

## The State of the Planet

By Ann Grosjean

On December 2, 2020, the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, spoke at Columbia University in New York City at the launching of their new Climate School. His opening remarks about climate change were so profound that I felt it would be most impactful to share and paraphrase his passionate words:

“We are facing a devastating pandemic, new heights of global heating, new lows of ecological degradation and new setbacks in our work towards global goals for more equitable, inclusive and sustainable development. To put it simply, the state of the planet is broken.”

The Secretary-General stated that humanity is waging war on nature and that nature will always fight back with fury. Biodiversity and ecosystems are collapsing with a million species at risk of extinction. Deserts are increasing and wetlands and forests disappearing. Oceans are being overfished, choking with plastics, and becoming acidic while coral reefs are bleached and dying. Nine million people are dying annually from air and water pollution. As people encroach into animal habitats, we could see more virus jump from animals to humans as seventy-five percent of new emerging human infectious diseases are zoonotic.



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We near climate catastrophe as 2020 may be one of the three warmest years on record globally and the past decade the hottest in human history. Ocean heat is at record highs and this year eighty percent of global oceans experienced marine heat waves. In 2020, the Arctic experienced exceptional warmth at 3 degrees Celsius above average and in October, their sea ice level was the lowest and re-freezing the slowest. Permafrost is melting and releasing a potent greenhouse gas, methane.

Apocalyptic fire, floods, cyclones and hurricanes are the new normal, costing the world \$150 billion last year. Even though lockdowns from COVID19 reduced emissions and pollution temporarily, carbon dioxide emissions are sixty-two percent higher than when climate negotiations began in 1990, but climate policies have not met the challenge. We are experiencing unprecedented climate extremes and volatility in every region on every continent. The science is clear: to limit temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial

levels (the Paris Agreement goal), the world must decrease fossil fuel by six percent every year between now and 2030. Instead, we are forecasting an annual increase of two percent.

The implications of this assault on our planet impedes our efforts to achieve the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) by 2030. We are less able to eliminate poverty and achieve food security. Our work for peace is more difficult as these disruptions create instability, displacement and conflict. Seventy percent of the most climate vulnerable nations are also the most politically and economically fragile with eight of the fifteen most vulnerable hosting UN peacekeeping missions. Those who have done the least to cause the problem are suffering the most.

“Dear Friends, Let’s be clear: human activities are at the root of our descent towards chaos. But that means human action can help solve it. Making peace with nature is the defining task of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It must be the top, top priority for everyone, everywhere. In this context, the recovery from the pandemic is an opportunity. We can see rays of hope in the form of a vaccine. But there is no vaccine for the planet. Nature needs a bailout. In overcoming the pandemic, we can also avert climate cataclysm and restore our planet... Covid recovery and our planet’s repair must be the two sides of the same coin.”

What can we do to solve these problems and build back better? Secretary-General Guterres suggested three strategies to address this climate emergency: to achieve global carbon neutrality by 2050, to provide the necessary financing to support the Paris Agreement, and to develop adaptations to protect people and countries, especially the most vulnerable, from the impacts of climate change.

The charge of [the Paris Agreement](#) is to achieve carbon neutrality with net zero emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050. One 2021 goal of the UN is to form a Global Coalition for Carbon Neutrality, The EU, UK, Japan, Republic of Korea and more than 110 countries have committed to carbon neutrality by 2050. President Biden has announced the same goal. China hopes to arrive by 2060.

Coal plants must be replaced with green energy as it costs more to run a coal plant than to build new renewables from scratch. Renewable energy is good for the environment, and also for the economy by possibly creating 18 million new jobs by 2030. Unfortunately, some countries are rolling back environmental protections or exploiting natural resources. Fossil fuel phase out must include the elimination of subsidies.

The second area of concern is Finance. Without the support of investors, markets and finance ministers, commitments to net zero emissions will not become a reality. Mr. Guterres asked that the developed countries honor their promise to provide \$100 billion dollars to support developing countries in reaching our shared climate goals.

The third area is the race against time to adapt to a rapidly changing climate. Adaptation and resilience, especially for the developing countries, are morally and economically necessary to prevent and protect against current and future climate impacts. The need is greatest for small, developing island states which face existential risk. Large-scale, preventive and systematic adaption supports including early warning systems, climate-resilient infrastructure, improved dry-land agriculture, and mangrove protection will prevent future loses.

“Nature feeds us, clothes us, quenches our thirst, generates our oxygen, shapes our culture and our faiths and forges our very identity. We can’t separate climate action from the larger planetary picture. Everything is interlinked – the global commons and global well-being. Next year, countries will meet in Kunming to forge a post -2020 biodiversity

framework to halt to the extinction crisis and put the world on a pathway to living in harmony with nature. Biodiversity is the living, breathing web of life. The world has not met any of the biodiversity goals for 2020. Again, we need financial and monitored regulations to succeed.”

Indigenous peoples make up less than 6 percent of the world’s population yet steward 80 percent of the biodiversity on land. Their knowledge, over millennia of direct contact with nature can show us the way. Nature managed by indigenous peoples is declining less rapidly than elsewhere. Their land is the most vulnerable to climate change and environmental degradation. It is time to hear their voices, reward their knowledge and respect their rights.

