

A transcript of a speech given by the Prime Minister to the Major Economies Forum in London on 19 October 2009.

**Prime Minister Gordon Brown:**

Can I say first of all welcome to London; welcome to these discussions at Lancaster House; welcome to what I hope will be a very constructive set of discussions that will lead us towards Copenhagen.

I'm particularly pleased that you're discussing such a big issue here at Lancaster House. Lancaster House has a history of resolving some of the great issues of our time. It's where all the great colonial and independence movements were resolved, from Ghana to Zimbabwe. It's where we agreed debt relief for the poorest countries. And I hope here that you will be able to agree progress on the climate change discussions that we need to have at Copenhagen.

I want to pay tribute to your work in leading the climate-change debate in your own countries, in driving that debate forward internationally, in creating a great consensus amongst public opinion right across the world.

And let me just say how important I believe your discussions today are. In every era there are one or two moments when nations come together and reach agreements that make history because they change the course of history, and Copenhagen must be such a time. There are now fewer than 50 days to set the course for the next few decades, so as we convene here we carry great responsibilities, and the world is watching.

If we do not reach a deal over the next few months, let us be in no doubt, since once the damage from unchecked emissions growth is done, no retrospective global agreement in some future period can undo that choice. By then it will be irretrievably too late, so we should never allow ourselves to lose sight of the catastrophe we face if present warming trends continue.

Only last week we saw new evidence of the rapid loss of Arctic Sea ice. In just 25 years the glaciers in the Himalayas, which provide water for three-quarters of a billion people could disappear entirely. IPCC estimates tell us now that by 2080 an extra 1.8 billion people - equal to a quarter of the

world's current population - could be living and dying without enough water.

If the international community does nothing to assist the rainforest nations in protecting the world's rainforests, the damage not just to climate but to biodiversity, to watersheds and to the livelihoods of millions of people will, as you know here, be incalculable.

And the recent report of the Global Humanitarian Forum led by Kofi Annan suggests that 325 million people are already seriously affected by drought, disease, floods, loss of livestock, low agricultural yields and decline of fish stocks. A further 500 million are at extreme risk, and every year the effects of climate change are already killing 300,000 people, the numbers killed by Indian Ocean tsunami, and the toll could rise to 500,000 each year by 2030.

98% of those dying and otherwise seriously affected live in the poorest countries, and yet their countries account for only 8% of global emissions. This is the great injustice of climate change: those being hit first and hardest by climate change are those who have done least to cause it.

On Saturday, the President of the Maldives, whose concerns I share, held a Cabinet Meeting underwater to highlight the calamity that may engulf his islands.

In the South Pacific nation of Kiribati, President Tong has requested international aid to evacuate his people before their land quite literally disappears.

But the threat, as you know, is not confined to the developing world. The extraordinary summer heat-wave of 2003 in Europe resulted in 35,000 extra deaths. On current trends such an event could become quite routine in Britain in just a few decades' time. And within the lifetime of our children and grandchildren the intense temperatures of 2003 could become the average temperatures experienced throughout much of Europe. In Britain we face the prospect of more frequent droughts and a rising wave of floods.

The threat is not only humanitarian and ecological; it is also an economic one. Three years ago, the Stern Report, which I commissioned, concluded that failure to avoid the worst effects of climate change could lead to global GDP being up to 20% lower than otherwise it would be. And that is an economic cost greater than the losses caused by two world wars and the Great Depression.

Let us therefore be in no doubt that this is a profound moment for our world, and it's a time of momentous choice. Down one path is a business-as-usual future of high carbon and low cooperation. And down this path, yes, we could see economic growth for a while, powered by traditional energy sources, but such growth would be unsustainable and soon overwhelmed by its inevitable consequences: greater energy insecurity; greater pollution and ill-health; and, as a result of climate-induced migration and poverty in the poorest countries, almost inevitably, greater conflict.

Now, the other path leads to a low-carbon, high-cooperation future; a future too of economic growth, but growth powered by new energy sources and by energy efficiency, and bringing with it huge economic opportunities for developed and developing countries alike: new jobs and businesses; new technologies; new export opportunities.

