

**WITH** Kofi Annan and The Elders on the bold action needed from world leaders / David Nussbaum on climate policies that match pledges / Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala on solutions from finance / Science and policy-making



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Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General



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# New World

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## Our greatest test

Hayley Richardson on the UN's frontline climate work

Climate change is the greatest test we face today. Yes, this statement is also one of the greatest clichés of our time, but that doesn't make it any less true. *New World* readers will be well versed in the dangers we're lurching towards – the loss of sea ice in the Arctic, disrupted monsoons in Asia, disappearing rainforest in the Americas and an increasingly toxic atmosphere just about everywhere.

As the only truly global organisation, the United Nations plays a central role in combatting climate change. The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) – meeting in Paris for climatic treaty talks at the time of publication – is the most prominent of its initiatives, though not always for the right reasons (see pages 8–10).

However, there is much more to the UN system's climate work than this. Over 40 specialised agencies, funds, programmes and bodies are engaged in a range of frontline efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help communities adapt. For example:

- Sustainable Energy for All: with 1.3 billion people lacking access to electricity, and mindful that energy demands from developing countries are expected to surge in coming decades, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched this initiative in 2011. It sets out to provide universal access to modern energy services and to double energy efficiency and renewable energy rates.
- Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+): a collaborative UN programme, REDD+ offers financial incentives for countries to tackle deforestation, mitigate emissions and sustainably manage their resources. These strategies also aim to provide social and economic benefits for affected populations. Established under the UNFCCC, REDD+ may form part of the outcome in Paris.
- WIPO GREEN: working with a range of other UN agencies, the World



A bucket wheel excavator removes soil at an open cast mine in Welzow-Süd, Germany. The site covers 11 square miles and produces up to 20m tons of lignite – the dirtiest form of coal – annually. The mine's Swedish owner, Vattenfall, has recently put all of its German lignite assets up for sale

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Intellectual Property Organization provides an online marketplace for the dissemination of over 1,000 innovative 'green' technologies.

- Hyogo Framework for Action: when natural disasters have struck, countless countries have benefitted from the Hyogo Framework for Action. Adopted at the World Conference for Disaster Reduction in 2005, the Framework provides a common system for rapid response, and practical advice for achieving disaster resilience.
- Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission: overseen by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Commission coordinates ocean observation worldwide, providing evidence of climate change through rising water temperatures and acidification levels.

The stark comparison between the UN's stalled climate diplomacy and its essential daily work can be seen as emblematic of attitudes towards the Organization as a whole. Too often we pass judgment on the UN's success or failure based on the outcomes of its latest 'talking shop', criticising it for the actions of member states while overlooking the vital good it does around the world, every day.

It's right that we should focus our attention on the climate talks in Paris. Over 20 years' worth of time, money, research and (arguably not enough) political will have been invested in them. But, as I hope this issue shows, a global treaty is just one element amongst a wide spectrum of necessary solutions (see pages 14–15). And to succeed, all sectors of society must be involved. We could do worse than following the UN's lead. ●

## Get in touch

UNA-UK welcomes your thoughts and comments on this issue of *New World*, or your suggestions for future issues.

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## The enemy of the good

Sir Jeremy on realistic routes to a sustainable future

At last policy-makers are getting serious about measures to confine global warming to a 2°C rise. The build-up to the Paris conference, the evidence of melting glaciers and the deepening consensus amongst climate scientists are concentrating minds.

Yet realistic solutions are still eluding people. This is for very understandable reasons; complex problems tend to require a complex approach. Low-carbon power generation is still way more expensive than power generated by fossil fuels, whose efficiency and ready availability have underpinned the world's enormous economic progress over the past century. Economic performance has become the primary indicator of a well-functioning state in the 21st century, now that the use of military force has lost its legitimacy in most circumstances, and expensive energy is unpopular with consumers anywhere.

Into this perception – that the best environmental prescriptions are unaffordable – comes historical resentment that the advanced industrialised states developed their economies at the cost of today's emerging societies (something I have witnessed both in my former diplomatic career and in my current role as Chairman of an energy advisory firm).

That countries like China and India, South Korea, Nigeria and Brazil are – at different speeds – producing consumer powerhouses in their domestic economies is a geoeconomic and geopolitical development of the first order. It is changing the pattern of trade and investment from the old global system of the World Trade Organization to a much more competitive, regional and culturally diverse mix of relationships.

Their rapidly growing requirement for energy cannot be met by renewables at prices their consumers will pay. Coal is their answer unless they can be persuaded otherwise, with money talking louder than climate logic. Yet this near-sightedness overlooks coal's huge health and social costs, mainly borne by the world's poorest.

When politicians base decisions on the false choice between ruination by poverty and ruination by climate change, things can get tense. Paris needs a deal that states will be prepared to implement as a matter of choice, since member states are unlikely to agree soon to legally binding targets. But there is a way forward if governments work in stages, and do not focus too early on the 2050 targets.

Renewable costs are starting to come down as technologies improve, but more time is needed. The German experience, of going strongly for wind and solar power but keeping the lights on with lignite and coal, illustrates the short- to medium-term problem: both costs and carbon emissions rise. Only a country as rich and determined as Germany can afford to go this courageous but painful route.

The next 10 years have to be committed to taking as much coal out of the system as possible, and replacing it with gas. This proposition irks environmentalists – with good reason – but policy-making is the art of the possible. Neither the cleanest solution, a dash for renewables, nor the cheapest one, burning more coal, will produce the best results. Gas for coal is less than perfect, but achievable and beneficial (according to the UN Environment Programme burning coal produces 70 per cent more carbon dioxide than natural gas). Both the United States and the UK – to a chorus of complaint – are now heading in this direction and, particularly in the former, showing the effect on carbon emissions.

Because Copenhagen failed in 2009, and because the evidence of climate change is overwhelming, Paris has to succeed in making a difference. It may only achieve a small advance, but even oil and gas companies are beginning to understand the pressures. Perceptions will start to change in the next few weeks, but the route chosen must collect enough public support to be sustainable. Gas is likely to be an important stepping stone to longer-term solutions. ●



● Situation worsens in Yemen

The United Nations has warned that a humanitarian tragedy is imminent in Taiz, Yemen, unless aid is delivered to the city. Both the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) are appealing for unrestricted access to Taiz, where over three million people are in need of medical assistance, food, water and fuel.

In addition to months of civil war and Saudi Arabia-led air strikes against Houthi rebels, the country has faced two powerful tropical cyclones in recent weeks, exacerbating the crisis. WFP has reported that Taiz, along with nine other governorates in Yemen, is facing “emergency level” food insecurity – one step below famine.

WHO has condemned the recent bombing of a hospital run by Médecins Sans Frontières, which has reportedly left 200,000 people without lifesaving medical care. The UN Special Envoy for Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheik Ahmed, announced on 26 October that preparations have begun for talks between the conflict parties.

● The world welcomes new leaders

A number of elections have taken place around the world in recent weeks. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon applauded the citizens of Myanmar for “their patience, dignity and enthusiasm” during historic elections in the country. Haitians face more political uncertainty as protestors challenged the preliminary results of elections held on 25 October amid allegations of fraud. October also saw John Magufuli win the Tanzanian presidency in a peaceful election, though some results on the autonomous island of Zanzibar were disputed.

Concern is growing over Burundi, which has seen a deepening political crisis in recent months. In April protests broke out when President Pierre Nkurunziza announced he would run for a third term, having already reached the two-term limit. The conduct of subsequent elections in July was criticised by the



Muslim students pray for rain to put out the fires which have enveloped Sumatra, Indonesia. A Malaysian company is among more than 20 firms under investigation by Indonesian authorities in connection with starting the forest fires, whose smog has affected large parts of southeast Asia  
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UN as “not conducive” to an inclusive, free and credible process. The Security Council has held crisis talks on the escalating violence in the capital, Bujumbura, which some UN officials have compared to Rwanda before the 1994 genocide.

● Forest fires in Indonesia

Severe forest fires have been raging across Indonesia in recent months, with NASA satellites detecting over 117,000 this year alone. It is thought that many of these have been started deliberately by companies who burn the rainforest as a cheap way to clear the land for palm oil or paper plantations, or for grazing livestock.

Air quality has plummeted, with the Pollutant Standard Index reaching nearly 2,000 – anything over 300 is considered dangerous. On the islands of Sumatra and Kalimantan, which have been worst affected, 10 people have died and over half a million cases of respiratory illnesses have been reported since July. The resultant smog has also affected the populations of Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines.

It is also a disaster for the environment. As the fires have reached

peatland, where some of the world’s largest concentrations of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) can be found, Indonesia’s daily greenhouse gas emissions have surpassed those of the entire US.

● Refugees face winter conditions

The UN Refugee Agency has launched an appeal for more than \$95m to cope with Europe’s refugee and migrant crisis throughout winter. The money would equip shelters with heating and fund other measures to protect people from cold weather conditions as they travel through Greece and the Balkans. The appeal follows reports from refugees that smugglers offer discounts to those who are willing to travel in poor weather.

Meanwhile, the European Commission has estimated that more than three million additional people are expected to arrive in the EU by the end of next year and that the number of new arrivals is not expected to diminish until 2017.

● A new development agenda

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by UN

member states on 25 September. The 17 goals and 169 targets will be a more complex and ambitious successor to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which expire at the end of the year.

