



## Transcript

# Keynote address

Christiana Figueres

Executive Secretary, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

21 October 2013

*This speech was delivered at the conference, [Delivering Concrete Climate Change Action: Towards 2015](#).*

The views expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of Chatham House, its staff, associates or Council. Chatham House is independent and owes no allegiance to any government or to any political body. It does not take institutional positions on policy issues. This document is issued on the understanding that if any extract is used, the author(s)/ speaker(s) and Chatham House should be credited, preferably with the date of the publication or details of the event. Where this document refers to or reports statements made by speakers at an event every effort has been made to provide a fair representation of their views and opinions, but the ultimate responsibility for accuracy lies with this document's author(s). The published text of speeches and presentations may differ from delivery.

## **Christiana Figueres:**

Dear friends and colleagues,

I'm delighted to see you all.

Before I start, I want to invite you to do something that we do every day without noticing. Would you please all take one deep breath...Now I'll tell you what just happened here. We are the first humans in the history of the world to breathe 400 parts per million of CO<sub>2</sub> with every breath we take. That is a daunting fact.

It is also daunting that 400 ppm is 100 ppm more than the last ice age, it is the variation that occurs normally – if anything is normal anymore – over 100,000 years and we have accelerated it 100 times.

We have just had an excellent exposé of the first working group of the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report. Because of that, I will not go into any of the science, but none of us should ever make any presentation in public or in private without starting with the basic facts of science.

Let me quickly move into the other areas. It seems to me that the Fifth Assessment Report actually ends at least two debates. It ends the debate on science because we have 200 lead authors putting together the work of 600 scientists who went through 9,000 peer-reviewed publications and answered 50,000 queries. The statistics speak for themselves. There is no longer a question on the science.

And that working group report ends the debate on 'should we act?' There is no doubt that we have to act and that we have to act now. Now is the time. It is not tomorrow. It is not the day after tomorrow. It is now. Now is the time.

There are two other debates lingering out there. One is: will the outcome actually be any different if we have climate-friendly policy in place? And the second is: are the challenges that we are facing so complex that we are unable to effectively address them?

Those two debates have also ended thanks to the overwhelming consensus of the major financial and energy institutions of the world.

The World Bank has put out its report saying that if we continue what we're doing, we're going to go to 4C degrees of warming, which would wipe out all the development gains of the past 25 years. But, we can still put policy in place to get to our vital 2 degrees Celsius goal. They have also announced they will no longer finance new coal plants except in extenuating

circumstances. This has been echoed by the European Investment Bank, and by the European Construction Bank and the Ex Im Bank.

The IMF has come out and said that subsidies on fossil fuels can and must be decreased while moving towards renewables. It emphasised that this can be done without jeopardizing or threatening low-income populations. The IMF has analysed the situation of each country with fossil fuel subsidies, and stands ready, willing and able to assist any country that wants to start decreasing fossil fuel subsidies.

The OECD has recently come out with the call for zero-net emissions by the second half of the century, a target we can reach if we have the right policies in place.

The IEA too has, very clearly, said that emissions continue to rise, but that we can curb those emissions with the right policies. They put out four choice sectors in which policy can be implemented without harming economic growth and functioning.

I recently came back from the World Energy Congress meeting in Korea, where the World Energy Council put out its Energy Trilemma report. They state that we must move toward an energy model that is reliable, affordable and environmentally responsible and they put out a clear 10 step agenda to take us there.

I was impressed that the conversation in Daegu at the World Energy Congress was not about whether, but rather about how we are going to move towards a reliable, affordable and environmentally responsible energy model. This is very encouraging. What is not encouraging is that the conversation does not yet reflect the urgency of the challenge.

Yes, policy matters; no, it is not so complex that it cannot be addressed, and yes, the time is now.

The next step in the global response to climate change is COP 19 in Warsaw and I will briefly give you our sense of what needs to be delivered in Warsaw because the incoming COP President will surely go into more detail.

First, the world is eagerly waiting for the ratifications of the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. Second, we must take the institutional arrangements that have already been agreed to and move them from the design phase into the operational phase. That includes all the institutional arrangements to support developing countries in both finance and technology. All of this is already agreed.