The impacts of climate change and environmental degradation fall most heavily on women, who are 80 percent of those displaced. They are also the backbone of agriculture and the key stewards of natural resources. They are among the world’s leading environmental human rights defenders. Women’s representation in national parliaments have resulted in the signing of climate action agreements, therefore, more women decision-makers are needed at the table to devise strategies for natural resource governance.

We see inspiring waves of social mobilization by young people. They vote, protest in the streets, advocate on-line, participate in the classroom, community engagement and places of work. They are pushing their elders to do what is right.

“Dear Friends, I have detailed an emergency, but I also see hope. I see a history of advances that show what can be done – from rescuing the ozone layer to reducing extinction rates to expanding protected areas. Many cities are becoming greener. The circular economy is reducing waste. Environmental laws have a growing reach. At least 155 United Nations Member States now legally recognize that a healthy environment is a basic human right. And the knowledge base is greater than ever. A new world is taking shape... More and more people are understanding the need for their own daily choices to reduce their carbon footprint and respect planetary boundaries... This is a moment of truth for people and planet alike. COVID and climate have brought us to a threshold. We cannot go back to the old normal of inequality, injustice and heedless dominion over the Earth. Instead, we must step towards a safer, more sustainable and equitable path. We have a blueprint: the 2030 Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on climate change. The door is open; the solutions are there. Now is the time to transform humankind’s relationship with the natural world – and with each other. And we must do so together. Solidarity is humanity. Solidarity is survival. That is the lesson of 2020. With the world in disunity and disarray trying to contain the pandemic, let’s learn the lesson and change course for the pivotal period ahead.

Thank you.”

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres

2 December 2020

Columbia University

To view the entire speech, click [here](#) .

# PIRATES, PHILANTHROPY AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

By Grace M. Murphy



Pirates threatened shipping in the waters near Somalia, the country with the longest coastline in mainland Africa. How might the world bring peace to the region? According to Marcel Arsenault, Founder of [One Earth Future Foundation](#), it was a simple matter of sitting down with the pirates and asking them what they needed. The men had turned to piracy because their fish-filled waters were being invaded by ships from other nations, over-fishing, and therefore depriving the locals of their livelihood. So, the pirates said they needed both hope and jobs.

A good design for philanthropy must include members of the community. Therefore, working with the pirates, local businessmen, elected officials and other citizens, One Earth Future designed a plan. Arsenault advises that philanthropic results happen slowly. Patience is required and developers must be prepared for miserable short-term results. Design solutions must be both locally and globally sustainable.

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The Foundation's design must have been functional since it has led to "Cold Catch," a venture which aims to secure fisheries, reduce food loss and improve quality in the fishing industry by providing ice and cold storage to fishermen, processors and vendors. This can expand the Somali market, improve profit, create jobs, decrease fishing pressure AND eliminate the need for piracy.

This presentation was one segment of "[The Future of Philanthropy in Global Governance](#)," a part of [UN 75 2020 and Beyond / Global Governance Forum](#), held virtually 16-17 September 2020.

Another presenter, Jess Orback, Executive Director of the Global Challenges Foundation, pointed out that two of the important issues of today – climate change and weapons of mass destruction – did not exist 75 years ago. He sees philanthropy as providing research, encouraging new ideas and issuing reports to develop the architecture for rule-based decision making. His main thought is, "Philanthropy needs alliances."

Sandra Brika, a member of the Board of Management of Robert Bosch Stiftung, presented the ideas that philanthropy has to look at the big picture, be transparent and accountable, build consensus and base its work on knowledge. Her main idea is that "Philanthropy has limitations and doesn't 'own' the solutions; interaction is necessary."

James Goldston, Executive Director of [Open Society](#), gave a direct and compelling plea for the future of the ICC – the International Criminal Court – developed by Kofi Annan in 1998 – which

offers survivors of heinous crimes the hope of justice. He believes it has “failed to fulfill its ambition” but that it is worth fighting for and that it can be more effective and work toward accountability with the selection of a new Chief Prosecutor, who with skill and experience can carry out its mandate. He repeated his idea that “The law must prevail over force.”

The speakers pointed out what they believe to be shortcomings in the current organization of the United Nations. In addition to his criticism of the ICC, Goldstone pointed to untackled problems of racial injustice and digital identity. Orback believes the Security Council is not dealing effectively with either climate or environment. If the UN as a whole cannot solve a problem, he proposes clubs for “like-minded” countries who could connect with each other to create a movement or achieve consensus.

How can philanthropy affect global governance?

Philanthropists would like to be considered catalysts – causing activity to promote change – by interacting with at-risk communities, looking at the big picture and presenting creative solutions, and basing their work on research and knowledge of the facts.

Philanthropy isn't giveaways anymore!

**YOUR UN REPRESENTATIVES** - The DKG members listed below are your official representatives at the UNDGC (UN Department of Global Communications) and ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council.) All of them also work with CTAUN. You can email us for further information.

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