The aim of the Agenda is to “end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all” by 2030. The World Bank announced in October that extreme poverty is likely to fall to below 10 per cent this year, “giving fresh evidence that a quarter-century-long sustained reduction in poverty is moving the world closer to the historic goal of ending poverty by 2030”.

● Women peacebuilders

To mark 15 years since the adoption of landmark Security Council Resolution 1325, the UN body has adopted a new text on the inclusion of women in peacebuilding processes. The new resolution (2242) compels the Security Council to integrate women, peace and security concerns across all country-specific situations on its agenda. The Secretary-General has been tasked with initiating a strategy to double the number of female peacekeepers within five years.

Addressing the Council meeting, UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka said “the voices of women leaders and frontline activists for peace are rare ... but they are the most important voices you will hear today.”

● The destruction of cultural heritage

The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has launched a global campaign which aims to prevent the destruction of cultural heritage sites. “The threat is global and our response must be global” said UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova. The initiative aims to foster greater awareness among the general public about the unifying role of culture. The World Heritage Committee has also adopted a Declaration which condemns attacks by Islamic State militants on cultural sites in Iraq and Syria.

● Unliveable cities

Heat waves in parts of the Middle East could render a number of cities unliveable by 2100 unless action is taken against global warming. A new study in the

journal *Nature Climate Change* asserts that Doha, Abu Dhabi and Bandar Abbas are among the cities facing extreme temperatures at which humans could not survive.

The rising temperatures also pose a risk to the Hajj pilgrimage which attracts millions of Muslims to Mecca every year. Meanwhile, the WHO and World Meteorological Organization have released a series of guidelines aimed at addressing the health risks posed by the rising number of climate change-related heat waves.

● Global health gains in Cuba

Cuba is the world’s first country to eradicate the transmission of HIV and syphilis from mother to child. According to WHO, approximately 1.4 million women with HIV become pregnant each year and, if left untreated, the chances of passing the infection to their children are between 15 and 45 per cent.

WHO and the Pan American Health Organization have been collaborating with Cuba for the past five years to halt mother-to-child transmission. Margaret Chan, WHO Director-General, said: “This is a major victory in our long fight against HIV and sexually transmitted infections, and an important step towards having an AIDS-free generation.”

“You must put down the weapons of despair”

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon speaking during an emergency visit to Jerusalem after a spate of violence in the city

● Top climate scientist criticises UK

The UN Environmental Programme’s chief scientist has said that cuts to renewable energy subsidies in the UK are sending “a perverse signal” ahead of the Paris climate summit in December. Professor Jacqueline McGlade said that it was “disappointing” to see countries such as the UK – which have previously taken the lead in renewable energy – withdraw subsidies and enhance tax breaks for the fossil fuel industry.

The Department for Energy and Climate Change has said that the move was needed after a projected £1.5bn overspend on the budget for clean energy, and reiterated that it is pushing for a strong global deal in Paris.



## Talking points

# Can the UN finally deliver a strong climate treaty?

In 2014, continuous rainfall in parts of Haiti's north resulted in serious flooding, leaving more than a dozen dead and thousands homeless  
© UN Photo/Logan Abassi



*Alex Evans is a Senior Fellow at New York University's Center on International Cooperation and in 2011 was seconded to the UN Secretary-General's office as writer of the High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability*

● **AE:** The UN climate circus has been underway for 23 years, during which time emissions have risen 60 per cent. The Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Christiana Figueres, has already said the Paris conference won't agree a deal to limit global warming to 2°C (the target international limit). When will we admit the current approach doesn't work?

We need an approach that focuses on stabilising concentrations of greenhouse gases in the air – rather than on countries just doing what they think they can manage, as though the climate gives marks for effort.

In practice, that means a scientifically-based, binding, global emissions budget that includes all countries and declines steadily to keep us under 2°C. And it means allocating that budget fairly, on the basis of equal per capita entitlements for all countries: how else are we going to agree to share out the sky?

New research from the Center for Global Development's SkyShares model shows this approach would be affordable for high emitters. What's more, it would be a major new source of finance for lower income countries, who could make \$416bn a year from emissions trading – three times more than current aid flows – just when they need it to meet the Sustainable Development Goals. Why isn't this on the table in Paris?

*The UN climate circus has been underway for 23 years, during which time emissions have risen 60 per cent*

● **BW:** It is important to recognise what has been achieved through the international negotiations. Over the past year, more than 150 Parties to the UNFCCC, representing almost 90 per cent of annual global emissions of greenhouse gases, have submitted Intended Nationally Determined Contributions.

These have included pledges, for the first time, to limit or reduce their emissions beyond 2020. Collectively these represent a significant improvement on 'business as usual' emissions in 2030, but they are not yet consistent with a pathway that stands a reasonable chance of avoiding global warming of more than 2°C.

That is why countries have already acknowledged that the summit in Paris later this year is not a one-off, but the start of a process through which ambitions to reduce emissions will be ramped up towards the goal of avoiding dangerous climate change.

● **AE:** The start of a process to reduce emissions? We're almost a quarter of a century in to this process! You write as if we have all the time in the world – when instead we're in the last chance saloon for limiting average warming to 2°C.

Since you haven't replied to my point that we won't stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations unless and until we have a global emissions budget covering all countries, let me put the question to you: how do you imagine that the incremental approach you advocate will control global warming? Or will you at least be honest enough to admit that it can't?

The best thing the UK ever did on this issue was to pass the 2008 Climate Change Act, which put a legally

binding requirement on future governments to keep Britain's emissions within a safe, scientifically-based national emissions budget. It was an approach based on the clear sense that some issues are too important to be left to the vagaries of short-term political cycles, and need policy designed to manage the problem all the way until it's solved.

If such an approach makes sense at national level – and it does – then it's doubly essential at global level. So, again: why aren't you pushing for this in Paris?

● **BW:** You are quite right that countries need to do more, but you have not provided a practical way to achieve this. You seem to think that countries can be forced to do more than they want. How? The first phase of the Kyoto Protocol attempted to force countries to comply with national targets. But countries, like the United States, that did not want to honour their commitments, simply withdrew. In addition, there is no way of assigning national emissions targets at present, because there is no agreement about what a fair target is for each country.

The Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC is a negotiation process between more than 190 nations. It is messy, frustrating and slow. But it is also the only way we currently have of promoting collective and coordinated action against climate change by all countries around the world.

*There is no way of assigning national emissions targets at present, because there is no agreement about what a fair target is for each country*

● **AE:** Milton Friedman famously observed that only a crisis produces real change, and that the crucial thing is to have the right ideas lying around ready for those moments. What my colleagues and I are proposing is just such an idea. What's yours?

I do agree with you that the question of fairness is right at the heart of this issue. But here too, I'm unclear what approach you're suggesting. True, there's no obvious, intuitively fair approach if the challenge is couched in terms of burden-sharing. But once we frame it as how to share out a global emissions budget then the opposite becomes true.

After all, there's no shared commons more basic than the sky. How are we going to share it out – which, again, we have to if we want to solve climate change – other than on the basis of equal per capita shares for all?

This approach is effective, fair, affordable, and above all necessary. I don't disagree with you that we're dealing with an issue of awesome difficulty – or pretend that countries are actually ready yet to solve climate change. But surely it's our job as experts to make clear what the solution looks like once they are?

● **BW:** The main weakness of the United Nations negotiation process has been that it has framed action against climate change as a burden-sharing problem. This blinkered view creates a perverse incentive for countries to minimise their efforts.

However, there are clear signs since the summit in Copenhagen in 2009 that countries increasingly recognise the broader economic benefits that climate change policies deliver. In particular there is a



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realisation that reducing the consumption of coal will not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions but also the local air pollution that kills millions of people across the world each year.

This should mean that beyond Paris, countries will start to ramp up their ambition based on the realisation of multiple opportunities offered by a low-carbon economy, instead of remaining trapped in a zero-sum game of burden-sharing. More countries now understand that low-carbon economic growth and development is the only sustainable path to greater prosperity and well-being.

● **AE:** I agree with you about the technological opportunities of a low-carbon economy. The key question is what it will take to drive that shift – given that today, prices don't tell the 'truth' about environmental impacts like greenhouse gas emissions (which are 'externalised' from prices, as economists would put it).

One option, of course, is for countries to undertake decarbonisation domestically, through regulation, subsidies, carbon taxes and so on. But one of our key findings from SkyShares is how inefficient and expensive that is, compared to an international approach that includes emissions trading.

In our Reference Scenario, we find that total decarbonisation costs for the world in 2030 come to 0.52 per cent of global GDP if emissions trading is allowed – but over six times that, at 3.38 per cent of global GDP, if trading isn't permitted. Trading saves everyone money – and also creates the massive new flows of development finance to poor countries that I mentioned earlier. But we only unlock these benefits if we grasp the nettle of agreeing and allocating a global emissions budget.

● **BW:** I agree that a greater degree of cooperation among countries would speed up the pace of decarbonisation and reduce its costs. A global uniform price on carbon is a fundamental mechanism to help drive the transition to a low-carbon economy.

But we should recognise that different countries are starting the transition from different starting points and have different domestic circumstances to take into account. Even if we do not achieve an economically optimal transition, it will still be far less costly than continuing along a high-carbon path.