Then we have the issues that are still under negotiation and which Warsaw must move. There, Warsaw needs progress in 3 major areas:

First: finance. We must be able to move the Green Climate Fund into its operational phase. The board is getting ready for an initial capitalization in next year. One goal of the GCF will be to help to de-risk and leverage private capital.

The annual \$100 billion that has been committed to, as climate finance needs to be understood in the context of real need. The IEA says we will need a yearly investment of \$1 trillion into clean energy and resilient infrastructure to transform in order to transform the economy. The \$100 billion is then basically the tail that needs to wag the dog: that funding needs to point the dog in the direction of green capital flows. It must move because we know the financing is not \$100 billion per year, it is \$1 trillion. That is what needs to be mobilized.

Second: loss and damage. Progress on this is incontrovertible. We know that we had, at the last COP in Doha, a starting decision. But we are far away from where we have to be on both adaptation and the next phase on loss and damage, so we need very clear progress on the mechanism to support loss and damage.

Third: the ADP. We need to further clarify the elements to be included in a draft agreement. Countries need to consider an ambitious and clear draft in Lima in 2014. Such a draft needs to include two difficult, but absolutely crucial points of progress from Warsaw.

Number one, governments have to walk out of Warsaw knowing their next step is to go home and do the necessary internal analysis, so that they are in a position to put their national contribution on the table towards a global solution.

Number two, Warsaw must figure out how the process is going to recognize all of the other actions, activities and initiatives that are going on outside the formal process.

The climate change negotiating process is the centre, but certainly not the circumference of climate action. The point of the formal process is for governments to point in the right direction and then all the sectors and initiatives actually provide the speed and action that is necessary.

Warsaw needs to change the narrative that we have created over time. We need to leave Warsaw with a dominant narrative of constructive engagement on climate action. That is why the secretariat is using Warsaw as a platform to showcase action that is already occurring. To this end we have chosen three

areas: women, the urban poor, and innovative financing. On their side the COP presidency will be offering Warsaw as a platform for cities and businesses to show what they're doing.

Warsaw needs to be a resounding response to the call for action that has been put out by the first IPCC Working Group.

My friends, now is the time and Warsaw needs to show that we have understood that now is the time.

I very much appreciate the agenda and work that you will be doing over the next two days, because you're going to be focusing on what is the challenge that we are all moving into as we get closer and closer to 2015. But before we get to 2015, I would like to very clearly underline that 2014 is the critical year. In 2014, we must enlarge the space for action and prepare not only for an agreement, but for a meaningful agreement.

There are a couple of events which we can use as milestones. In January, we are grateful to have the World Economic Forum devote one of the days in Davos to climate change. We are working with them on that agenda to be able to identify a handful of climate change game-changing opportunities in the climate agenda that can be moved forward and truly make a difference.

In May, we have the Clean Energy Ministerial in Korea, where I expect ministers of energy to come together to constructively discuss how the energy model is going to move forward under the circumstances that we now understand.

In September – as you all very well know – the Secretary-General of the United Nations has called for a summit for both heads of state as well as heads of corporations. He is calling for them to come with their bold commitments on climate finance as well as on their emission reductions.

Why? Because now is the time.

I do not exaggerate when I say that 2014 needs to be the year in which every government, every organization, every business, every individual needs to ask themselves, 'How am I going to contribute to solving climate?' If 2014 emerges as the year in which we have mounting evidence not just of severe weather events but also mounting evidence of bold action and bold commitment, then we stand the best chance of having a strong draft agreement in Lima. This will enable us to then move to Paris with a universal framework for climate action that is anchored in reality and that is powerful enough to transform our reality.

If 2014 yields strong answers from every government, organisation, business and individual, we will be able to go to Paris and get a climate framework that both harvests everything we're doing now and that will be accelerating in 2013-2015, as well as catalysing further action. This is so important because it is the only way that we will achieve low global emissions in this decade and zero-net emissions in the second half of this century.

So my friends, this is my bottom line message to you today. Now is the time and all of your work is needed. I know all of you are here because you have a contribution to make. Do not peg that contribution to 2015, it will be one year too late. Peg that contribution on 2014 because that is the only way you'll be able to influence the meaningfulness of the agreement of 2015.

Thank you.