

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's address at the Youth4Climate conference: 30 September 2021

Thank you, thank you very much Mr President, distinguished guests, ladies and gentleman.

Great speech Mario and ciao from Londra. I'm very sorry I'm not able to be with you today, but I just want to say to all of you at this gathering: Mario, you and I, we've got to face it.

We were born in the 1960s; the politicians, I'm afraid, like us – we're middle aged people.

And we're going to be meeting to thrash out the world's path to net zero in just a few weeks' time at COP26.

But it will be the people in the audience, it will be your generation, young people, who are left to deal with the consequences if we should fail.

Because a child born in 2020 will endure seven times as many extreme heatwaves and twice as many droughts as their grandparents.

And as this gathering has heard in sometimes harrowing detail, young people around the world are already paying the price for the reckless actions of their elders.

Hundreds of millions of you are facing rising seas, failing crops, burning forests and ever-more ferocious storms. Daily challenges that lead to lost opportunity.

Your future is being stolen before your eyes, and I saw the protestors earlier on, and frankly you have every right to be angry with those who aren't doing enough to stop it.

And perhaps the most frustrating thing is that we know we can stop it.

There is still just enough time to put on the brakes. We know what needs to be done, we just have to get on with it.

It's a big task, one that will ask a lot of absolutely everybody. But change on the scale we need is perfectly possible.

When I was a child something like 80 per cent of the UK's electricity was generated by burning coal. Even as recently as 2010 we got 10 times more electricity from fossil fuels than from renewables.

Yet today, as I speak to you, most of the electricity consumed in the UK comes from clean green sources. Our carbon emissions are barely half what

they were in 1990.

And coal, which was once the undisputed king of our energy mix, now accounts for less than two per cent of our electricity – a number that will hit zero within the next couple of years.

I tell you this not because I want to brag about how great the UK is – because I'm the first to admit that we all have much more to do – but because I want to show what can be achieved when people and politicians have the will to make change happen.

That's why it's so important that these three days are not the end of the story.

We've got 190 countries represented here, almost 190 countries represented here.

And if between now and November, the COP26 Summit, that you all continue to raise your voices in the way that you have, as passionately and articulately as you are doing;

and if you can keep talking to the politicians and the business leaders where you live about this issue and why you care about it and why we must have action – then what I'm saying to you is we can turn this thing around.

And the four things we want to come out of COP26, four big changes in our approach, and it's very easy to remember – it's coal, cars, cash and trees; coal cars, cash and trees.

We want to move away, as I've described, from using coal as the way we generate electricity, we want to move to move towards renewables. We want all the countries in the world to move off coal.

We want everybody to stop using internal combustion engine vehicles, and it can be done, people are moving away from them as we speak.

As Mario has just said in his really excellent speech, we want to raise the funds that the whole world needs, the developing world in particular, to tackle climate change – and we need to get up to \$100 billion.

And we need to plant 100s of millions if not trillions of trees around the world.

If we do all that, we can make COP26 in November, which Mario and I are working on, we can make it the beginning of the end of climate change.

So without being unduly rhapsodical, when you're my age, you young folks, you young thrusters out there, you'll inhabit not a world on fire, but a planet where your phones and your computers and your lights are powered by the wind and the water, the waves and the sun;

You'll inhabit a world where electric cars glide silently down your streets from California to Cape Town; emission-free, guilt-free jet zero planes will

fly overhead; and all of us will be able to deal with whatever the climate throws at us.

So what I'm saying to you is that the situation is dire, it is frightening, but change is possible and it can be done.

So help me and help us to make it happen at COP26.

And together let's make this earth the planet that you deserve.

Thank you very much.