The outcome from Paris should signal the intention of all governments to collectively manage the risks of climate change, including through increased collaboration. This will build confidence among policy-makers, as well as among investors, businesses and the public, about where the world is headed, allowing each country to accelerate its transition to a low-carbon future. ●

*More countries now understand that low-carbon economic growth and development is the only sustainable path*

## What's COP got to do with it?

As the world's attention turns to the climate talks in Paris, *New World* tells you what you need to know about the UNFCCC process.

- The Conference of the Parties, or COP, is the annual meeting of states signed up to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), where decisions are taken by consensus.
- Adopted in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the UNFCCC bound governments to tackling climate change, but did not specify what action should be taken.
- Recognising that more needed to be done to reduce emissions, in 1997 the Kyoto Protocol was passed.
- The Protocol required 37 industrial nations to cut global emissions by five per cent from 1990 levels, but developing countries were not required to participate and a number of major emitters withdrew support.
- COP15, held in Copenhagen in 2009, failed to achieve a legally-binding treaty, but for the first time agreed that global temperature increases must be limited to below 2°C in order to avert dangerous and irreversible climate change.
- In the last few months, governments have been submitting proposals for how they will cut emissions domestically, known as Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, or INDCs. However experts suggest that when combined these will not limit global warming to 2°C.
- In December, France will host 195 states at COP21, where they will decide what should replace the Kyoto Protocol after it expires in 2020.
- States are also expected to outline how they will meet the target of providing at least \$100bn a year in climate finance for developing countries.

## Opinion



*The Climate Change Act showed that Britain can lead the world. We can do it again, says WWF-UK's David Nussbaum*

In 2008 the Climate Change Act, introduced with cross-party support by then Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change Ed Miliband, put the UK in a position of leadership in the fight against climate change. By establishing a legal obligation for the UK to cut its carbon emissions by 80 per cent against a 1990 baseline by 2050, it raised the bar internationally and provided a basis for a raft of domestic policies designed to create a low-carbon economy.

Perhaps most importantly, it provided businesses and civil society with long-term clarity about the national direction of travel – away from fossil fuels and towards green technologies, energy efficiency and more effective management of the natural resources that help reduce climate change and mitigate its effects.

Around the world, countries including Mexico, Finland and Denmark followed the UK's lead by introducing their own laws to hold down emissions. Following the adoption of the UN Sustainable Development Goals in New York in September – which included a goal on climate action – there is now global agreement that we need to protect our environment to make social and economic progress possible.

But as the international community speeds towards a greener future, the picture here in the UK is becoming more opaque. Ahead of this year's general election, Prime Minister David Cameron publicly committed to retain the Act and play a leading role at the international level in tackling climate change. However, after six months in office, Government Ministers have watered down or scrapped numerous green policies.

These range from cancelling support for solar power and tax exemptions for low-carbon vehicles to abandoning Zero Carbon Homes standards. Protection for the natural environment has taken a back seat in the push for fracking, exploration for North Sea oil and unprecedented subsidies for nuclear power. This hardly adds up to a plan for a resilient, low cost, clean energy future.



As we approach the UN climate conference in Paris, now is the time for the Prime Minister to rediscover his zeal for a greener conservatism. A recent boost in the UK's financial commitment to mitigate climate change and help developing countries to adapt to its impacts was a step in the right direction. But more is needed to make domestic policy tally with the more positive pledges delivered on international stages.

What should Ministers do?

First, they should signal decisively that the age of dirty energy is over and announce the date by which the unabated use of coal will be phased out in the UK. Doing this by 2023 would make sense, not least because – as WWF has pointed out – it would help give us a fighting chance of staying within the provisions of the Climate Change Act.

They should launch a national push to make millions of homes and businesses energy efficient and incentivise a smarter energy system. This would be good for the environment, reduce pressure on the national grid and save bill-payers money.

They should end their baffling hostility towards backing the clean-tech industries of the future, and establish a solid platform for investment in solar, wind and energy efficiency – and boost research into renewables, energy storage and low carbon transport.

British Parliamentarians also have a key role to play in holding the Government to account and ensuring that the environment is no longer an afterthought but a mainstream priority at all levels of decision-making. For starters, the sound management of our natural capital – our forests, oceans and other habitats – should become the bedrock of domestic economic policy. This will require a particular change of heart in the Treasury, which for decades has been a bastion of venerable and old-fashioned economic thinking. Instead of blocking innovative ideas designed to protect and enhance the natural environment upon which all of us depend, Treasury mandarins and Ministers should assess the impact of every policy, from infrastructure to tax, to account for their true costs to people and the planet.

For too long, governments around the world have been chasing economic growth at any cost, and the world is now paying the price – not just in terms of climate change, but in growing inequality, damaging pollution and the loss of more than half of wildlife populations in the last past 40 years.

Britain's reputation as a world leader on climate has taken a beating, but not a fatal one. Putting his own house in order before Paris is a chance for the Prime Minister to put Britain back in the lead again. ●

*David Nussbaum is CEO of WWF-UK*

# The art of science and policy-making

*Allowing the facts to simply speak for themselves is a risky gamble in a debate as monumental as climate change*

Last month, an election for one of the most influential positions in science took place with modestly little fanfare in Dubrovnik, Croatia. Hoesung Lee of the Republic of Korea became the latest person to Chair the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) – the primary world body for assessing the science behind climate change.

For over 20 years its landmark reports have provided the baseline for discussion by member states at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Yet in his first statement the new Chair hinted at charting a new course for the Panel: “We need to provide more information about the options that exist for preventing and adapting to climate change.”

## Into the political fray?

Banal as this may sound, these were bold words for an institution governed by a traditionally cautious credo. The IPCC closely follows the convention that verifiable and objective facts must be presented neutrally to policy-makers, who in response will act in the best interests of society. The Panel describes itself as providing “policy relevance without being policy prescriptive”.

This position suggests that the first victim in championing a particular solution for climate change is independence. This does not have to be the case. A 2014 policy commission undertaken by University College London explored compelling new ways in which the scientific community can become climate advocates without forgoing impartiality or a rigorous evidence base.

The Panel is rightly wary of allegations of politicisation, which member states are prone to cast. But this hands-off approach does not always produce the intended results. History is littered with examples of policy-makers ignoring scientific fact and avoiding hard choices. Heads remained stuck in the sand long after evidence of tobacco’s harm to human health came to light.

In making policy decisions, politicians face a variety of different – sometimes competing – considerations. These may include pressure from constituents, legal precedents, or what other ‘tough sells’ are on the political agenda. Often as not, the bottom line comes down to economics.

## Communication is key

The influence of science is too often curtailed by research that is beyond the understanding of most. Studies have shown that when clearly communicated scientific information has been provided at UN climate negotiations, it has resulted in far more productive discussions. Whereas a recent linguistics assessment of the IPCC’s reports found that their readability was “exceptionally low”. Allowing the facts to speak for themselves is a risky gamble in a debate as monumental as climate change.

Just as policy-makers should not ignore science, science must not disregard politics – decisions are not made in a vacuum, even when the consensus



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at the Kings Bay Marine Laboratory in the high Norwegian Arctic, observing the effects of climate change  
© UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

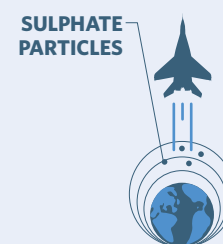
## For the attention of policy-makers:

### 5 suggestions from science



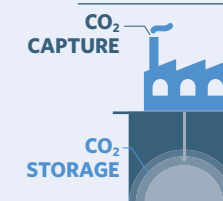
#### Plastic fantastic

A new production process from Newlight Technologies takes methane from the atmosphere and combines it with air to create AirCarbon™. Products typically made from oils-based plastics could be replaced by this new material, reducing the amount of greenhouse gas (GHG) in the air as well as our dependency on fossil fuels in plastic manufacturing.



#### Stratospheric sulphates

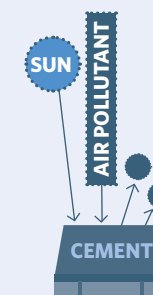
A common proposal from bioengineering involves firing sulphate particles into the atmosphere via military jets. This method seeks to imitate volcanic eruptions, which naturally emit similar particles which reflect sunlight back into space and create a cooling effect on earth. Critics though fear untold consequences for the environment.



#### Going underground

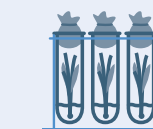
Carbon capture and storage is a technology which could have a significant impact on global emissions. The process entails capturing carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) from industrial sites before it is emitted,

compressing and transporting it via pipelines and injecting it into deep underground rock formations for storage. However, this is an expensive option, and not all are convinced of its long-term safety.



#### Smart cement

Photocatalytic concrete has been developed to break down pollutants captured on its surface. Roads of the future could turn pollution into oxygen, water, carbon dioxide, nitrate and sulphate which then gets washed away. As well as keeping itself surprisingly clean, the material can also help improve surrounding air quality in urban environments.



#### Revolutionary rice

Recent efforts to mitigate emissions from agriculture and adapt crops to a changing climate have focused on rice, the staple food for more than half the world’s population. Researchers have genetically engineered varieties which are resistant to drought and floods, while scientists at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences have created a version which may reduce the plant’s GHG emissions by up to 90 per cent.

may be clear. Take the Ebola crisis in west Africa as an example. Quite aside from the medical technicalities, the major challenges presented were political. From inaccessible rural areas to inadequate national health sectors to a persistent suspicion of government-dispensed advice, those coordinating the response required much more guidance than could be provided by experts in viral haemorrhagic fevers.

