

Interfaith Forum on Climate Change for Sub-Saharan Africa

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen...

I am Amy, from the UK. I am here as a representative of the Christian Muslim Youth Forum, and I also work for an inter-governmental organisation, the Commonwealth Foundation.

Firstly, I want to thank you not only for your stimulating discussion and your time over the last 2 days, but for allowing us this opportunity to present our views to you as well.

It is through this mutuality, sharing, and respect, that we can achieve real change regarding climate change. I think you will agree that, for the most part, there has been a very open, warm atmosphere at this conference, and this helps foster the positive attitude and openness needed to create change. It helps generate hope, and to avoid a fatalistic attitude towards this issue.

So, I've been chatting with my young friends here, and they would like to present to you some of the issues discussed here during the course of the conference that they felt were most important, and would like to offer you suggestions for further action.

But before that, I'm going to do a little preaching of my own! I am going to tell you about the importance of young people in mobilising action on climate change. It is not only faith leaders, but young people, who can help.

It became clear as we worked together and discussed that all five of us, whether from the UK or Nigeria, a boy or a girl, and no matter which faith we belong to, that we all carry multiple identities. Some of these identities we share, whether by faith or gender, and others – the colour of our skin being an obvious one! – we did not. But either way, we worked together, we discussed, and we cooperated.

Cooperation is a word we have heard a lot of over the last two days, and we believe that this is very important. Cooperation, working as a 'we', through collective action across generations, and seeing past individual identities to find commonality and a unitedness in our dedication to this environmental challenge leads to positive results and actions.

Young people, with ambition and drive, and an ability to influence their peers and to adapt to this changing world, are an important part of the solution to catastrophic climate change, and vital in helping take forward recommendations emerging from this declaration signed today.

Another word that has come up in discussions during this conference is sustainability. Sustaining the positive changes we can make with regard to climate change is *our* responsibility as the generation who will live in this changed world. *We* must sustain a new, environmentally friendly lifestyle for ourselves and future generations. And to this, we need your help, as more distinguished leaders of faith. We can lead by example, but we need support, resources, and knowledge. These are things that you can help provide. We can then sustain future, greener generations.

We have the determination and energy to see your plans through and we want you to set the bar high for us to follow. The higher you go, the further we must climb to achieve change, and thus more gets done. Of course, we must also be realistic, to avoid resignation or defeatism by those who feel there is no hope.

As young people of faith, we can carry this hope.

Mahatma Gandhi said:

“Be the change you want to see in the world.”

Well, we as young people are *in* the change, and we can *be* the change.

Adopting an asset-based approach was mentioned yesterday: using what is available to make positive change. Well, here we are. *We* are your assets, and we are ready and willing. So we ask you – please continue to involve us. We have the opportunity to be the change that Gandhi talks of.

But, enough from me! I would now like to hand over to my younger colleagues, who will share with you the issues they feel have been most important during this event, and to further stress, within those contexts, the importance on the younger generations today.

What the young ‘uns said...

Thanked those in attendance.

Mentioned that since those present were all ‘advanced in age’, young people do not expect them to do all the hard work with regard to climate change!

Requested that faith workers work with schools and educators to ensure that young people are well educated with regard to climate change and environmental issues.

Commended the Ministry of Environment for including promotional messages when you send a free text with a certain mobile network (one is allowed 5 free texts per day). This message includes ‘plant a tree today’ ‘protect your environment’, etc. Advocated that the use of new technologies be included in the faith based sphere. Requested that faith groups think ‘outside the box’ to come up with new ideas like this example to help the cause. Requested that faith groups engage with the government to act on climate change.

Admonished bureaucracy in Nigeria for being a hindrance to advancement with regard to climate change. There is no time to be bureaucratic. The time to act is now.

Told the story of the Minister of Works, who refused to repair a particular road. He later travelled the very road himself, was in an accident, and died. The lesson here is that the way we act today foretells our future. This is a lesson to pay close attention to.

Highlighted the importance of women: they are closest to the children of the family, and are therefore vital in dealing effectively with climate change.