

# **The Great Transformation in Times of Unease**

**Keynote Speech by Former German President Horst Köhler**

**on the Occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the German Federal Environmental  
Foundation (Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt, DBU)**

**Berlin, 8 December 2016**

## I.

Birthday celebrations are always pleasant, even more so, if one remembers the actual day of birth itself. Therefore, I am particularly happy to be here today. To me, the 25th anniversary of the German Federal Environmental Foundation (DBU) is not just another jubilee. It makes me think back to the year 1990 when, as a young State Secretary in the Finance Ministry, I had the chance to work on executing this ingenious idea of Theo Waigel and Hans Tietmeyer. Ever since, I have been following the work of the DBU - sometimes close by and sometimes from a distance. Today, there is much to celebrate and good reason to admire some of the DBU's achievements: thousands of funded projects, an increased awareness for sustainability and, of course, Europe's most highly-endowed environmental award. The DBU stands for an ecological foresight that we need today, more than ever. And for that I congratulate the DBU most warmly.

On this occasion, it should also be mentioned that the very establishment of the DBU is the product of such foresight. When in 1989 Finance Minister Theo Waigel proposed to the cabinet to use the revenues from the privatization of Salzgitter AG to found an environmental foundation, that decision was by no means a given. God knows there were other issues on the agenda, and few recognized the full extent of our planet's ecological crisis at that time. That is why you, dear Theo, also showed a great deal of political courage. It would have been easy to simply plug some short-term hole in the budget or to finance some temporary benefit. Financial appetites of that sort were plentiful. You, however, were thinking ahead!

Twenty-five years later, there is no room for doubt that your courage and steadfastness have paid off. This is especially an achievement of the DBU-leadership, which - Mr. Brickwedde - was in your hands until 2013 and since then rests with you, Dr. Botterman. Yet, credit is also due to both the board and the DBU's dedicated employees: All of you deserve our profound gratitude!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There are two key ingredients for a successful anniversary: the grateful glance back into the past and the courageous look ahead into the future. I have been kindly asked to use this ceremonial address as an opportunity to set our sights on the future and to talk about the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals - the so-called 2030 Agenda - as well as about the Paris Climate Agreement, both of which were adopted last year by all states across the world. This is an important matter since both framework agreements aim at a new and comprehensive transformation of societies and economies on a global scale. And yet, as I prepared this speech, the topic suddenly appeared almost smallish to me. Because many of the difficulties we encounter in implementing sustainability policies are mere symptoms of something else. They are symptoms of much deeper-lying tensions and dilemmas which our societies, our economies, and our political systems, are confronted with in this extremely complex 21<sup>st</sup> century.

If you would allow me, therefore, an attempt at bringing some of these underlying tensions to the fore in my speech today. What I am concerned about is the question of how the Great Transformation will become possible, despite all the inherent contradictions of our time.

## II.

Perhaps we have such difficulty shaping our future, because we have such a poor understanding of our present. After all, we do live in strange times. Precisely now, when it becomes evident that our problems are both complex and global, it appears that those forces are gaining the upper hand, whose answers are both simple and national. It is a matter of fact that the major crises of our times – pandemics such as Ebola, financial crises, climate change, the refugee crisis – can no longer be addressed by means of the nation-state alone. From that it should naturally follow that we need more international cooperation, that we need global solutions. Instead, there is a danger that discrediting global cooperation suddenly gains majority backing in many Western democracies. That is not only paradoxical but also reveals a great deal of hypocrisy. Because it was precisely the West that built up the existing international system of cooperation and trade after World War II and that has benefitted most from it:

What made America “great” were not walls, but rather the open-mindedness of a nation whose president could legitimately exclaim “Tear down this wall!” For his country was the living proof that it is to one's own advantage not to hide behind walls, but to reach out to the world, be it through trade, pop culture or with a Green Card.

And what made Germany Europe's economic power house was its great effort, but also its intelligent positioning, to become a supplier for growing economies in Europe and across the

world. One in four German jobs depends on exports. Therefore, it truly takes a lot of nerve to pretend that one is defending national interests by cursing the idea of open borders!

Populists capitalize on that queasy feeling people have living in a rapidly changing world. A world in which politics seems to have lost control in many realms – think of Ebola, the global financial crisis and the refugee crisis. The rhetoric of wall-building aims at fabricating the *illusion* of control.

The unease many people experience in view of the complexity of global interdependencies, the fear that impending changes threaten one's own material prospects – all of this must be taken seriously. And politics will fail dramatically, if the answers given exhaust themselves in *business as usual*.