Clearly both scientists and policy-makers have much they could learn from each other, something which is already being explored in interesting ways. The Royal Society runs a pairing scheme which teams 30 of its Fellows with Parliamentarians or civil servants in order to aid mutual understanding. The UK’s Climate Change Act (see page 11

for more on this) paved the way for a statutory body staffed by independent experts in the fields of climate change, science and economics, which advises on UK emissions.

In 1987, innovative research and political will combined to enact the Montreal Protocol, the universally ratified treaty that phased out ozone-depleting substances which were once ubiquitous. The Protocol averted 135 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide (compared with doing nothing). This is the equivalent of more than two years’ worth of global greenhouse gas emissions at current levels. Should science and policy-makers come together again at the UN negotiations in Paris this December, we may yet witness another historic moment for the world’s climate. ●



● **INDIVIDUALS: Acting as essential agents of change**

- Climate tops a Pew Research Center poll on global list of public's concerns
- German citizens have provided half the country's investment in expanding renewables
- In June 9,000 people came to Westminster to discuss climate issues with 330 MPs

● **RELIGIOUS GROUPS: The moral voice of the climate movement**

- The Vatican has urged UN member states to agree a goal of "complete decarbonisation" by 2050
- The Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change calls for warming to be kept "within the '1.5 degree' limit"

● **CIVIL SOCIETY: Countless campaigns united by a common purpose**

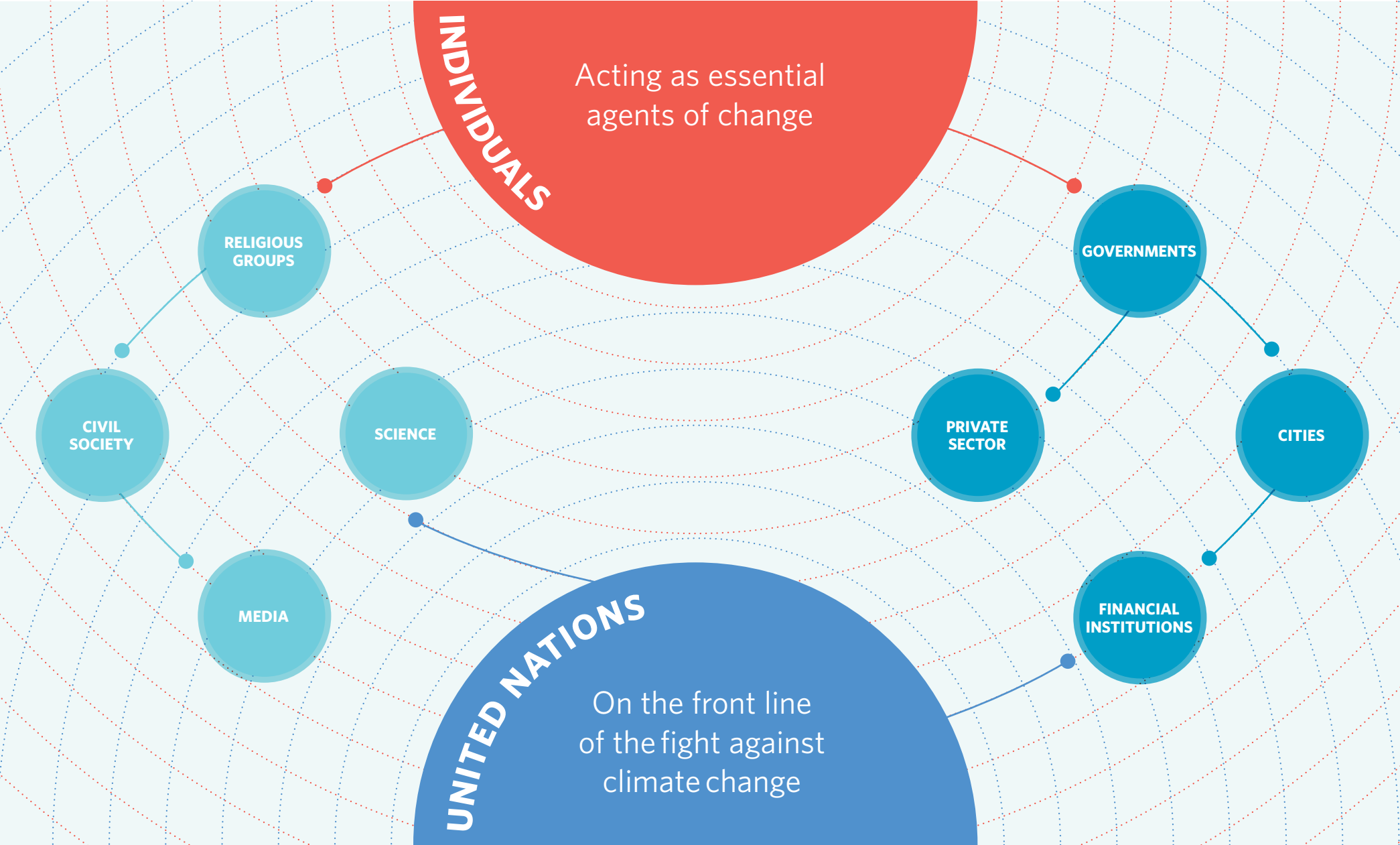
- A global divestment campaign has removed \$2.6trn from fossil fuel companies
- In March protestors in Madhya Pradesh, India – supported by Greenpeace – stopped the sale of a coal block in one of the oldest forests in Asia, home to 50,000 indigenous people

● **MEDIA: A unique responsibility to inform public opinion**

- The *Guardian* has launched the Climate Publishers Network, a global pool of free content, to better inform the public
- The Earth Journalism Network has trained over 3,300 journalists from developing countries on climate reporting

● **SCIENCE: Gateway to understanding our world**

- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says it is "extremely likely" (95% certain) that global warming is manmade
- Its most recent report involved over 830 authors and received 142,631 comments during the evidence review process



● **UNITED NATIONS: On the frontline of the fight against climate change**

- The UN has received emissions reductions plans from 150 states, covering 90% of global emissions
- The Green Climate Fund has received \$10.2bn in climate pledges from 38 countries
- Over 40 different UN bodies work to adapt to and mitigate climate change

● **GOVERNMENTS: Our representatives on the global stage**

- The US has pledged to cut CO2 emissions by 26% (from 2005 levels) by 2025
- Since 1990 Sweden has cut emissions by 22%, whilst the economy grew by 58%
- Mexico has reduced fossil fuel subsidies from \$18.5bn in 2012 to \$2.5bn in 2014

● **CITIES: Pathfinders for innovation**

- 175 cities with more than 250 million people have made climate pledges under the Compact of Mayors
- Oslo plans to ban cars from the city by 2019 whilst Melbourne hopes to be the first zero-carbon city by 2020

● **FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS: Managing risk and adapting to climate instability**

- The World Bank and International Monetary Fund have launched the Carbon Pricing Panel to put a cost on emissions
- According to the Climate Bond Initiative, the green bond market was valued at \$502.6bn in 2014

● **PRIVATE SECTOR: Driving the transition to a zero-carbon economy**

- Unilever has improved its carbon efficiency by 40% since 1995 and leads the charge in making the business case for change
- 80% of water used by Intel to create computer chips (billions of gallons annually) is recycled and returned to local supplies

# Part of the solution

This issue of *New World* may be an unusual one. It does not seek to contest, challenge or even scrutinise its central theme. In fact, it's one of the few subjects in global governance where there is a near-unified acknowledgment of the problem in front of us.

Decades of scientific research has led to the ever-growing consensus that man-made climate change is the greatest challenge we have ever faced. But actually solving it can feel as insurmountable now as at any point over the last few decades. Preventing a 2°C rise in global temperatures – the internationally agreed ‘red line’ for climate negotiations – and mitigating the adverse effects the world is already experiencing, will require myriad efforts on the part of all sections of society. Acting on this responsibility will require a sea change in attitudes. In recent months, momentum has been steadily building among proponents of climate action, with major shifts in both words and deeds (see graphic above). One of the most outspoken ‘game changers’ to

have emerged has come from a somewhat unusual quarter – the Vatican. In June, Pope Francis published a rare papal encyclical – a 184-page letter to Catholics all over the world – which lambasted past efforts to curb global warming. “Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain,” he said. Reprising his argument in an address to world leaders at the UN in September, the Pope continued: “Without the recognition of certain incontestable natural ethical limits ... the ideal of ‘saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war’ and ‘promoting social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom’ risks becoming an unattainable illusion, or, even worse, idle chatter which serves as a cover for all kinds of abuse and corruption.”

Pope Francis is not alone in calling for urgent change. Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of England and Chair of the G20's Financial Stability Board, recently warned the insurance industry that “the challenges currently posed by climate change pale in significance compared with what might come.” He went on to suggest a climate disclosure task force, designed to set a voluntary international standard by which companies could publish their carbon emissions. (For more on the role of the financial sector, see next page). For some, however, it is long past time for half-measures. Kumi Naidoo, Executive Director of Greenpeace, recently criticised UN member states for the “mood of self-congratulation in New York”. He called out governments

that for too long have said one thing and done another, citing President Obama as an example of a leader who, “in crass contradiction to his fine words, is still allowing Shell to drill for more oil in the Arctic” (the US has since suspended sales of drilling leases there). The role of civil society movements, particularly in challenging these inconsistencies, is more important than ever (see page 26). Just over a year ago, 300,000 activists in New York, plus as many more in cities around the world, marched for climate justice. It was undoubtedly a powerful display of global citizenship. But what did it achieve? The clamour for headline-grabbing stunts on the one hand, and scientific analyses wielded as bludgeons on the other, can only get us so far.