This will not stop climate change. Already, some change is inescapable, but we can slow climate change to a rate to which we have a chance to adapt. And low carbon means high cooperation: cooperation over technology development and assistance; cooperating in providing finance for adaptation; cooperation in a global carbon market which fosters efficient emissions reduction and creates investment flows to developing countries.

Taking this path will not be easy for any of us. It involves changing long-held assumptions about the nature of the economic development we'll pursue, about the kind of energy we will use, about how our societies and economies will be organised. We will all face formidable political constraints and challenges. And the first step - one we must take here in this forum - is to acknowledge all this and resolve that the barriers shall be overcome.

The signs of momentum, however, of forward movement, are now unmistakable. It was at the Bali Conference two years ago that the international community agreed to secure the new agreement in Copenhagen this year. At the G20 in April, at the Major Economies Forum, at the Secretary-General's Summit last month, which I attended, world leaders reaffirmed their determination to meet the Copenhagen timetable.

In just the last few weeks new commitments and announcements have spurred new progress, including the target announced by the new Government of the Prime Minister of Japan to cut emissions by 25% on 1990 levels by 2020, President Hu's speech to the United Nations, and the announcement by the President of Indonesia, who would seek to reduce emissions by 26% on business as usual by 2020.

I welcome these developments, which build on commitments already announced by many countries represented at this meeting and beyond it. And I believe that in many other nations too momentum is building towards further announcements before Copenhagen.

So I believe agreement at Copenhagen is possible, but we must frankly face the fact that our negotiations are not getting to agreement quickly enough. Before Copenhagen there is just one more negotiating week in Barcelona, so I believe leaders must engage directly to break the impasse. We cannot compromise with the Earth; we cannot compromise with the catastrophe of unchecked climate change, so we must compromise with one another. I urge my fellow leaders to work together to reach agreement among us, recognising both our common and our differentiated responsibilities, and also recognising the dire consequences of failure.

We urgently need convergence on the principle issues for any agreement: binding economy-wide caps in the mid-term for developed countries and nationally appropriate mitigation actions for developing ones; finance, including for adaptation, forestry, technology- and capacity-building; technology cooperation including specific action plans in areas like solar power and carbon capture and storage; and national communications and monitoring, reporting and verification.

In particular we must make progress on finance. That requires developed

countries to come forward with finance offers and developing countries to come forward with the plans and actions which such finance would support, practical commitments which both must keep and make.

As you know, I put forward a package of proposals for how such climate finance could be organised with a working figure of 100 billion per year in predictable public and private funding by 2020. Let us match what developed countries can raise with what developing countries can do, to combat climate change.

I believe we can do this. I believe also that such an agreement not only must, but can, put the world on a trajectory to a maximum average global temperature increase of 2°. Lord Stern has shown that, with annual global emissions currently at 50Gt, a 2° deal requires emissions to fall to around 20Gt by 2050. To get there, he suggests, we will need to reach 44Gt by 2020, and 35Gt by 2030. Already countries are undertaking actions or have put forward offers which would reduce emissions to 46-49Gt in 2020, so we are looking for a further 4-5Gt, and I'm convinced we can achieve this through a combination of efforts in developed countries, in developing countries, and in global reductions in aviation and maritime emissions.

So, in conclusion, in the remaining weeks to Copenhagen, and in the two weeks of the conference itself, I will work tirelessly with fellow leaders to negotiate a deal. I have said I will go to Copenhagen, and I'm encouraging them to make the same commitment. I ask you as our representatives to devote this meeting not to rehearsing disagreements, but to pursuing the common interests and global imperatives that are the only path to agreement and the only sure way to make the world safe for human survival.

This is our test of our ability to work together as nations facing common challenges in this new global era. We have shown this year in the approach to the global economic crisis how cooperation from all can benefit each of us. Now we must apply the same resolve and urgency to the climate crisis that faces us.

We cannot afford to fail. If we fail now we will pay a heavy price. If we act now, if we act together, if we act with vision and resolve, success at

Copenhagen is still within our reach, but, if we falter, the Earth will itself be at risk and, for the planet, there is no Plan B. In the words of a former President of the United States, 'If not us, who? If not now, when? If not together, how?' So this is the moment, now is the time, and we must be the people who act.

Thank you very much.