And yet, it makes me angry to see how these charlatans, with their political sham, are exploiting this general feeling of unease; how they are selling false hope and, in doing so, are making it much more difficult to find solutions to the problems on people's minds. For they offer no real alternatives. After all, it is no coincidence that, across the world, the "New Right" denies man-made climate change – including the AfD by the way. When confronted with problems for which an isolationist nation-state quite obviously offers no fix, the problem is simply declared non-existent.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I neither can nor want to offer you a panacea against nationalist populism tonight, and it is in fact not the subject of my speech. What I am interested in is the question of how change can become possible in an atmosphere of unease and polarization. Three steps appear important to me: First, politics must learn to pick up on and make sense of this very feeling of discomfort itself. It must listen to why some people are afraid of losing their autonomy, their right of participation, and their dignity. My gut feeling tells me that current disputes about refugee policies, for instance, are in part a proxy discussion for much more deeply-rooted fears of loss. Second, politics must make transparent the complex factors contributing to this unease – because fear also grows out of ignorance. And politics needs to make clear that sticking to business as usual comes with far greater risks than tackling these challenges head on. Third, and on this basis, concrete policies must be developed that do not exhaust themselves in symbolic action but, instead, bring real change.

We cannot reduce the world's complexity by simply ignoring it – but we can pinpoint direct links and causal relations, and we can offer solutions that do justice to this complexity. I am convinced: If politicians demonstrate sincerity in their answers and if they make real impact their yardstick of success, then public trust in the state's problem solving capabilities will be recovered. Without this trust, transformational change will not be possible.

This sounds abstract, but I promise I will be more concrete. Let me begin by describing what I consider to be the starting point for the great transformation.

### III.

The worldwide combustion of fossil fuels has driven atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations to unprecedented levels. 15 out of the 16 hottest years on record have been in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. And while we take every November snowflake as an occasion to joke that climate change cannot be that serious after all, global warming already today threatens those the most who have contributed to it the least: Be it the nomads of the Sahel, the inhabitants of Pacific islands or farmers in the Andes. And *we* will be directly confronted with the consequences, at the very latest, once these people commence their journey as climate refugees. The United Nations estimates their numbers over the next 30 years at up to 200 million, should the two-degree goal not be met.

And while a refugee can be sent back (although the question remains *whereto*, if their home is underwater), most ecological consequences of global warming are irreversible. Our ecosystem, after all, is not like a plant in the living room of which one can simply buy another one, once it dies. In many areas we are approaching dangerous “tipping points” which, once crossed, may cause abrupt and irreversible changes to the earth system. Whether it is the melting of the Greenland ice sheet, the heat-induced collapse of tropical coral reefs, or the destabilization of the Indian monsoon – the potential consequences for humans would be difficult to predict and hardly manageable. This is what makes the challenge of fighting climate change so unique: It makes concrete temporal demands on climate policy and thereby calls for an entirely new type and quality of politics, which must allow itself to be measured against deadlines. One simply cannot negotiate with or ask climate change for an extension. Here, the method of buying time, so popular in politics, reaches its limits. I will come back to this point later.

Yet it is another factor that more than anything else demonstrates that the ecological crisis demands a new dimension and quality of politics: global population growth and the more than one billion people still living in extreme poverty. The challenge of decarbonizing the economic model of the industrialized countries would be difficult enough. At the same time, however, we must enable massive economic growth in poor countries – where hospitals and schools and streets and energy networks and services and industrial enterprises are needed to provide people with education, work, and income – in other words, the prospect of a life in dignity. But which resources should this growth feed on if we are already now reaching our planet’s ecological limits?

I raise this question because I am not always sure, to be honest, whether we have really grasped the gigantic dimensions of this challenge, despite the ease with which the rhetoric of sustainability has come to pass our lips. Only once we look at the globe as a whole and consider poverty and environmental issues together, will we begin to get a notion of what lies ahead of us. Humanity’s greatest challenge in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is to allow all people a life in dignity without destroying our planet in the process. That cannot and will not succeed on the basis of our current model of prosperity and growth in the industrialized world. If all humans

were to produce and consume like Europeans and Americans, then we would need three or four planets in reserve. We do not have them however.