Ultimately, the most influential advocate for stimulating climate action is you. If governments, business leaders or our international institutions are to address this issue they must feel compelled by their own constituents. This approach can feel uncertain. As Isaac Newton once put it, “I can calculate the movements of heavenly bodies, but not the madness of men.” But in years to come, our success or failure may be judged by the extent to which those in power were moved to act. From making the case for reducing your carbon footprint among friends and colleagues (see page 17 for ideas) to the gradual ratcheting of pressure on your political representatives, it is time for your voice to rise above the fray. ●





*Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala looks to African peers for innovative climate finance*

This month, world leaders meet in Paris in the hopes of securing a legally-binding and universal climate treaty. Government representatives will be joined by more stakeholders than at any previous climate summit – from charities, foundations, universities and the private sector.

The scale of the challenge is huge and every sector needs to play its part in finding solutions.

This requires different sectors working not just alongside each other but together – understanding each other’s opportunities and constraints, and innovating jointly. It is in climate finance that this challenge of working collaboratively is felt most acutely.

For too long, the debate about climate finance has focused on the volume of funds required to help developing countries manage and adapt to the risks posed by climate change. In 2013, the World Bank estimated that \$331bn flowed between and within countries to finance low-carbon development. Many argue this is far below the level of funding needed.

With the bulk of future funding likely to come from the private sector, debates inevitably focus too on whether this sector is committed enough. Are fossil fuel companies investing enough in renewables? Are commodity companies doing enough to protect the natural environment in countries in which they operate? Should financial services firms provide more products to incentivise low-carbon development?

These are legitimate concerns. Climate change is expensive. And while many in the private sector have woken up to the risks of climate change, not every business sees that tackling it is both good for them and good for the world. But often these debates miss the point. Because the biggest climate finance challenge is not only one of volume or commitment, but of innovation.

Whether it is putting a price on carbon through market mechanisms or taxes, removing fossil fuel subsidies, or creating a stronger investment environment for green energy, we need innovative solutions



and these will only be found with meaningful collaboration across sectors. I am proud that my continent, Africa, leads in producing some of the most genuinely collaborative solutions to climate change so far. The African Risk Capacity (ARC), for example, brings together public and private sectors to help countries better manage and adapt to climate risks.

At the moment, the system for responding to climate disasters is not as timely or equitable as it could be. Funding is secured on a largely ad hoc basis after disaster strikes and people suffer. ARC works by transferring the burden of climate disaster risk away from governments and the farmers and pastoralists they protect. Member states pay premiums for insurance, which when paid out provide them with rapid funds in the event of climate disasters. This puts the risk out to the international financial markets, which can manage it much better.

So far this approach is working. When the Sahel was hit by drought last year, ARC paid out more than \$26m, while a UN aid appeal was still being formulated. The money, used to buy livestock fodder and food staples, is benefitting roughly 1.3 million people who might otherwise have had to cut down on meals, take children out of school or leave their land.

ARC is now going one step further, not just responding to climate disasters

but creating mechanisms which facilitate adaptation to climate change. Our recently-launched Extreme Climate Facility (XCF) will track extreme climate shocks in Africa over time, and provide pay-outs in the case that the frequency and/or intensity of extreme weather events increases.

In a truly innovative approach, XCF’s financial obligations to countries will be issued as a series of catastrophe bonds and financed by capital from private investors. From the initial feedback from the market we believe interest in XCF’s bonds will be very strong. A major benefit is that, by leveraging private capital to fund the uncertain risk, public money is freed up to focus on preparation and resilience-building in African member states.

In Africa, thanks to collaboration and innovation from governments and the financial sector, we have a sophisticated, fair and well-governed climate financing scheme in place. I hope that delegates at the Paris conference will take note and see the potential for innovation to deliver results for the world’s most vulnerable people – those for whom finding solutions matters most. ●

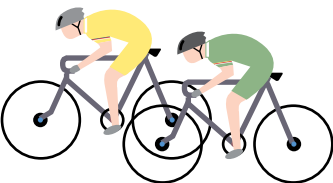
*Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala chairs the African Risk Capacity Agency Governing Board and was formerly the Nigerian finance minister*

# 10

## helpful ways you can save the planet



**1 Eat fewer granola bars**  
Individually packaged foods contribute up to a third of total energy inputs for food consumption, as each ingredient – oats, berries, sugar etc. – is shipped from countries across the world, processed, packaged and sold in various shops up and down the country. By reaching for a locally-grown apple or making your own healthy snacks from fresh ingredients, you’ll be looking after the environment as well as your health.

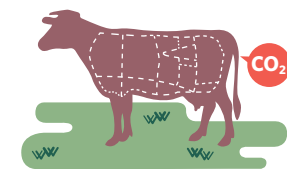


**2 Start training for the next Tour de France**  
We all know that ditching the car for our commute would help reduce emissions – on average it would save half a tonne of carbon dioxide per person every year – but did you know about the wider health benefits? Cycling, especially for short journeys, is a great way to protect the planet and get fit at the same time, and it could even help the NHS too. It is estimated that if one in 10 journeys in the UK were made by bike the NHS would save £250m a year – enough to buy 126 new radiotherapy machines.

**3 Turn your investments green**  
Keep a close eye on your finances and make sure you’re not investing in companies that are damaging the environment.

By divesting from fossil fuels and other destructive industries in your personal banking, pension plans and bonds, you’ll be joining a growing protest against companies that are harmful to our environment. You can find out more about the fossil fuel divestment movement at [www.gofossilfree.org](http://www.gofossilfree.org).

**4 Use a laptop, not a desktop**  
Laptops, unlike desktop computers, are designed to save energy due to their extended battery life. According to Energy Star, a US initiative that helps businesses improve the efficiency of their products, a laptop can be up to 80 per cent more energy-efficient than your average desktop computer. If you must buy a desktop, spend a bit more and get an LCD screen and check if it has a power management function to ensure you’re not wasting energy.



**5 Avoid hamburgers**  
Cows produce almost 20 per cent of the world’s greenhouse gases – more than cars, planes and all other forms of transport put together. According to a report from the Food and Agriculture Organization, the effect of methane (emitted from bovine back-ends around the world) on the climate is 23 times higher than the effect of carbon dioxide. Not only that,

but livestock uses 30 per cent of the world’s land surface, is a major driver of deforestation and uses 11 times more water in processing than pork or chicken. Cutting out hamburgers, choosing chicken or going all the way to veganism would have a significant impact on tackling climate change.

**6 Stop moaning!**  
Celebrate that extra 5p for a plastic bag, rejoice in the Congestion Charge and applaud the aeroplane levies – it means that we’re living in a society that is taking daily action to combat climate change. It also signals to policy-makers that we’re willing to take on short-term costs for everyone’s long-term gain. So rather than complaining about the extra hassle, why not embrace the opportunity to go green and encourage your friends, family members and colleagues to join in with these small steps in protecting our environment.

**7 Downsize your dog**  
Small dogs have smaller appetites and more modest needs, and therefore a much smaller carbon footprint (or pawprint) than larger dogs. According to the World Watch Institute, a large dog uses 0.36 global hectares of resources annually, while a small dog only uses 0.18. This means that two German Shepherd dogs use more resources each year than the average person in Bangladesh (who uses 0.6 hectares). A dog may be a man’s best friend, but he could also be our planet’s worst enemy.

**8 Plant some roots**  
We all know that trees play a vital role in climate change. The world’s forests absorb and store carbon dioxide that otherwise would contribute to an increase in global temperatures. In the UK alone our woodlands contain around 150 million tonnes of carbon in biomass and 640 million tonnes in the soil. The UN’s Billion Tree Campaign has planted over 12 billion trees since its inception in 2006 – have you planted yours? Our UNA Eastbourne branch are doing their bit – they plant two trees for every new member they recruit.

**9 Microwave your tea**  
You might only use the microwave for soup or porridge, but in fact, microwaving your food is faster and consumes much less energy than traditional means. If a meal takes 15 minutes to cook in the microwave versus one hour in the oven, you’ll knock 15p off your energy bill each time. If microwaveable meals don’t sound appealing, try boiling water in the microwave to make your daily cups of tea.

**10 Pass New World on to a friend**  
New World is printed using vegetable-based inks on chlorine-free and acid-free paper that is 100 per cent recycled. By passing it on to your friends, family and colleagues, not only will you be spreading the word about the work and values of the United Nations, but you’ll be helping to save our planet too.

