

Secretary-General António Guterres

United Nations

UN Headquarters, S-3800

New York, NY 10017

September 16, 2021

***Re: International diplomatic emergency***

Mr Secretary-General,

We are an international group of current and former politicians, diplomats, judges, lawyers, mediators, policy experts, business people and community leaders that share a global outlook. Our desire to see rapid action to combat the clear and present global threat of climate change has brought us together. Some of us have spent decades of our careers on this issue.

As you are aware, Mr Secretary-General, the consequences of carbon emissions, expected by scientists for several decades and spelled out in the IPCC's shocking latest report, are unfolding before us. They are coming earlier and with greater ferocity than anticipated. We may be near tipping-points, where the climate system may suddenly and irreversibly change. These changes will impair living conditions for many and may bring disaster and conflict to vulnerable nations. This is already a climate emergency. It may become a climate tragedy in our lifetimes. Yet there is another path.

There has been a quarter-century of talking. There is now an overwhelming need for action. More promises for the distant future are not a measure of success. At COP 26 in Glasgow this

November, nations must focus on progress in fulfilling commitments already made and on plans for action in the next five years. COP 26 will be an international diplomatic failure if governments don't come together and make firm commitments to act now.

The immediate actions required of the international community to combat this emergency are stark but clear. From the UN, we need a new focus at COP 26 on creating a robust framework for assessing actual delivery of outcomes, rather than on pledges. From countries, we need the cessation of new fossil fuel projects, a carbon price of around \$100 (per tonne of carbon dioxide), building cleantech investment to \$5 trillion a year, halving emissions by 2030, and demonstrating that alternatives to the current energy system are beneficial to citizens, states and regions.

The response has so far been woefully inadequate. Pausing only for the pandemic, emissions are expected soon to return to their upward, business-as-usual path. We must urgently change this course. Not to have done so already is a gross failure of international diplomacy. We have a diplomatic emergency alongside the climate emergency.

There is no single authority that can prescribe and enforce the urgent action needed. To avoid a climate tragedy, we need the political will to accept science, to cooperate in new ways and to make tough decisions together. We believe that there are four critical ways in which COP 26 can infuse new urgency into global climate diplomacy. They are: (1) immediate action on fossil fuels and other sources of rising emissions such as methane, (2) more money, (3) better institutions and (4) involving communities.

First, the huge and rapid response to COVID-19 confirms that resolute action can be taken, and the money found, to combat a global emergency. China and the USA, the world's largest carbon emitters, have a unique opportunity to act together for the good of humanity. We call upon them to lead resolutely by example by agreeing a phased programme to close their existing coal-fired power plants, or to retrofit them with carbon capture technology, and to ban the financing and construction of new coal plants. Likewise, we call upon Saudi Arabia, the world's largest national oil producer, to lead OPEC to halt investment in additional oil production and on the USA to support such a policy.

Second, there is no excuse for not honouring commitments to poorer countries. Their governments must be able to ensure access to cheap and reliable power for hundreds of millions of people. The \$100 billion a year promised by rich countries to poorer countries should be delivered without delay and then greatly increased. It is insignificant compared to the \$5 trillion a year that must be spent. Investment funds are primed for cleantech opportunities. Governments should commit to facilitating a global \$1 trillion energy transition investment fund both to accelerate progress and to send a strong signal to markets that they are now serious about taking the steps needed. In addition, we call for new international arrangements, coordinated by international financial institutions and the G20, to manage climate-related financial risk, to reduce the debt service burden on countries that invest in greening their economies and to use innovative means for managing disputes in climate critical projects, including the use of dispute boards for conflict avoidance.

Third, COP 26 should set a radical path by creating a robust framework for holding nations, institutions, companies and communities to account for their promises. In the absence of a binding international agreement to reduce emissions, citizens are of necessity the enforcers of last resort of these promises. Countries should agree to adopt laws that empower citizens to enforce national environmental commitments through domestic courts. Multilateral development banks and institutions should prioritize funding of infrastructure projects that both promote sustainability and are sustainably built. The World Trade Organisation should fully recognize the validity of multilateral climate and environmental instruments. Existing bodies should be adapted, or new ones created, if necessary, to officially call out countries and institutions that are failing to deliver their commitments.

Fourth, we need to adopt an all-hands-on-deck mentality that recognizes that the climate emergency is not an issue that the UNFCCC process can combat by itself. Communities, cities, regions, young people, women, indigenous peoples, not-for-profits, trade unions and businesses are already contributing to the solutions. The UN can help design and implement the means to empower networks of these non-state actors to drive transformative climate action around the world.

If emissions are to halve by 2030, we are already at “T minus 9” and counting. The countdown doesn’t look good so far. If COP 26 cannot deliver rapid, permanent emissions reductions and the ability of citizens to enforce the promises their governments make, we question the purpose of further climate COPs. The time may have come to replace the COPs with the emergency diplomacy that is used in times of crisis to defuse international conflict. This may be the most momentous international crisis humanity will face.

We think it is now or never. Without coordinated, collective, radical and impactful action in the next nine years we will be heading towards a climate tragedy. We offer our collective support to the efforts that you and the UN are making.

Sincerely,

**The undersigned members of the Scotia Group**

**HM Queen Noor of Jordan (Patron)**

**H.S.H Prince Etienne d'Arenberg** - Limited Partner Mirabaud Group, Head of UK Market, Private Wealth Management

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