



**2015 World Summit Climate & Territories
Lyon, 2 July 2015**

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

Good afternoon to all of you,

My first statement is congratulations on the incredible inclusiveness of this meeting. May I start by addressing you all not just as dear friends but as dear miracle workers, because you have done miracles both in your jurisdictions and in coming together here as a group.

It is very encouraging for us who have the responsibility of making another miracle in Paris. It is very helpful to see that these miracles are occurring and that you have shown the way. So thank you very much for inviting me here.

I have recently, just in the past few days or weeks, been able to visit some of you; let me just mention Quebec, South Australia, California. I have been not just impressed. I have been moved by the action that is already under way, not just planned because it is easier to plan, but all the climate change action that is already under way in every single one of your territories, every single one of your jurisdictions.

So I ask myself, "Why is all of this occurring?" Surely, my dear friends, it is not only to save the planet. Let us be very frank about that. The reason why you are all embarked on this is because from the point of view of your state, your city, your territory, your jurisdiction, from your point of view there are huge benefits to be had.

You're interested in better and more efficient transportation. You're interested in cleaner air to breathe. You're interested in better waste management. You're interested in more energy efficiency and more reliable renewable energy on the grid and off the grid. You're interested in the new economy creating more jobs, more industry and more economic growth for your respective jurisdictions. So that is why you have individually embarked on this action.

But then, my friends, I ask myself: "So what are you doing collectively?" And let me tell you that, collectively, you are doing nothing less than creating a new reality for the world.

You are making possible what heretofore had only been in the literature. You are making possible the move towards a low-carbon, high growth society – both of those together. You are proving time and time again that it is not only possible to reduce emissions while GDP goes up; you're proving that there is actually a very clear cause and effect.

Reduction of greenhouse gases brings with it a growth in the economic impetus of your jurisdiction, so you are transforming the global economy. Collectively, you are truly getting the global economy ready for the twenty-first century.

Getting ready for the twenty-first century is what the Paris Agreement is all about. The Paris Agreement is going to be a legally binding instrument. I hope that's not news to you. But if it is, please take note. It is going to be a legally binding instrument.

It is going to be applicable to all countries, but not equally applied to all. It is going to be applicable in differentiated ways. It is not going to be a punitive structure; it is going to be an enabling and facilitative structure. And, above all, it is going to be a structure that accompanies the global economy over time. It is going to mark the progression towards the low-carbon, high resilient economy over time.

If you will, picture that the Paris Agreement is going to build a very broad highway with many different lanes, where each country, from your perspective think each jurisdiction, can find the lane that they want to join, whether you are in the fast lane – as many of you are – or whether some need to be, for different circumstances, in the slow lane or anywhere in between.

It is going to allow for different vehicles of engagement because even here in this hall we already have very many different ways of approaching climate change, and when you put 195 countries together you can imagine that the diversity is exacerbated.

So there will be the possibility to engage on this very broad highway with different vehicles of engagement. But it is one single highway. It is one single highway that if we do our work correctly has no exits, because once we get on that highway, that highway takes us together in differentiated ways towards the low-carbon, de-carbonised, high resilience society that we need to get to.

That is a very different construct to what we had in the past. And it is a construct that looks at these famous INDCs – I am sorry, that is the only acronym I am going to use, the

Intended Nationally Determined Contributions that we're getting from national governments – it looks at those INDCs as frankly the first step, the first stop along that highway, but certainly not the last.

It is the first stop. It will be quantified. It will set the baseline and then from there, my friends, we move up every five or ten years.

We will have renewed sets of INDCs that take us along that highway progressively until we are actually at the point where we have to arrive at climate neutrality, certainly by the end of this century, if not before.

It is also going to be an agreement that provides financial support, in particular for developing countries and in particular for least-developed countries and small island States, because they are the ones that are suffering the worst impacts, and where financial and technical support is most urgent.

And very importantly for you, it is going to be an agreement that recognises the actions of all stakeholders.

Exactly how that recognition is going to turn out, that is still a work in progress. But there is enough political will. You have worked enough with your national governments to ensure that that willingness is there. My one request is for you to continue to work with those national governments that are open to this idea and ensure that we get a very good, constructive recognition of all stakeholders.

Speaking of national governments, some of you are working very well with your national governments, and that is a very helpful thing because it allows for vertical integration of policies and sectors that take us along that highway in an accelerated fashion. But others of you are having, let me say, a more challenging time with your national governments.

That difference that some of you are living is regrettable but, I assure you, it is not permanent. It is not a permanent difference. It is a difference that you have now, that you have to manage now, but it is not permanent. Because if there is anything that we can already recognise about this transformation, about this highway, it is that it is irreversible. There is no such thing as somebody taking the car in the other direction.

This transformation that we are is irreversible, it is unstoppable. It has already started and Paris is going to be one stop, but certainly not the last. Therefore we have to understand that this transformation that you have all helped so much to fuel, because it is in your own interests, also has global benefits.

This transformation clearly goes beyond political parties. This is not an issue that should be divided by a political aisle. Addressing climate change is not pitting the left of the political spectrum against the right.

The threats from non-action and the benefits of action are so broad that no matter where you sit – to the extreme left or the extreme right or anywhere in between – you can find a benefit in climate action.

Addressing climate change is not pitting national governments against sub-national governments either. The agenda of climate change is so broad that it goes clearly beyond any territorial boundaries. In fact it goes beyond national boundaries; it goes to the planetary boundary.

And sitting where I am, addressing climate change is not pitting the north against the south. Unfortunately we fall into that default thinking. But, it is not pitting the north against the south or the south against the north.

My friends, addressing climate change has so many benefits for every single country, no matter where those countries are in their economic development. Whether you're currently in the global north or in the global south trying to move up into the global north, or staying in the global south for a while, there are absolutely tangible concrete urgent benefits that come from climate action.

So addressing climate change is not a divider, it is a unifier and we must understand it as so. I think you have come to that conclusion already, and you are acting on that knowledge. That is something that you need to export further outside of these halls.

Action on climate change is not a divider, it is a unifier. It is precisely in addressing climate change that we come in touch with our deepest humanity as has been expressed recently by His Holiness Pope Francis. Addressing climate change is the space in which we unleash the most stunning of human ingenuity.

Addressing climate change is the challenge for the most intentional and deepest collaboration that humanity has ever attempted. It is the space in which we as a human race must stand up and act if we want to call ourselves responsible stewards of this planet.

So, my dear friends, as individuals you can count yourselves as truly visionary leaders. Collectively, you are transforming the world.

Every single step that you take, every single cause, every single measure, every single project contributes to transforming not just your jurisdiction, but to transforming the world and getting it ready for the twenty-first century.

Collectively, my friends, you are writing history. And it is going to be a history that you and I are going to collectively be proud of.

Thank you.