And neither can the answer be: “Let others do things differently”. That would fit the textbook definition of immorality. The philosopher Vittorio Hösle, whom I hold in great esteem, once wrote: “Since universal applicability is the principle of modern ethics, the realization that our lifestyle is not universally applicable can, by modernity’s own yardstick, mean nothing other than that it is immoral”. This is what I had to think of when I was at the annual meeting of the African Development Bank a couple of months ago. There I learned that Germany, as a shareholder of the bank, opposes the financing of a new coal-fired power plant in South Africa. In terms of climate policy surely a defensible decision. But the African presidents also said to me: “Dear brother, we know quite well that you are still clinging on to coal in Germany. Because of jobs. And now you want to tell us that we have to do without? How are industrial enterprises meant to settle here without a stable supply of energy? Don’t our young people need jobs too?” – So my African counterparts.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I know better than to advocate for new coal-fired power plants in Africa at the DBU anniversary. There are alternatives, after all. But these alternatives exist here too! And this is what I want to get at: if we want to end extreme poverty, and if we want to do so without destroying our planet along the way, then a new and comprehensive transformation of our economies and societies is inevitable. And this transformation must happen first and foremost here, in our countries, in the industrialized world. This is no small responsibility. But the advantage we have gained, until now, from the unequal and, yes, unjust distribution of natural resources was by no means small either. Hence, it is first and foremost here with us where the transformation needs to start: it needs to change the way we produce and consume energy, it needs to change our means of transportation and it needs to change how and what we eat. This fundamental transformation will be taxing. Yet, more than anything else, it will offer new opportunities.

Whoever talks about this great task of a transformation towards sustainability has to do so in the context of a second major wave of change – namely the digital revolution, including the tremendous and rapid advances in robotics and communications. For lack of time, I will not be able to elaborate on this aspect tonight. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that *both*, the Great Transformation and the Digital Revolution, will shape this century. Both can be mutually beneficial. We must be aware, however, that their simultaneity puts the willingness for change in economies and societies to an acid test.

In the second part of my speech I will address what I see as some of the difficulties, dilemmas and possible solutions regarding the ecological transformation. But first, a note on something that gives me cause for optimism.

#### IV.

These days we are used to hearing almost exclusively bad news from the world of international politics. That is why we should not be embarrassed to ‘warm our hopes’ on the little good news like cold fingers at a wintry camp fire. I do not want to carry this metaphor too far, but last year there were two such fires signaling hope, and we should be damn sure to keep them burning.

I am referring to the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. That both agreements came into being is in itself a small miracle. They show that, despite all differences and even in times of major international conflicts, it is possible to come together and cooperate. I see the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement as the strategic antithesis to the current mood of retreat into the national, of division and of decay. I also see both as signs that the United Nations has not become irrelevant, but that we need it more than ever. All this gives me hope.

But above all I take hope in the fact that the Sustainable Development Goals and Paris, in their substance, reflect a precious consensus – an agreement amongst the community of states that we aspire to be the first generation to end extreme poverty and the last generation to be threatened by climate change. The 2030 Agenda and its respective targets attempt to square the very circle I have described earlier: to treat as one the economic, ecological and social dimensions of human development. And in contrast to their predecessor, the Millennium Development Goals, the Sustainable Development Goals (or “SDGs”) are not a reform program for developing countries, but rather a transformational agenda for all countries. I consider all of this to be as ambitious as it was overdue.

And I gladly admit: Of course, the 17 goals and 169 targets can be a headache to me too. And of course, in legal terms, the SDGs represent little more than a declaration of intent. And yes, if one studies these goals more closely, one finds conflicting goals and a conception of growth that would have benefitted from further reflection. Still, together, the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change provide a framework for the Great Transformation. They are no global master plan, but they are a compass. And the very fact that it has been possible to agree on this compass is a signal that should not be underestimated – now, no one can pretend anymore to not know which direction to go from here.

#### V.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Germany, too, signed the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement, and thus brings its own policies in line with this ambitious international reference framework. When travelling the world, I often encounter a lot of respect for Germany’s sustainability policy. Abroad the

German ‘flagship’ project of a transition towards sustainable energy (*Energiewende*) is often met with admiration (even if it is sometimes *skeptical* admiration). And neither did it go unnoticed that in July - at the High Level Political Forum monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda - Germany was among those pilot countries that first reported on their implementation efforts. At the climate conference in Marrakech two weeks ago, Germany was one of only four countries that presented a somewhat tangible timetable for how to reach its climate goals by 2050. I do not wish to trivialize all of this. Nor do I intend to talk down that the German cabinet will shortly adopt a completely revised sustainability strategy, which takes a position on all 17 SDGs and seeks to measure progress against 50 indicators. That goes beyond what we had thus far.

But is it really enough? And are we content with simply doing fairly well by international comparison?