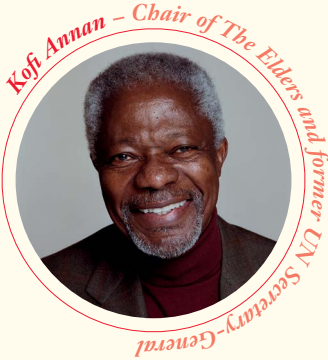
*The UN has launched a new website to help you calculate your carbon footprint and offset it by donating to certified sustainable projects. To find out more go to [www.climateutralnow.org](http://www.climateutralnow.org)*



Charting the course of history:  
**The Elders** call for bold and decisive  
action on climate from world leaders

About The Elders

Chaired by Kofi Annan, The Elders is an independent group of global leaders who work together for peace and human rights. They were brought together in 2007 by Nelson Mandela. Members of The Elders no longer hold public office; they are independent of any national government or other vested interest and have built a reputation for inclusive, progressive leadership.



Editor's note: the following letter was sent by The Elders to heads of state and government in September, just prior to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Summit.  
The Elders' letter highlights the pressing need for the SDGs – since adopted – and the anticipated climate treaty to share a

coherent and ambitious agenda. The issues of poverty and climate change, closely interwoven, cannot be decoupled. How unified these two UN processes are may ultimately decide their success in tackling these challenges. *New World* is grateful to The Elders for sharing this letter with our readers.

Your Excellency,

2015 is the year in which the community of nations will conclude two of the most important international processes of our times. Together they hold the promise of improving the lives of billions of people over the coming decades, while preventing irreparable damage to our planet. You have a decisive role to play in charting the course of history.

In September in New York, governments will agree new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In December in Paris, nations will adopt a new universal agreement to address climate change. We are confident that governments will successfully conclude both the SDGs and the climate change agreement. The question remains: at what level of ambition will they be so concluded?

Incremental change is no longer enough. The world is already experiencing the damaging impact of climate change. If action is not taken immediately to stop and reverse current climate trends, we shall face a world with average global temperatures several degrees higher than when we were children.

The SDGs will be greatly reinforced by the approval at the Paris conference of a strong, ambitious and equitable agreement to address climate change. We do not face a choice between development and poverty reduction or addressing climate change. To the contrary: climate stability underpins prosperity, poverty alleviation and the rule of law.

Yet the negotiation of the new climate agreement is proceeding slowly and key issues remain unresolved with precious little time left. Thus we urge you to:

- use the opportunity of the SDG Summit later this month to inject new urgency into the Paris negotiations. Give your negotiators the mandate to draft a binding international agreement under the UNFCCC which will limit the increase in average global temperature to less than 2 degrees Celsius – the target that all nations already agreed to in 2010. Now is the time to move towards early implementation of a credible carbon pricing system, linked to carbon budgets. Accurately pricing carbon will accelerate development of alternative sources of energy;
- establish in the Paris agreement an overarching goal for all nations to reach a state of carbon neutrality by 2050. Countries should agree a timetable for acting on their commitment to phase out fossil-fuel subsidies, with early action on coal. The science is clear and business, investors and consumers need strong signals that economies are clearly, firmly and steadily on the path to carbon neutrality;
- commit now to the inclusion in the Paris agreement of mechanisms that will assess collective progress and ratchet up the commitment of all countries on mitigation and

adaptation every five years. Mutual support and transparency to ensure our collective future wellbeing is the most effective – and morally just – way to proceed;

- approve a financial package that will ramp up investment in clean energy and support adaptation by poor countries. Plainly, poor countries must grow in order to reduce poverty and meet the aspirations of their citizens, and growth requires energy. So developing countries must grow in a way the world's industrialised societies did not: using clean energy that decouples economic growth from greenhouse gas emissions.

Excellency, our future needs to be created by design rather than by happenstance. We urge you to seize the extraordinary opportunity at hand. Together Heads of State and Government can go far beyond business as usual. You can prove to be an historic generation of leaders who will have a profound and positive impact that echoes throughout the century. This is the moment for you and all world leaders to be the architects of a new and better world. The courage and conviction you show will be remembered for decades to come.

Please accept, Your Excellency, assurances of our highest consideration and esteem. ●



# The UN & the UK

### UK celebrates UN's 70th anniversary

Across the country, British citizens have been showing their support for the UN and its work on the occasion of its 70th anniversary. UNA-UK organised a variety of events in celebration (see pages 24–25), including a diplomatic reception at which former Chair Lord Hannay received the Sir Brian Urquhart Award for Distinguished Service to the UN.

Many of our local UNAs demonstrated their own long-held commitment to the global Organization, including through the presentation of commemorative UN Charters and publishing articles in the local press. In London, Central Hall Westminster turned UN blue in recognition of its unique role in the Organization's history – in 1946 it hosted the UN's first ever meeting. It was joined in this colour celebration by Edinburgh Castle, Belfast City Hall and hundreds of other landmarks all over the world.

**W** For more on our UN70 celebrations go to [www.una.org.uk/UN70-celebrate](http://www.una.org.uk/UN70-celebrate)

### UN human rights chief addresses UK obligations

In his keynote address at UNA-UK's 70th anniversary celebrations at the Guildhall, London, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights spoke out against the UK Government's plans to scrap the Human Rights Act. Concerned that this would reduce access to justice in this country, the High Commissioner said such a move would be "profoundly regrettable ... and contrary to this country's commendable history of global and regional engagement." The High Commissioner warned that if the UK weakened its human rights laws, other states may quickly do the same.

The subject was also raised at a roundtable meeting between the High Commissioner and MPs and Peers, hosted by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the United Nations (UN APPG). In a substantive discussion, Parliamentarians shared a number of other concerns,



On the eve of the Sustainable Development Goals summit in September, UK delegates joined activists near the UN building in New York for a global celebration called Light The Way  
© Marisol Grandon/Department for International Development

including the efficacy of current refugee protections, dealing with intolerance and extremism and upholding the rights of minorities.

### House of Lords shows cross-party support for R2P

Members of the House of Lords demonstrated widespread support for the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) during a recently held debate. Adopted by all UN member states 10 years ago, R2P obliges the international community to protect citizens from atrocity crimes, such as genocide and ethnic cleansing, if their governments are unwilling or unable to do so.

Tabled by Lord McConnell, the debate scrutinised the UK and the UN's utilisation of R2P. In his opening statement, Lord McConnell highlighted the UK's approach to atrocity prevention, which is not currently mentioned as a priority in the Government's National Security Strategy. Lord Hannay, Chair of the UN APPG, suggested that the UK make better use of the UN's Peacebuilding Commission and the preventive deployment of

peacekeepers. Both Lord McConnell and Baroness Hodgson, who also joined in the Lords debate, participated in a UNA-UK delegation to the UN and to Washington DC earlier this year.

### Campaign success!

After months of grassroots campaigning and high-level lobbying, UN member states agreed to reform the process for appointing the next Secretary-General. In a General Assembly resolution it was agreed that the process should: follow a clear timeline, use agreed criteria, utilise informal dialogues with candidates and include female nominations.

As a co-founder of the global campaign on this issue, 1 for 7 Billion, UNA-UK has worked hard to achieve this reform. However, there is more that needs to be done. In the coming months the Association will be pushing members of the Security Council – particularly the UK – to implement the resolution, involve civil society in the process and amend the Secretary-General's term to a single, seven-year period.

### UK backs UN reform

The UK has shown support for two UN reform initiatives in recent months. Its early backing of an improved process for selecting the next Secretary-General has contributed real momentum to the campaign, resulting in an historic General Assembly resolution on the subject (see previous story).

Efforts to stop states blocking action in relation to cases of mass atrocities have also garnered official UK support. In October, the UK's Permanent Representative at the UN in New York backed a code of conduct for all members of the Security Council. The new code was proposed by the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group, a cross-regional grouping of states seeking to improve the working methods of the UN Security Council.

### Peacekeeping pledges made

A US-led summit held on the fringes of the UN General Assembly in September saw 40,000 new peacekeepers pledged for service, including more than 300 from the UK. The UK Government is



### Natalie Samarasinghe, UNA-UK's Executive Director, on climate refugees

"And what's the UN doing about all these refugees? Nothing." "Doesn't surprise me – it's a waste of space."

Travelling home after a UNA-UK event to mark the UN's 70th anniversary, I wondered what my fellow commuters would have made of Oxfam's Winnie Byanyima, who had praised the UN "as an African and a woman" for its role in furthering decolonisation and gender equality. Should the well-dressed British men on the train be similarly effusive?

I think so. While the UN has delivered much for the poor, Western states have gained more from the post-1945 system, which favours them in structure and approach. International agreements have allowed trade to flourish. Humanitarian assistance has largely insulated us from crises. Wars have occurred somewhere else. Now, as the system comes under severe strain, we are scared by the fall-out on our doorstep: the refugees, for instance, for whom under-funded UN agencies can no longer care.

Climate change is adding to the pressure. According to the Environmental Justice Foundation, it is already uprooting around 27 million people a year. In a 2014 report, the UK Ministry of Defence set out worst-case scenarios for a 2°C temperature rise: 3.9 billion people suffering water shortages, over 100 million affected by desertification, and coastal regions and islands devastated by rising sea levels.

Given European reluctance to shelter people fleeing barrel bombs, it is unlikely that 'climate refugees' will be welcomed with open arms. The term does not yet have legal force. The 1951 UN Refugee Convention covers persecution on racial, religious, political or social grounds; it is generally operated on an individual basis and includes provisions relating to return. It does not easily address the disappearance of entire countries and there is little appetite to expand its scope amidst the current crisis. But those displaced by climate change cannot be treated like 'economic migrants', itself a problematic label. Their needs are radically different from, say, the 5.5 million Britons who have left home to seek better pay, services and sunshine abroad.

