

# IARU Climate Change Congress

10-03-2009

## **Opening Remarks by H.E. Connie Hedegaard Denmark's Minister for Climate and Energy**

Your Royal Highness. Excellencies. Distinguished participants.

When the World gathers in this very hall in December to forge an ambitious and truly global climate deal which will be the culmination of years of negotiations and talks since Kyoto. Hopefully, it will reflect the new reality of today – and be a defining moment in World Politics.

Mans impact on the Planet is increasing – and so are the costs of our inaction. The World needs a climate agreement that charts a common course for a new beginning; an agreement that adheres to the rationale of the New World Economy – the Green Economy.

If we are to succeed here in Copenhagen – AND WE HAVE TO! – then science must inform us and guide our decisions. Or rather: YOU have to tell US what you know – LOUD AND CLEAR.

What did Katherine say? This is no easy task – certainly not for scientists... Richardson just say: The relationship between media and science is naturally “complicated”. But I urge you: Bring your best game. Make your cases compellingly to all decision makers – and indeed to every citizen. Everybody must understand the urgency of this matter - AND the potential costs if we don't act now.

In no uncertain terms science has made it clear that we are part of the problem; that we must act on the science before us – before our generation; that we must mend our ways – for the generations to come.

Therefore it is ironic that with such scientific clarity, we are still sensing doubt and uncertainty in our midst. AND it is worrying that in this year of international resolution, the authority of science is fading in the shadows of serious economic crisis.

Dear friends: We must not let fear delay action. Certainly: The economic crisis is no excuse for inaction. On the contrary, it is a chance to set a new course and steer our economies towards great opportunities. How often do we get a chance to rethink business as usual. In fact: The policies needed to address climate change and revitalise our core infrastructure are the very same policies that can help rebalance and revitalize our economies.

Denmark has seen the positive effects of enhanced energy efficiency and increased use of renewable energy. In thirty years, we have gone from being almost completely dependent on foreign sources of energy to being a net energy exporter. And we have become one of the most energy efficient countries in the World.

Over the past 25 years Denmark has registered almost 80 percent of accumulated economic growth - with almost no increase in our total energy consumption. Today, clean tech and renewables account for some 10 percent of our total exports – and remains one of our fastest growing export

areas.

We have created an abundance of clean tech jobs largely in remote areas of the country that were previously hit by consecutive waves of outsourcing.

In short: We don't just claim that green growth pays off. We have proven it in clean, cold numbers. We have proven that green growth can deliver the millions of new jobs that the World needs; that it can diversify economic development; and that it can make us all less dependent on fluctuating energy prices. And on a Planet of soon to be nine billion people - all wanting the commodities of modern life – the already solid business case for sustainable growth only becomes all the more apparent by the day.

Reaching an ambitious and truly global climate change agreement here in Copenhagen in December is not just about saving our climate. There is much more to the equation – and yet it is in fact quite simple, because:

If we don't act now, we won't sustain economic growth.

If we don't act now, we will stay hostage to outdated energy systems.

If we don't act now, we risk catastrophic changes to our climate causing destabilising conflicts and massive migration of refugees due to water and food shortage in many parts of the World.

And consequently if we don't act now, we ultimately bring our national security in danger.

In other words: We simply cannot afford not to invest in a green future. And we cannot afford not to rethink the way we shape our societies and economies.

And for this we also call on you – on science. We need all the expertise gathered in this room – and even more. We need your innovative findings for a low carbon future that is full of fun, fashionable, exciting, smart and intelligent solutions – a low carbon tomorrow that is not dull and grey, but bright and green.

YOU – the scientists - have identified the problem before us – and you can also provide us with the research leading to new generations of technologies to help fix it. It is then up to us – the politicians, the companies and citizens – to make it happen.

I strongly believe that future politics must be guided by science – also when it requires tough political decisions.

When it comes to climate change, science is unambiguous: To avoid the unmanageable and manage the unavoidable we must take immediate action and keep global warming below two degrees centigrade.

With every day of delay, we waste precious time.

With every month of delay, the costs of inaction continue to rise.

With every year of delay, our efforts must be even more ambitious.

Science plays a monumental role in defining our level of ambition. It is vital that our targets and goals are set in accordance with the widest possible scientific consensus. We must acknowledge the immense work of the IPCC – and the guidance of the assessment reports.

In many capitals around the globe, governments are now calculating how they can best contribute to our future global climate architecture.

The IPCC has set a yard stick for us all to measure our efforts against: To stay below the two degrees centigrade threshold, developed countries must reduce emissions to 25-40 percent below 1990 levels by 2020 – and 80-95 percent below 1990 by 2050. And large developing economies must reduce their emissions with 15-30 percent below a business as usual scenario for 2020.

True commitments by the developed countries will inspire confidence in the developing world – also financially – that the rich world seriously will live up to its responsibilities.

With his clear determination to tackle global warming and take on international leadership, President Obama has received the World's undivided attention. AND the President's pledge to reduce emissions to . BUT we also need the 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050 is a start United States to listen to science and deliver real reductions in the short to medium term. That will be the key to make others, also China, move their positions.

The clock is ticking. In just nine months the World must reach a truly global climate change agreement here in Copenhagen. The deal must be ambitious enough to reverse the path that we are on – and it must have full commitment from all major emitters.

Signing on to a global deal is no free lunch. It requires political responsibility – putting a price on carbon and setting reduction targets to be reached within our time. This is not the time to get shaky and doubtful. It is the time to reaffirm our commitment to an ambitious global deal and contribute with our level best.

As we progress towards December, we count on your clear guidance. This Congress will help illuminate our path to Copenhagen. I'm sure it will emphasise the sense of urgency – and so I wish you all the best in your deliberations and look forward to receiving your input and advice.

Thank you!