

PM opening remarks at COP26 Press conference: 2 November 2021

It is all too easy to come to a summit like this and get caught up in a mood of exaggerated enthusiasm simply because of the very nature of diplomacy and the instinct to be polite.

So as this first stage of COP26 draws to a close – and don't forget there are still two weeks of detailed negotiation to come – we must take care to guard against false hope and not to think in any way that the job is done because it's not – there's still a very long way to go.

But all that being said, I am cautiously optimistic in the sense that on the way to the Rome G20 I said to some of you on the plane that if this was a football match, the score would be 5-1 down in the match between humanity and climate change.

I think what you can say today, after two days with around 120 world leaders, is that we've pulled back a goal or perhaps even two and we could yet take this to extra time because there's no doubt that progress has been made.

We're ending the Great Chainsaw Massacre, with more than 85 per cent of the world's forests to be protected by the end of this decade – an unprecedented agreement by 122 countries now backed by the biggest ever commitment of public funds for forest conservation, with much more still to come from the private sector.

We've got 90 per cent of the world's economy working towards net zero, up from less than a third when the UK took up the COP reins – including India keeping a billion tonnes of carbon out of the atmosphere by switching half its power grid to renewable sources.

More than a hundred countries have just signed up to cut their methane emissions by 2030. When we were selected as hosts of COP26, just one per cent of the world's economy had met the post-Paris obligation to improve on their 2030 emissions targets.

Today that figure stands at 80 per cent. But it's not just that we're setting bigger targets – the world has been actually putting forward better plans to reach those targets. Billions of dollars have been committed to support developing and vulnerable countries.

Big business has stepped up with the launch of the Glasgow Breakthroughs this afternoon and our Clean Green Initiative idea – the Build Back Better idea by Joe Biden talks about is catching on and is taking our green industrial revolution worldwide. For example we're working with South Africa's President Ramaphosa to deliver his ambitious vision for faster, greener growth and what I've been asking for, as you know, is action on coal, cars, cash and trees, and after just a couple of days we can certainly begin to tick three of those

boxes – we're beginning to write the tick and that's all happened because we were able to come together in person in Glasgow and make it happen here at COP26.

Of course it's only part of the story. Although the UK has this week committed a further billion dollars of international climate finance, taking our total to £12.6 billion by 2025, and just a few hours ago Japan announced another \$10 billion over the next five years, a big commitment by Japan, the reality is the developed world will still be late in hitting the \$100 billion target.

It's brilliant that so many countries have embraced Net Zero this week but we're going to keep working with all the leaders around the world to get them there sooner – to accelerate their timetable. And while we've now got measures to protect more than 85 per cent of the world's forests protected and 90 per cent of the world's economy working to net zero- those commitments will be 100 per cent useless if the promises made here aren't followed up with real action.

As Prime Minister Mia Mottley of Barbados so passionately warned us yesterday, climate change is not some parochial political issue. For tens of millions of people around the world it is literally a matter of life or death. They need, those economies, 1.5 to survive. So I'll be watching proceedings, we'll be watching proceedings, very closely to make sure we keep moving forward and there are no U-turns from where we've got to.

But I think we can be confident of one thing in the days ahead, the two weeks we've got. The clock on the doomsday device is still ticking, but we've got a bomb disposal team is on site, they're starting to snip the wires – I hope some of the right ones. My message to them is very simple – the leaders of the world may have left or are leaving COP now, but the eyes of the world are on you, eyes of the British government and all the other governments that care about this, and we have got your numbers.