



**Launch of Climate Neutral Now  
New York, 22 September 2015**

**Statement by  
Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary  
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

Ladies and gentlemen,

The overarching idea of this week and next week is – here we are, with transformation in front of us. We are witnessing the transformation.

It's not that we are planning for the transformation. It's not that we are dreaming of the transformation. It's that we are already in that transition and it's very, very exciting to see so much evidence of it everywhere.

It's really quite wonderful to be here. And Janos (Janos Pasztor, Assistant Secretary-General on Climate Change, United Nations), thank you for taking time out to be here. I know how incredibly busy you are this week, so thank you very much. I appreciate that.

So, where are we with this initiative? Let me give this a little bit of a conceptual context.

Governments say that they understand science, and led by science they have already agreed to not allow temperature increase to go beyond 2 degrees Celsius, to in fact stay below 2 degrees Celsius. And many governments want us to stay below 1.5 degrees Celsius in order to increase the probability of safety for their populations.

Translating that and translating 2 degrees Celsius as a maximum temperature rise into emissions trajectory means, quite starkly, having to peak global emissions within the next ten years maximum, then decline quite quickly and get to the point of climate neutrality in the second half of the century, if not before.

What that actually means from a global perspective is that for those of you who will be around in 2050 – you don't have to raise your hands, because it will make the rest of us quite jealous – those of you who will be here after 2050 will live in a world in which all the unavoidable emissions will be absorbed naturally by the natural systems of the planet. That is climate neutrality.

We need to re-establish that ecological balance. Now, is that possible today? No. It is not possible today. It is currently not possible because the carbon intensity of our entire economic structure is such that even those actors who are very responsible – call them individuals, call them corporations – have to go to extraordinary efforts to figure out how to get to climate neutrality.

Even I as an individual – I drive a hybrid car, I use the public tram, etc. – but the moment I get in a tram, I am responsible for at least one part of the emissions of that tram and I can't control whether that tram is using 100 per cent renewables. So it is actually not fully under our control what our personal or corporate or national or provincial climate footprint is.

We can certainly begin to address it, but it is not 100 per cent under our control. It will be very easy fifty years from now because the system is going to support that climate neutrality. But just because we need to intentionally plan our future climate neutrality, does that mean it is impossible to get to climate neutrality now? No!

Just because it has to be intentional, doesn't mean we have to wait for 2050 to be climate neutral. The fact is that with very clear intentionality and planning, individuals, corporations can actually be climate neutral now, without waiting for 2050 and that is what this initiative is about.

It is about encouraging individuals... and here we have very nice, very well-known names. Ed Norton, Vivienne Westwood and others who have committed to this. Certainly I am very grateful to Rob (Rob Bernard, Chief Environmental Strategist, Microsoft) and to Mike (Mike Barry, Director of Sustainable Business, Marks and Spencer) for Microsoft and Marks and Sparks, if I may use the loving name that we all use for you. And then, of course, some other companies such as Sony and Adidas who understand that becoming climate neutral now is actually possible and who are helping us to socialise this concept.

We would like to puncture the myth that climate neutrality is impossible, that it is only something that can be reached fifty years from now, that it is very, very difficult, that it requires extraordinary effort. It's not true. You can be very responsible with your emissions. Rob and Mike will explain to us what they are doing about bringing down their emissions, about committing to renewable energy as the source of their energy.

And, then, once you have measured and reduced your emissions, either as a person or as a company, you can invest in offsets to become climate neutral – not in the future, but now.

I have done that personally. I have actually already offset all of my lifetime emissions as well as for my family, fully well understanding that I will continue to travel, that I will continue to get on a plane, and my family will continue to do this.

So what do you do? You overestimate how much you are going to be doing and then you offset so that is entirely possible. You can do it as an individual. Janos, have you become climate neutral? Because otherwise, guess what you're going to be doing after this meeting! I don't want to steal your thunder – but it is actually quite exciting.

I have to tell you... the look on the faces of my daughters when I went to them and I said: "Guess what, the whole of the family is climate neutral, now, for the rest of our lives!" And they say: "How do you know how many kids we are going to have?" And I replied, "Ok, ok, ok...only the current generation!" It is possible and it is exciting, and it is something that we all need to move forward, because I don't want to hear any more arguments about climate neutrality – it's impossible, it's too difficult. No.

Frankly, all of us have the resources to do this. There is no excuse not to become climate neutral now. That's my bottom line.

All of us who have the resources and the brain to put these two things together, there is no excuse, under current conditions – in particular with this tool we are launching today – there is no excuse for anyone not to be climate neutral now.

So my invitation is not just to Janos but to everyone here. Step up and demonstrate how easy it is. Thanks!

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