

ROAD TO COPENHAGEN 2009

WWW.ROADTOCOPENHAGEN.ORG

ARTICLE

WE HAVE AROUND 2850 DAYS, OR 97 MONTHS TO SAVE THE PLANET

We have around 2850 days, or 97 months to save the planet. That is when we, according to "doomsday climate experts", will go beyond the climate's "tipping point". A point where it is no longer likely that we will stay below the 2C temperature rise threshold.

On November 6 (or Today if the article is published that day) is a day when a different kind of meeting on climate change will be held in Brussels. So, what is different about this meeting? To start with the participants have recognised that there is a different clock to watch than the one on the office wall. Contrary to being a counsel of dooms day, it tells us that everything we do from now matters. Climate change is a story about desperation and hope. It can literally kill us or it can save us. Climate change will test us, threaten us and force us to change. And change, the unknown, is daunting. But it does not have to be. On the contrary, we believe there are reasons to be optimistic, even to be very optimistic. Because, in fact, we have the know-how, the tools, the technology and the economy to mitigate climate change and ensure climate justice! And that is what the meeting we are hosting today is about, that change is possible.

The Kyoto protocol ends in 2012 and the global community must decide on a new agreement in Copenhagen 2009. That is why the conference and the initiative we chair is called Road to Copenhagen. Last December the debate started at UN level in Bali and this year the negotiators will meet in Poznan, Poland (1-10 December). We have engaged in this unique initiative because we believe that politics alone can't fix climate change. As people throughout the world it will be our daily choices and outspoken demands on companies and politicians that will decide the temperature. We will all be affected, so we should all have the right to express our concerns, needs and expectations. This discussion should not only be reserved for a small elite of politicians, business people and experts. We need to have a democratic debate on climate change and our future. And that is what Road to Copenhagen is about - giving as many people, business and civil society groups as possible a voice in the negotiations on a post-Kyoto agreement.

Road to Copenhagen is a joint initiative organised by Club of Madrid, Globe Europe and Respect Table. It brings together people from all walks of life who believe that change and a sustainable world is possible. It is web-based and interactive, and open to every one to engage and discuss directly with politicians, NGO's and progressive business.

The meeting on November 6 (or today if the article is published that day) will discuss the agenda of the upcoming UN climate conference in Poznan. We will talk about the long term targets, progress made on adaptation and technology. One workshop will in particular focus

on human rights, gender and climate justice, a dimension which often is overlooked in the current UN debate. A debate which tends to focus on climate change in terms of technology and its economy and less on the human and social context. This aspect will be an important contribution to the communiqué that will be elaborated and delivered by us directly to the UN negotiators in Poznan.

Why do we feel the human context is so important? In 1820, the United Kingdom was the richest country in the world. The average income per person was three times greater compared to the poorest region, sub-Saharan Africa. Today the United States is the richest country in the world with a per capita income that is roughly twenty times larger than of the poorest region, still sub-Saharan Africa. Most of the expected 2.6 billion rise in global population by 2050 will come from the poorest regions in the world. These are regions which have no convergent economic growth, are the most unstable politically and will be the hardest hit by climate change. Jefferey Sachs speaks about the paradox of a unified global economy and a divided global society where the poverty trap is self-reinforcing, not self-corrective. It is an alarming trajectory which constructs a “sustainability gap” that must be addressed. The Nobel peace prize laureate Wangari Mathai puts it very simply: *“there can be no sustainable development without an equitable development; and there can be no equitable development without gender equality”*. It is clear that we will not be able to mitigate climate change unless we address poverty and ensure climate justice.

Ultimately, achieving sustainability and a low-carbon economy will not only depend on technological innovation, but will require far ranging social and political innovation. Let us not forget that technology does not have the ability to eliminate poverty, respect human rights, stop climate change and build a sustainable society – *people do*. That is what the initiative Road to Copenhagen is about – and the agreement in Copenhagen must be about – climate justice for all peoples.

Mary Robinson, Former President of Ireland and Vice-President of the Club of Madrid

Margot Wallström, Vice President of European Commission