

PM House of Commons statement on G20 and COP26 World Leaders Summit: 3 November 2021

Mr Speaker,

with your permission I will make a statement about the G20 summit in Rome and update the House on COP26 in Glasgow.

Almost 30 years ago, the world acknowledged the gathering danger of climate change and agreed to do what would have once been inconceivable

and regulate the atmosphere of the planet itself by curbing greenhouse gas emissions.

And one declaration succeeded another until,

in Paris in 2015,

we all agreed to seek to restrain the rise in world temperatures to 1.5 degrees centigrade.

Now, after all the targets and the promises

and after yet more warnings from our scientists about the peril staring at us in the face

we come to the reckoning.

This is the moment when we must turn words into action.

If we fail, then Paris will have failed

and every summit going back to Rio de Janeiro in 1992 will have failed,

because we will have allowed our shared aim of 1.5 degrees to escape our grasp.

Even half a degree of extra warming would have tragic consequences.

If global temperatures were to rise by 2 degrees, our scientists forecast that we will lose virtually all of the world's coral reefs.

The Great Barrier Reef and countless other living marvels would dissolve into an ever warmer and ever more acidic ocean,

returning the terrible verdict that human beings lacked the will to preserve the wonders of the natural world.

And in the end, Mr Speaker it is a question of will.

We have the technology to do what is necessary: all that remains in question is our resolve.

The G20 summit convened by our Italian friends and COP26 partner last weekend provided encouraging evidence that the political will exists,

which is vital for the simple reason that the G20 accounts for 80 percent of the world economy and 75 percent of greenhouse gas emissions.

Britain was the first G20 nation to promise in law to wipe out our contribution to climate change by achieving net zero,

and as recently as 2019, only one other member had made a comparable pledge.

Today 18 countries in the G20 have made specific commitments to achieve net zero

and in the Rome Declaration last Sunday,

every member acknowledged – and I quote – “the key relevance of achieving global net zero greenhouse gas emissions or carbon neutrality by or around mid-century”.

To that end, the G20 – including China, including China – agreed to stop financing new international unabated coal projects by the end of this year, a vital step towards consigning coal to history.

And every member repeated their commitment to the Paris target of 1.5 degrees.

In a spirit of cooperation, the summit reached other important agreements.

The G20 will levy a minimum corporation tax rate of 15 percent, ensuring that multinational companies make a fair contribution wherever they operate.

Over 130 countries and jurisdictions have now joined this arrangement, showing what we can achieve together when the will exists.

The G20 adopted a target of vaccinating 70 percent of the world’s population against Covid by the middle of next year

and the UK is on track to provide 100 million doses to this effort.

By the end of this year, we will have donated over 30 million doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine,

and at least another 20 million will follow next year,

along with 20 million doses of the Janssen vaccine ordered by the Government.

And the G20 resolved to work together to ease supply chain disruptions

which have affected every member as demand recovers and the world economy gets back on its feet.

I pay tribute to Prime Minister Draghi for his expert handling of the summit.

But everyone will accept that far more needs to be done to spare humanity from catastrophic climate change,

and in the meantime,

global warming is already contributing to droughts and brushfires and hurricanes,

summoning an awful vision of what lies ahead if we fail to act in the time that remains.

So the biggest summit that the United Kingdom has ever hosted is now underway in Glasgow,

bringing together 120 world leaders,

with the aim of translating aspirations into action to keep the ambition of 1.5 degrees alive.

I'm grateful to Glasgow City Council, to Police Scotland, to the Police across the whole of the UK and to our public health bodies for making this occasion possible and all their hard work.

For millions of people across the world, the outcome is literally a matter of life or death;

for some island states in the Pacific and Caribbean, it is a question of national survival.

The negotiations in Glasgow have almost two weeks to run,

but we can take heart from what has been achieved so far. Nations which together comprise 90 percent of the world economy are now committed to net zero,

up from 30 percent when the UK took over the reins of COP.

Yesterday alone, the United States and over 100 other countries agreed to cut their emissions of methane

one of the most destructive greenhouse gases

by 30 percent by 2030.

And 122 countries – with over 85 percent of the world's forests – agreed to end and reverse deforestation by the same deadline,

backed by the greatest ever commitment of public funds to this cause, which I hope will trigger even more from the private sector.

India has agreed to transform her energy system to derive half her power from renewable sources, keeping a billion tonnes of carbon out of the atmosphere.

The UK has doubled our commitment to international climate finance to £11.6 billion and we will contribute another £1 billion if the economy grows as is forecast.

We have launched our Clean Green Initiative, which will help the developing world to build new infrastructure in an environmentally friendly way,

and we will invest £3 billion of public money to unlock billions more from the private sector.

I've asked the world the UK has asked the world for action on coal, cars, cash and trees,

and we have begun to make progress – substantial palpable progress – on three out of the four.

But the negotiations in Glasgow have a long way to go Mr Speaker and far more must be done.

Whether we can summon the collective wisdom and will to save ourselves from an avoidable disaster still hangs in the balance,

and we will press on with the hard work until the last hour.

Mr Speaker, I commend this statement to the House.