

# Speech: Minister Mark Field's speech at the Global Climate Action Summit, Moscone Centre, 14 September 2018

Climate change is not an abstract threat. This year people around the world have suffered unprecedented heatwaves, wildfires, and monsoon rains. All are examples of the sorts of extreme weather events that scientists confirm are becoming more frequent and more severe due to climate change.

The [Paris Agreement](#) brought the world together in a shared ambition to reduce the man-made causes of climate change. We need to keep pressing ahead with that. But with the impacts of climate change already being felt, we must also start to adapt and build resilience to the changes that are already taking place. According to the World Bank, 100 million people could be pushed into poverty by 2030.

The need is urgent; failure to act now will hit poor countries first and hardest; but in our interconnected world, it will affect us all in one way or another. Regional climate disasters have global impacts. That is why the UK is leading work on resilience at the UN Secretary General's Climate Summit in 2019.

We want the summit to mark a step-change in the global approach to climate change. Our aim is to ensure we can all better anticipate climate extremes; adapt to them; and absorb their impacts, through effective disaster response. To achieve these goals we need to work across the globe to reduce exposure to disasters and build climate resilience into our economies by factoring our changing climate into investment decisions at home and abroad.

The UK is already working internationally to make this happen. Since 2011, we have helped 47 million people cope with the effects of climate change, in many cases through enhanced adaptation. This is not pure humanitarianism: it makes economic sense. Every dollar invested in climate risk mitigation today saves at least three dollars in disaster response later.

We are supporting the Climate Leadership in Cities Programme in partnership with the cities signed up to the C40 Group, and we will fund 15 city-level climate action plans across Latin America and Asia in the coming years. Another UK programme, called Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters, is doing what it says – helping 7 million of the world's poorest people cope with climate shocks.

Importantly, the programme works directly with affected communities and offers a tailored approach to the climate challenges they face – for example by using technology to achieve better harvests, greater access to finance and markets, more accurate weather information, and better disaster preparedness.

Households in target areas have seen their incomes rise by around \$200

dollars a year, and early warning systems have helped evacuate more than 12,000 people ahead of rising floodwater. I was recently at the Pacific Islands Forum. Few of us are impacted as directly by climate change as the people of the Pacific Islands, whose very existence is under threat from the seas creeping up their shores. Their plight is one of the world's most tangible examples of the security threat climate change can cause.

This is why we support the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme and why, as we expand our diplomatic presence in the region with new High Commissions in Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu, climate change will be an increasingly important part of our work there. All countries also need to do what they can to build resilience within their borders. For our part, the UK Environment Agency is working with local partners to address both coastal and inland flood risks and reduce the risk posed to 300,000 homes by 2021.

Our recently published National Adaptation Plan requires public bodies to report on how they are adapting to current and future climate impacts; and later this year we will be launching a revised set of climate projections, through to the end of the century, which will help us plan a more climate-resilient future. We are applying lessons learned at home and abroad to address this global challenge.

In closing. Building societies that are resilient to the changing climate is a team effort. From emergency planning to infrastructure investment, from adaptations in agriculture and land-use to risk financing, and countless other areas. It is a global challenge requiring global solutions and global cooperation. The UK is committed to building ambition and action. We invite national and subnational-governments, the private sector, and civil society, to join us in making the summit next year a success. Galvanizing action to increase resilience in the countries and communities most affected by climate change.