States must begin work on a new framework that combines climate, development and humanitarian responses, from disaster preparedness to large-scale resettlement. Wary of taking in people, rich countries have tried to stop this issue being discussed in Paris. However, momentum is building ahead of next year's World Humanitarian Summit, with over 100 countries now involved with the Nansen initiative on climate and disaster-induced displacement.

Progress in this area could improve existing refugee responses. The average duration of a refugee situation is now a staggering 17 years – a long time to press pause on a person's life. We need to move away from our current approach, which sees people languishing in camps or given restrictive asylum-seeker status, to permanent solutions, including resettlement. Countless studies indicate that migrants and refugees are net contributors to their host societies: in 2013 the OECD put the figure at €5,000 a year per migrant household. They also send home about three times the total development aid budget. We are clearly missing not one but several tricks.

Western governments must recognise that borders don't matter when it comes to climate change. In a connected world, solidarity and self-interest increasingly yield the same responses: we have a stake in helping others and in making the international system work for them as well as for us. If nothing else, we should accept that with global instability and sea levels on the rise, we too may need shelter one day.

Comments: @Natalie\_UNA or [samarasinghe@una.org.uk](mailto:samarasinghe@una.org.uk)



expected to deploy up to 70 troops to the UN-supported African Union Mission in Somalia and up to 350 to the UN Mission in South Sudan. This increase would more than double the number of UK troops assigned to UN peace operations.

Increasing UK engagement with UN peacekeeping has been a key UNA-UK priority in recent months, and was the theme of the 2015 annual peacekeeping conference, held earlier this year with the Royal United Services Institute and UNA Westminster. This renewed interest in UN peace operations comes at a critical time as its 16 missions face increasing pressures in some of the most dangerous conflict zones in the world.

“What lessons can we draw from this roller-coaster ride which continues to this day? The UN’s indispensability remains as true today as ever; if we now slip back into disorder ... we will rue the day”

Lord Hannay of Chiswick, former Chair of UNA-UK, at the 2015 UN Day diplomatic reception

UN probes welfare changes

The UN Committee with oversight of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability has begun hearings under an inquiry into how welfare reforms have affected disabled people in the UK. Held confidentially, the Committee will be assessing changes introduced under the previous Coalition Government, but is unlikely to publish its report until 2017.

The inquiry was first requested in 2012 by a grassroots campaign group, Disabled People Against Cuts, which submitted a complaint under the optional protocol to the Convention. This is the first time the Committee has investigated a state under the protocol, which it initiates only if there is “reliable information” regarding the alleged violations.



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UNA-UK calls for a smarter approach to UN and defence

In September UNA-UK launched a major campaign calling on the UK to invest in the United Nations in order to strengthen the international, rules-based system and as a sensible defence against global threats.

UNA-UK’s Chairman, Sir Jeremy Greenstock, wrote to the Prime Minister, the Secretaries of State for Defence, Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs and Development as well as their shadow counterparts, urging them to strengthen multilateralism in their work. In reply, the Prime Minister supported the sentiment and stated that “the UK is committed to upholding this system which continues to serve our interests and guarantee our security.”

UNA-UK also called on its members and supporters to share this message with the Government through its consultation on the National Security Strategy and the Strategic Defence and Security Review. Hundreds took up the challenge and urged the Government to:

- Invest in strengthening the United Nations, including through the development of a coherent and imaginative strategy for consistent action to increase the effectiveness of all parts of the UN system
- Increase support for UN peacekeeping, including through increasing awareness of UN peace operations as a career enhancing activity for military, police and civilian personnel
- Prevent mass atrocities as part of the UK’s wider national security strategy, including efforts to ensure that its early warning frameworks are geared towards spotting the risk of atrocities
- Work towards global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, including efforts to improve dialogue between nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon states

Information on this campaign, and copies of the letters to Government, can be found at [www.una.org.uk](http://www.una.org.uk).

As part of this work, UNA-UK has also released three new publications on peacekeeping, atrocity prevention and nuclear disarmament. Go to [www.una.org.uk/media/publications](http://www.una.org.uk/media/publications) to find out more.

Proceed with caution

It may not have been your intention to play down the problem of world population growth in your myth-busting page of *New World* 2 // 2015 (page 19) but the headline “Myth: the world’s population is exploding” is misleading. It comes across as suggesting that population growth is nothing to worry about. However, best predictions suggest that world population is predicted to rise to 11 billion by 2100; an almost 60 per cent increase on today’s levels. This is a major problem for humanity in terms of climate change, resources and its impact on other species.

Thoraya Obaid, UN Under-Secretary-General from 2000 to 2010, has said “We cannot confront the massive challenges of poverty, hunger, disease and environmental destruction unless we address issues of population and reproductive health”. I do hope that *New World* will provide a more balanced view on this issue in future.  
Martin Earl, London

Editor’s note: *New World* sought to present an alternative to the doom-laden views often given on this issue. For an interesting take, watch Swedish statistician Hans Rosling’s film on population at: [www.gapminder.org/videos/dont-panic-the-facts-about-population](http://www.gapminder.org/videos/dont-panic-the-facts-about-population).

Food for thought

My latest copy of UNA-UK’s *New World* is covered in scribbles, from the first page to the last, you will be glad to hear. All good brain-teasing stuff. Try as I do to understand the perspective though, I’m unsure of Sir Jeremy Greenstock’s line from page five of “The uncounted”:

“Peace and security would only know its true place if it saw itself (or rather if the Security Council members saw it) as a sub-category of the UN’s primary purpose, which is providing disadvantaged populations with the opportunity to develop.”

I feel obliged to argue that that is a highly partial précis of the UN’s “primary purpose”. But I absolutely agree with what follows: “We must weave together the strands of peace, security and development.”



At a time when all Government departments continue to be under extreme pressure, it is all too easy for narrow-minded exponents to declare primacy in certain areas. But every UK Government department has input into peace, security and development, and the more they understand each other the better we will all be.

Rather than UNA-UK simply championing “sustainable development”, I’d like to see it go even further in an effort to encompass the whole. I liked the image of resolute peacekeepers holding riot shields, but a few more words to match would cheer me up!

I’m still grateful for all your hard work. It matters.  
Mike Harwood, Bath

Making good on our commitments

First of all, congratulations. Both your special edition and the 2 // 2015 issue of *New World* are attractive, easy to read and very interesting. That’s the nice bit. However here comes the nasty bit. Pages 24–25 of the latter is misleading, in part, on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Its aim, as described in the box on page 25, is not just to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons but to eliminate nuclear weapons globally.

We have just had a national election in which both major parties did their very best to ignore that fact that our country, supposedly strapped for cash, is about to commit £100bn to replacing and running another fleet of nuclear weapon

submarines. Yet Article VI of the NPT also requires that we are supposed to act “in good faith” to disarm.

What kind of good faith is it that allows us to tell the Iranians et al that they can’t have nuclear weapons while we are intent on spending colossal sums to ensure that we British remain nuclear armed for another 30 years? A lost opportunity for UNA-UK to make a clear point?  
Bruce Kent, London

Human rights oversight?

I was interested by the disconnect between the prominence given to human rights in the UN Charter – and the fact that they are one of the UN’s three pillars – and the absence of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) from your UN organogram (*New World* special issue 2015).

The fact is your material was 100 per cent spot on, and that is exactly the problem! The HRC is only a subsidiary body and OHCHR isn’t a major fund or programme. All of this goes to show that UN reform must include reform and strengthening of the human rights pillar if it is to have any meaning.  
Marc Limon, Geneva

Editor’s note: this feature followed the UN system’s own categories and descriptions. OHCHR falls within the UN Secretariat, along with other bodies omitted from the piece such as the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. UNA-UK unreservedly agrees that the UN’s human rights work must be accorded far more prominence.





Richard Nelmes  
rounds up UNA-UK's  
recent initiatives to  
celebrate the UN in  
its 70th year

UNA-UK and the UN have always enjoyed strong support from instinctive multilateralists. Our goal this year – on the occasion of the UN's 70th anniversary – was to reach a new audience of people who recognise the global nature of the world's problems but perhaps doubt our ability to solve them.

The response from the public was enthusiastic; tickets to events like the one we held at the Guildhall in London sold out quickly, and local activities, such as UNA-UK's 'It's our UN' campaign, saw strong take-up.

Some of our outreach projects are highlighted on these pages, but this is just a small selection of our commemorative initiatives. We have worked with universities, media, the diplomatic community and our own supporters and local UNAs on various projects to involve people in the work of the UN.

Partnering with the School of Oriental and African Studies, we hosted a two-day debate on the UN and the global South, for students and the general public, while the French embassy generously hosted a diplomats' reception for us to mark UN Day.

UNA branches helped us turn the world UN blue, lighting up prominent landmarks in London, Edinburgh and Belfast with the UN's distinctive colour. UNA-UK staff and members also appeared on radio stations and in local newspapers up and down the country.

Everyone from secondary school students to City traders have had the chance to respond to the challenge we made in the previous special issue of *New World*: support the United Nations.

There is, however, much more to do. The UN is only as strong as we make it and the need for individuals to pressure government to invest in this vital institution has never been more urgent.

Next year sees 70 years since the first Security Council and General Assembly meetings, and you can bet we'll be using these to push for even greater action by the UK on the international stage.

