

SPEECH TO LEAD'S CORPORATE SUMMIT ON CLIMATE CHANGE. 19 FEBRUARY 2009

Good morning and welcome to the Leadership for Environmental Development's Corporate Summit on Climate Action.

This has been funded by the British High Commission: in association with a number of leading partners in Pakistan, whose logos are prominently displayed and to whom I am exceedingly grateful.

I'd like to start by thanking LEAD for organising this event. LEAD has now been established in 14 different countries. LEAD Pakistan was created in 1995 with the sole purpose of bringing an innovative capacity building initiative to Pakistan.

I can't think of a better organisation with which to be associated to address this issue.

This Summit provides us with a welcome opportunity to discuss climate change concerns, including its impact, in particular on Pakistan.

Climate change is recognised as one of the major threats to the security and prosperity of the world in the twenty-first century. Unchecked climate change undermines the conditions for economic growth.

Climate change is the ultimate expression of our interdependence. It respects neither wealth, geography nor borders. It arises from many years of carbon-led development. These have brought unprecedented affluence and opportunity to many: but not to all. And we know now that this model of development is no longer sustainable.

But it is not a challenge that can be left to scientists, or even to governments alone to overcome. We all need to work together to strike the best balance. A balance between the need to create economic prosperity and the need to preserve our environment for future generations.

The potential consequences of not taking action are enormous.

Take this region:

- One and a half billion people and large-scale vegetation in the South Asia face threats.
- Eighty per cent of bio-diversity will be at an increased risk.
- By 2035 the Himalayan glaciers which help to provide water for 3/4 billion people could disappear.
- This will impact on the Indus, Yellow, the Yangtze and the Ganges Rivers.
- Kyrgyzstan has lost over 1,000 glaciers in the last four decades.

So what does climate change really mean for Pakistan itself?

Pakistan contributes only 135th of the world's average of carbon dioxide emissions. It produces minimal chloro-fluoro-carbons and a few sulphur dioxide emissions. It makes a negligible contribution to ozone depletion and acid rain.

Yet it is likely to suffer disproportionately from climate change.

According to a recently published index, Pakistan ranks 12th on the list of the countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

The effects but could be large. Wet areas could become drier, the receding of mountain glaciers may reduce inflows for irrigation, agriculture and low-lying areas may become stalinised by saltwater intrusion owing to rise in sea level.

If, as some predict, the average temperature is likely to increase by 1.5 - 2.0 degrees Celsius in next 50 years. Pakistan might face more frequent droughts and floods and further desert-ification.

Just imagine Jacobabad, Sibi and Multan having temperatures that exceed 52 degrees Celsius. Or the intrusion of seawater into the coast areas of Sindh and Baluchistan. And what are the implications of all this for food production?

What will we do when people start to fight, not over their politics, but over water?

Happily Pakistan recognises the issues that may arise and is playing an important role as a partner in the Abu Dhabi dialogue. This dialogue involving Nepal, India, Afghanistan and Bangladesh is intended to improve the management of the rivers of the Greater Himalayas.

It is important that these countries come together to plan their water needs for the future. One and a half billion people in the region rely on rivers that flow from the Himalayas and through seven countries.

Through regional co-operation, those countries can provide much needed early warning of the kind of river surges that have brought widespread flooding to India and Nepal. And those countries can share insights on the changing nature of life along these rivers, and how best to make the necessary adaptations.

Locally I am pleased to record that the British Deputy High Commission is working with the Karachi City Government and Sindh Environment Ministry on drawing up a strategy and guidelines on adaptation in tackling climate change.

Yet Pakistan cannot tackle climate change alone. Local action is not enough – it must be backed both by regional and global co-operation.

In tackling climate change, we must 'think global, act local'. We must 'think global, act regional'. And we must 'think global and act global'.

A crucial step will be agreeing a fair and ambitious deal in Copenhagen in March this year. Agreement made at Copenhagen must meet five clear development tests if we are to avoid condemning the world's poorest people to generations of poverty.

First, any deal must include a goal with credible near-term targets to limit greenhouse gases. We need to commit to a cut in emissions of at least 50% by 2050, and make explicit the link between climate change and development.

Second, any deal must find a way of reducing greenhouse gas emissions that is both fair and equitable. Developed countries must take the greatest responsibility for cutting emissions. Developed countries hold the greatest responsibility for the climate change: we have the greatest capacity to act in response.

Thirdly a key part of the deal at Copenhagen, will be a reformed carbon market. One that will help poor countries adopt resilient, low carbon development. At both global and national levels, we need to make the carbon market work more effective.

Fourth, we must provide greater support for technology development and transfer to benefit developing countries. Rich countries and emerging economies will have the resources to change to low-carbon paths quickest. Our shared challenge is to help every country to change and be part of a new global low-carbon economy.

I will belabour this point since it is an important one. We recognise Pakistan's energy needs are increasing. We cannot simply say to the people of Pakistan: 'I'm sorry, but the planet can't sustain your energy needs'.

The international community must find ways to help countries like Pakistan make the most out of opportunities for renewable and clean energy sources. Sources like wind, hydro and solar power are both cleaner and more sustainable than fossil fuel reserves.

The UK recognises Pakistan's energy needs and potential in the renewable energy sector. We have sponsored the Alternate Energy Development Board's current visit to the UK. We hope they will gain from exposure to new technologies and set a platform to build relationships between British and Pakistani Renewable Energy companies.

And finally at Copenhagen the deal must provide more support for developing countries. Support to build their resilience and adapt to climate change. That will involve international funds – (such as the strategic climate fund launched at the G8, which the United Kingdom Government has supported to the tune of £800 million). And it will mean providing direct support for countries' own plans to protect the most vulnerable communities.

The British Prime Minister Gordon Brown has said- "a low carbon economy will not emerge from thinking of business as usual". "Business as usual" is unchecked climate change. This threatens the prosperity and security of citizens and businesses throughout the world.

Increasingly the global business community is recognising the importance of its role in meeting that challenge.

International business leaders, together with governments and climate change experts, drew up a comprehensive set of recommendations on climate change policy at the World Economic Forum in January 2008. These recommendations highlighted that the cost of inaction on this issue would be disastrous. It

highlighted that the only reasonable approach for all governments and business leaders is to take action now.

The business community is also recognising that climate change is not only a challenge but an opportunity.

Global economic shocks and energy security issues have led governments and businesses to think in new ways about how to use their resources. To grasp the opportunity to invest in new "green" technologies and practices.

Reducing dependence on oil and creating a low carbon economy will mean that we will all be less vulnerable to fossil fuel price shocks. And mean that we will have greater energy security. It will mean that businesses and households save money through energy efficiency. The growth of the low carbon economy will be a source of employment and innovation.

LEAD Pakistan has recognised that Pakistan needs the innovation, ingenuity, drive and strategic risk-taking of its business community to break away from "business as usual". This is the start of a long journey, and we need to progress along it quickly.

I hope the LEAD Corporate Summit on Climate Change can be used as a starting point on that journey. A journey that will enable Pakistani businesses to get involved in the climate change debate; to develop a shared understanding of what needs to be done and to move forward together. I wish LEAD Pakistan, and all those taking part, every success for a productive and rewarding meeting.