

Home truths on climate delivered ahead of COP26

Thank you [Roberto Cingolani] very much indeed. And thank you for organising this event with your team.

I think it's been brilliantly organised. And the fact that we've managed to get young people here from across the world, many of whom actually have had to make very difficult journeys to get here. I think it's testament to the organisation but also to the young people who have come here.

Listening to the session, I think there are probably three feelings that I got. One was that it was incredibly inspiring. Secondly, that they spoke really very very frankly.

And I think third, for me, was that they spoke the truth. That we need to do much, much more, much faster. And I have to say, I hope every minister who was present, those that were tuning in, felt pretty uncomfortable and squirmed when those messages were being delivered. The home truths were being delivered.

I think PM Draghi talked about the fact that what we were hearing shamed this set of world leaders. And there is no doubt that this group of young people and, in fact, young people around the world, are going to hold this set of world leaders to account if at COP26 we are not able to credibly say we have kept 1.5 degrees within the reach. Of that I'm absolutely certain.

And one of the ministers who spoke also made a really important point. He said, in three days, we'll have had 400 young people, very few of them will have met before, coming from almost 200 countries, able to deliver a document in three days, that they agreed on. Consensus.

If you look at the Paris Agreement. Six years on, historic agreement. But there are still key issues outstanding.

And perhaps it's time, at COP26, for the ministers and the politicians to take the lead from young people, and actually find that consensus. Finally.

Reflecting on some of the messages that came through. They were, in my view, really very well thought out. It's some of the issues that we have been discussing over the past year and a half through the COP process with Roberto and other governments as well. In terms of energy transition, in terms of the finance flows, in terms of just transition and capacity building, getting the non-state actors to do their bit so of course governments have to step up. And then actually showcasing the work that is going on.

And I think Roberto is right. This is the start. This cannot be the last time that we get young people together and have this kind of discussion. And so I am very open to us, and Roberto and I will discuss this with our teams, looking at how we build on this. I mean this really cannot be a one off,

because if it is, I'm afraid it will not go down well with the young people who have come here today.

In terms of COP itself. What we will be doing is taking these messages from young people, they will be discussed at COP. We will ensure that the outcomes are presented, and that ministers respond to these outcomes, these decisions that have gone forward from young people. And this will take place on the Youth and Public Empowerment Day.

We're also going to ensure that throughout the COP26 process, the voices of young people are heard throughout that two week period. There's a lot of expertise in that room. There's a lot of expertise internationally when it comes to understanding of nature, of science, of transport, all of these issues. And we will ensure that young people's voices are reflected in those discussions at COP26, throughout that two week period.

I think the final thing I just want to say on this is that there were a number of times that the young people challenged us and said: You're not answering our questions. You're not actually responding to what we're asking.

So Roberto and I have agreed that we will get the feedback that comes through. We will respond to the best of our abilities on those questions that have been raised. But actually, this is a question for every government. It is not just a question of Italy and the UK. Yes, we are together, partnering and leading on organising COP26. But this is for every government.

I think that is very clear in terms of the response that young people require. Yes it's an international response but it's also a response that has to be delivered by individual governments in their home nations as well.

So I just want to end with saying that yes, we have more work to do in terms of the NDCs, the 2030 emission reduction targets, and Net Zero targets, the finance. We're gonna have a lot of discussions, Roberto and I, in the Pre-COP now with ministerial colleagues on some of those outstanding issues in the Paris Rulebook.

And I hope that one thing that we will always have ringing in our ears, is the voices of young people that we've heard of these last few days. And I think if we keep those voices at the front of our minds, I do think we will have an opportunity to come to consensus together.

But at the end of the day, it is on this generation of leaders, it is on us, it is on the people who are on the stage sitting there. I know, Jayathma, you said, you're putting it on the young people to tell us what to do. Of course, you know, we have to do our bit. But as I said, this goes back to us working together, and that's what I want to see coming out of this meeting.

Thank you.