To find out what else we've been doing to celebrate, go to [www.una.org.uk/UN70-celebrate](http://www.una.org.uk/UN70-celebrate).

Photo exhibition - UNEARTH

**PLACE AND DATE**  
Central Hall Westminster  
13 October – 11 December 2015

**PARTNERS**  
UNRIC Europe, Gabarron Foundation,  
Central Hall Westminster

**REACH**  
9,000 members of the general public

This powerful collection of photographs highlights the UN's work on human rights, development, humanitarian assistance, and peace and security to explore the Organization's journey through a rapidly changing world.

Previously on display in New York, Brussels, the Hague, Verdun and Lisbon, UNEARTH seeks to be the most revealing and broadest exhibition on the UN ever assembled.



© UN Photo

Nationwide campaign -  
It's our UN

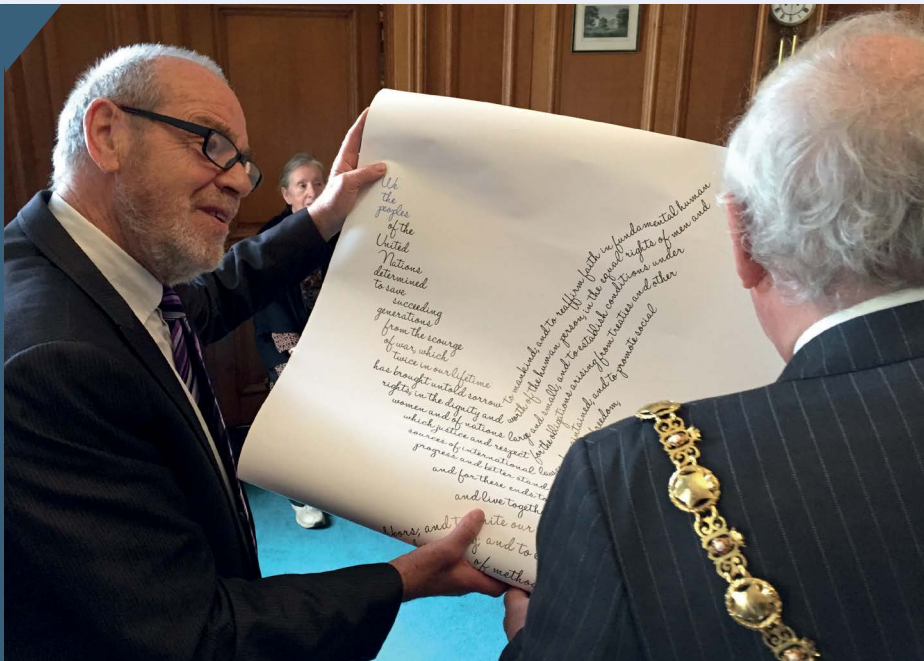
**PLACE AND DATE**  
Across the country, throughout 2015

**PARTNERS**  
Local UNAs

**REACH**  
Over 50,000, through coverage in  
local newspapers

From Devon firefighters to Belfast shipbuilders, every community in the UK has a link with the United Nations. UNA-UK's 'It's our UN' project encouraged local UNAs to uncover these stories and share them with local people.

Every participant received a special edition of the UN Charter to present to their mayor or local authority.



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Debate - Has our global  
experiment worked?

**PLACE AND DATE**  
Guildhall, London, 9 October 2015

**PARTNERS**  
City of London, The Elders, Office of the  
High Commissioner for Human Rights,  
Foreign & Commonwealth Office

**REACH**  
Almost 1,000 people in attendance and  
1.5 million people through social media

Our most high-profile celebration featured Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and members of The Elders: Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Prime Minister of Norway, and Hina Jilani, Advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

In an interactive panel discussion, the Elders focussed on why the UN matters and how it can be made more effective.

The High Commissioner delivered a powerful speech in which he addressed the refugee and migrant crisis, reminding the UK of its human rights obligations towards those who flee various conflict zones around the world.

All speakers argued that despite its political limitations, the UN has had a transformative impact on the world and must not be taken for granted.



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## The last word



### Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah calls on governments to change how they engage with citizens on climate change

#### **Tell us a bit about what first interested you in working for an organisation like CIVICUS**

The world is changing in fascinating ways, particularly in the way that citizens are organising and mobilising to shape their communities. Whether it is through online activism or mass street protests or the Occupy Movement or innovative service delivery, civil society is at the centre of some interesting developments. And CIVICUS, as the global civil society alliance, is trying to protect the ability of citizens to organise and harness the power of civil society.

#### **You've previously said that many ordinary people "see the international intergovernmental system as irrelevant at best and ineffectual at worst". How can the UN improve the way it engages at the grassroots level?**

The best way of winning grassroots support is for the UN to make a tangible difference in local communities. After two decades of unsuccessful climate talks and unfulfilled climate finance pledges, many feel that the UN has failed to protect the world's most vulnerable people from things like rising sea-levels and extreme weather patterns. The UN's lack of progress on this supreme issue has led to public distrust of the institution's ability to fulfil its vital mandate. The UN needs to devise inclusive decision-making processes that address the needs of its more than seven billion constituents rather than the interests of a few powerful member states.

#### **A busy year in global governance culminates in the climate treaty negotiations in Paris. What are your hopes for this process?**

We desperately need an ambitious and binding set of commitments coming out of Paris; commitments that take heed of the science and deliver fair outcomes. This means that those most responsible for

climate change lead in the efforts to limit the warming of the planet to two degrees Celsius, and that all countries stick to the national climate action plans that are being submitted to the UN. Together these diverse yet compatible commitments can provide a roadmap for mitigating climate change.

#### **Civil society and activist movements have played an important role in building momentum towards the Paris conference. What lessons do you think have been learned along the way?**

We've learned that the UN process has been less than democratic. The outcomes of previous climate conferences have often reflected the interests of the world's most carbon-intensive economies rather than the demands of global civil society. As more people become aware of the interlinkages between climate change, poverty and inequality, citizens are beginning to evaluate the environmental voting records of politicians. Right now very few politicians pay any domestic political price for their actions (or inactions) at the intergovernmental level, but I am confident that this is changing as more people care about what goes on at these global forums.

#### **Many fear that as civil society voices around the world become increasingly restricted, vested interests will still win the day. How would you respond to these concerns?**

In 2014, CIVICUS documented serious threats to the core civic freedoms of assembly, association and expression in 96 countries. In too many of these cases, civil society is under attack because it dares to question the collusion that occurs between political and economic elites. Big business – particularly mining and energy companies – are busy watering down government regulations and policies and preventing civil society from having a say.

#### **The success of any climate treaty – or indeed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – will ultimately be decided by its effective implementation. What role can there be for civil society in ensuring states live up to their obligations?**

Thankfully there is growing recognition that global deals will not be delivered by the governments let alone the UN system. Instead, in many parts of the world and across countless issues, there is recognition that civil society is key to delivering these shared agendas and promoting accountability. When it comes to the SDGs we are already seeing that without civil society many of the goals will hardly have a chance of being achieved. Through our work on the DataShift project ([www.thedatashift.org](http://www.thedatashift.org)), we are already seeing the innovative ways civil society is harnessing information to monitor progress.

#### **Finally, what one message would you like New World's readership of global citizens to take away with them?**

Citizens wanting to have a say in the development of national and international climate action plans are experiencing a double democratic deficit. At the national level, growing numbers of people – including in countries that look democratic on paper – are angry that domestic plans to combat climate change do not reflect the required urgency. At the global level, civil society doesn't get a seat at the table or if they do it is merely a box-ticking exercise. If the UN and its member states are serious about taking meaningful action on climate change, they need to drastically improve the way that they engage citizens in their governance of the planet. ●

**Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah is the Secretary General of CIVICUS, the global civil society alliance. He tweets at @civicsg**

We  
the  
peoples  
of the  
United  
Nations

determined  
to save  
succeeding  
generations

from the scourge  
of war, which  
twice in our lifetime

has brought untold sorrow  
rights, in the dignity and

women and of nations large  
and small, and to establish conditions under

which justice and respect  
sources of international

progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

and for these ends to practice tolerance

and live together in peace with one

another as good neighbors; and to unite our strength to maintain

international peace and security; and to ensure, by the acceptance of

principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be

used, save in the common interest; and to employ international machinery

for the promotion of the economic and social advancement

of all peoples, have resolved to combine our efforts to accomplish these aims


We the peoples

UNA-UK's commemorative  
posters available to buy at:  
[www.una.org.uk/poster](http://www.una.org.uk/poster)



The United Nations Association – UK is a movement of global citizens committed to the values of the United Nations. We believe that only by working together can we build a better future for us all. Find out more and be part of our work: [www.una.org.uk](http://www.una.org.uk)





*"Our small, dense, interconnected world continues to stand thanks to the lessons learned by the women and men who survived the Second World War; and if we neglect or dismantle the dykes that they built against such disaster, we will place ourselves and our children in terrible danger"*

**ZEID RA'AD AL HUSSEIN**

*UN High Commissioner for Human Rights  
UNA-UK's keynote speaker, 70th anniversary celebrations  
Guildhall, London*

UNA-UK is the UK's leading source of independent analysis on the UN and a vibrant grassroots movement campaigning for a safer, fairer and more sustainable world



**UNA-UK**

Visit [www.una.org.uk](http://www.una.org.uk) to become a member or make a donation