glasgow together and to find possible solutions to negotiating issues.

Friends, I have to say this: this is a joint endeavour. An endeavour between all of us together.

So we are working with the UNFCCC to support parties' connectivity. We are holding meetings at times that respect different time zones. And we are discussing how technology can help us move forward together.

We must continue to work creatively and flexibly, guided by the principles of transparency, inclusivity and common purpose, to make progress which is so vital.

So that when we do meet in person in November, we secure an outcome that delivers for each and every country. And that delivers for our planet as a whole.

And I look forward to working with all of you throughout 2021 to achieve this.

We all know what is at stake if we do not work now to secure the right outcomes at Glasgow.

Let me remind you: we have 266 days to go to COP26. Please, let's work together.

Let's make sure that every one of those days counts.