

PM opening statement at COP26 Press conference: 14 November 2021

Good afternoon everybody and apologies for interrupting your Sunday afternoon, but I wanted to say a few words about the truly historic achievement that was secured in Glasgow last night.

I'm very, very pleased to be joined by Alok Sharma, my friend the President of COP.

For two weeks at COP26 politicians and negotiators and campaigners from around the world have been locked in talks about how we're going to keep our planet habitable for future generations by getting real about climate change.

It was the biggest political gathering of any kind ever held in this country.

And there was a reason for that.

All these world leaders came to Glasgow because their populations are telling them they need to act.

We've heard about the peril we face if we fail.

We've heard from the individuals who are already living with the effects.

And yesterday evening we finally came to the kind of game-changing agreement the world needed to see.

Almost 200 countries have put their name to the Glasgow Climate Pact, marking a decisive shift in the world's approach to tackling carbon emissions, setting a clear roadmap to limiting the rise in global temperatures to 1.5 degrees and marking the beginning of the end for coal power.

Because for the first time ever a UN climate change conference has delivered a mandate to cut the use of coal for power generation.

And it's backed up by real action from individual countries – for example we've arranged a multi-billion pound partnership to help South Africa ditch coal and create new green jobs instead.

On top of that we've brokered a deal with the G20 to end international finance for coal by the end of next month.

We've persuaded most of Western Europe and North America to mirror the commitment I made last December by pulling the plug on financial support for all overseas fossil fuel projects by this time next year.

And when you add all that together it is beyond question that Glasgow sounded the death-knell for coal power.

It's a fantastic achievement and it's just one of many to emerge from COP26.

90 per cent of the world's economy is now following our lead here in the UK by committing to net zero, ending their contribution to climate change altogether.

Don't forget when Alok Sharma took up the COP reins it wasn't even a third who committed to net zero.

The developed world is finally going to hit the \$100 billion climate finance target – albeit a bit later than we all would have liked.

Over 130 countries have signed up to halt and reverse deforestation by 2030 – between them they're home to more than 90 per cent of the world's forests.

We've got trillions of pounds of private sector assets lined up with climate goals.

We've even managed to do something that has eluded the world for six years by finalising the Paris Rulebook, allowing us to move from interminable debates about how to measure emissions and instead get on with cutting them.

Of course my delight at this progress is tinged with disappointment.

Those for whom climate change is already a matter of life and death – who can only stand by as their islands are submerged, their farmland turned to desert, their homes battered by storms – they demanded a high level of ambition for this summit.

And while many of us were willing to go there, that wasn't true of everyone.

Sadly that's the nature of diplomacy.

We can lobby, we can cajole, we can encourage but we cannot force sovereign nations to do what they do not wish to do.

It is ultimately their decision to make, and they must stand by it.

But for all that we can be immensely proud of what has been achieved by Alok Sharma and his team.

I want to take this opportunity to thank him for his many months of tireless diplomacy, and thank everyone involved in making COP26 a success – from the bobble-hatted volunteers to Peter Hill and his team in the COP Unit.

I know it's tempting to be cynical.

To dismiss these types of such summits as a series of talking shops.

But we came to COP with a call for real action on coal, cars, cash and trees and that's exactly what we've got.

And just look at what it all means for our planet.

Before Paris, the world was on course for a devastating four degrees of warming this century.

After Paris, we were heading for three degrees.

At Glasgow we've turned that dial down to around two degrees.

That's still far too high.

But for all our disagreements the world is undeniably heading in the right direction.

Even the most pessimistic commentator will tell you that that goal of restricting the growth of temperatures to 1.5 is still alive.

Now the work continues to make it a reality.

Alok is going to keep pushing, along with everyone else in the UK Government to strengthen the promises made in Glasgow and make sure they're delivered rather than diluted.

The UK Government will get on with our extraordinary record of decarbonisation, get on with delivering our green industrial revolution and exporting that revolution worldwide.

There's still a long journey ahead of us and very little time to complete it.

But COP26 has shown us that we can do this.

We can end our reliance on coal and fossil fuels.

We can put the brakes on runaway climate change.

And we can preserve our unique planet for generations to come.

I want to finish by thanking once again the people of Glasgow for providing a spectacular summit, and of course, I want to thank Police Scotland as well for everything they do.