



REMARKS OF
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High Level Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF)
Summit Preparatory Meeting
02 October 2018, 3:00pm – 5:00pm
Permanent Mission of Bangladesh
820 Diplomat Center, 2nd Avenue, 4th Flr, New York, NY 10017

Good afternoon,

We associate ourselves with all of you here today for all the things we hold in common. We are citizens of nations the most vulnerable to climate change

If the magnitude of the common threat were lost to us, it would quickly materialize in one or most of our countries in the same region before the year was out. This is why, as past chair of the CVF, the Philippines was instrumental in ensuring that the Paris Agreement was gavelled only when the appropriate scale of ambition was agreed.

It is hard enough to be ants moving among elephants, it is harder still to move pachyderm to take effective action against climate change. At best we can bite them on the flesh around their gigantic toes but their skins are thick which is why they don't feel the change of the climate for the worse.

But we had giants to help us, like the late Tony de Brum, the Marshallese diplomat who was a dear friend of Filipino communities in the Marshallese capital of Majuro. He fought from conference benches that looked like trenches at UN climate negotiations as leader of the High Ambition Coalition. De Brum demanded accountability from the U.S. for using the Marshall Islands as a nuclear test site as if no one that mattered lived there. We recall De Brum because of the situation in which we find ourselves. We have before us the opportunity for a wider more unequivocal solidarity with countless communities on the frontline of climate change.

We must demand far more urgent and ambitious climate action from the world's largest emitters. Sure they commiserate with, and extend post-mortem help to, the survivors in the mounting body count among vulnerable countries—not least body bags. But it would be nice if they could, as they can—given the size and wealth of their polluting economies—do something to slow down climate change. Rich countries are far better prepared to meet its destructive force and to rebuild what it destroys. But eventually climate change will take a devastating toll on the rich as well.

Already on fire, and in many places sinking, flames and floods engulf more rich lands and cities. Harvests are failing on greater scales. And refugees fleeing climate

change-devastated places are tearing down their boundary walls. What are they gonna do? Decimate them at the border? They would like to and they can try but let us see what comes of that.

What goes around comes around. As the famous picket sign opposing anti-migrant discrimination said, “We wouldn’t be here if you hadn’t gone there.” Referring to their home countries which the West colonized and wrecked. The idea that Western imperialism was anything better than the moral and material horror it was is pure historiographical garbage.

None will be spared by climate change; yet those least responsible for it are the first and the worst to suffer the most damage and hurt.

We applaud the members of the CVF Troika of Leadership. We have come a long way since 2009, when the Forum was founded by President Mohamed Nasheed of the Maldives, Jose Ramos Horta of East Timor and Philippine Senator Loren Legarda. From 20 members we are now 48, plus the V20 Group of Finance Ministers of Vulnerable Countries CVF helped establish.

The coming CVF Virtual Summit on November 22 is the gift of the Republic of the Marshall Islands to the world. Not only does it provide a platform for countries to express their resolve for urgent action to reach the goals of Paris but it shows how we can come together without having to increase greenhouse gas emissions by traveling abroad and impoverishing our countrymen more with the expense. I hope this starts a serious trend in international conferences by compelling officials to stay in their home countries and using what everyone else does to communicate across boundaries: the Internet. CVF walks its talk; preferring to do things than be seen doing them.

We see the climate crisis not only as a threat but an opportunity to innovate and transform our economies to greater efficiencies and savings. Meeting the challenge of climate change will come at an initial cost to economic progress and living standards. But in the long run, it can contribute to sustainable and inclusive progress and prosperity. Although in the long run we here will all be dead.

To make everything more resilient to climate change, we need to upgrade everything, including infrastructure, supply chains, urban services, logistics, food supply, energy and transport and how things have been made since the Industrial Revolution that started climate change. But let us face it: there will be a terrible cost in existing employment because retooling hardly ever works. Most work is not quantum physics but ordinary. And between old hands at the old jobs and the new hands coming into the work force—the pick of the latter and discarding the former is a no-brainer. But better ways of doing things might create more and better employment, and generate greater wealth sustainably. Just the prospect of that greater wealth should argue for a universal basic income so that those displaced have the means to survive into a climate-safer world.

Remember, the environment serves people and not people the environment. Once you are jobless and others get the work you were doing but in a more climate-friendly way is no compensation at all. No one should get poor just so the rich can enjoy a cleaner view of the landscape from world class resorts. The world has no value in itself; it has no value as a way to make life better for all human beings or for none at all. So, yes there are risks and costs; but none so great as that posed by doing nothing to meet, to reduce, and cope with climate change.

Thank you.