Now before you retort that “nothing is ever good enough for Köhler”: It is not about measuring Germany’s transformation against my - Köhler’s - aspirations and expectations. It is about judging the transformation by the standards dictated to us by the reality of climate change itself. And here, we should certainly ask ourselves: Have we yet come to recognize the necessary extent and the necessary speed of the transformation?

I would like to mention two examples which gave me pause for thought lately.

The first example is our climate action plan itself. For the interested newspaper reader, it was rather painful to witness how it came into being - how the noticeable ambition of the Federal Environmental Minister was ground down in the mills of interdepartmental coordination until what remained of it was, in the end, a plan not ambitious but lacking - lacking both political courage and true innovative spirit. The plan lists in which industries, and until when, what amounts of carbon dioxide reductions have to be realized respectively – yet it does not identify the transformative actions necessary to achieve this. We all know that these goals cannot be met without bidding farewell to the combustion engine, without phasing-out coal power, without reducing our meat consumption, without an ecological tax reform. We all know that some transformational challenges cannot be met by incremental improvements but only through a bold change of course. And yet, instead of telling the truth fair and square we beat around the bushes; and we postpone action instead of tackling the job head-on. So what’s going wrong here? Why is it so difficult for politicians to translate knowledge into action?

A second example is the German automobile industry. The industry is currently a bit remorseful about the emissions scandal as well as about the creeping realization that it did not wake up in time for the competition in innovation, for instance, with regard to electro mobility. The question arises - why did this realization creep and crawl rather than gallop?

There were times when, as President of Germany, one would receive angry letters from lobbyists when publicly posing critical questions about the future of the German automobile industry. Yet, for at least a decade it must have been clear to any China travelers, for instance, that the buoyant sales party for big cars on the gigantic Chinese market – which so fueled the

euphoria of carmakers over their own products – must eventually come to an end. With every additional Chinese citizen wearing a protective mask on the open road, the problem with combustion engines became more and more evident. When I was on a state visit to China in 2007 and attended an event at Tongji University, the President of the University took me aside afterwards and whispered that he wanted to show me something. He led me to a small backyard, where a VW Jetta was standing. The VW was packed full of batteries. I was standing before an experiment which fueled the Chinese dream of emission-free mobility. Incidentally, that same year, the same University President took office as Minister of Science and Technology, a position which he continues to hold today.

While the Chinese tinkered with innovations and prepared clear-cut government guidelines for phasing out combustion engines, certain German carmakers were tinkering with innovative manipulative software, and put all their energy into watering down our government's environmental regulations. Most recently they did so successfully in Brussels when, in 2013, a little more time and a few more grams of CO<sub>2</sub> were squeezed out of the deal limiting the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of cars.

Again, the question: What is going wrong here? Why does it prove so difficult to translate knowledge into action?

I would sketch-out two areas of conflict, which might bring us closer to an answer.

## VI.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The human existence is full of contradictions. As humans, we can love and hate at the same time; as humans, we often know what is right and yet we do the wrong thing. Politics mirrors these very basic conditions of human nature, for it is nothing but the collectivization of all those conflicting needs and hopes and fears that each of us carries within themselves. Democratic politics is an attempt at reconciling the squillions of interests which co-exist within a society. Politics is the balancing of interests.

Now, what makes this transformation so difficult is the fact that we must organize this reconciliation of interests not only with a view to our own country, but that we must expand its spatial and also its temporal dimension. Politics in this interdependent 21<sup>st</sup> century is as much about giving due consideration to future generations as it is about taking into account other parts of the planet. Put differently: Our democracy is bound by time and space, and yet the solutions democracy must deliver need to transcend exactly these boundaries. This is the crux of the matter and this is what makes truly transformative politics so challenging.



This is particularly evident in the relationship between the short-term and long-term dimensions of our decisions. Our democratic system is subject to distinct temporal horizons. Every four years there is a parliamentary election, legitimizing a parliament and a government for a set period of time. The fact that each representative makes her or his decisions in such a way as to sustain voters' support at the next election is nothing reprehensible. Rather it forms the very basis of legitimacy in this system. This way, however, we legitimize policies at a point in time when their long-term effects have not yet been felt, neither in the good nor in the bad. Thus, our system incentivizes a preference for convenient short-term solutions over uncomfortable long-term solutions. This is what makes phasing-out coal so difficult, for instance. And hence, every generation has to live with the consequences of policies of the preceding generation, although it was not involved in their making.

This dilemma is not easily solved. We cannot overrule the democratic majority of today in the name of the future – that would be an eco-dictatorship. But we do need a new awareness for the long-term consequences of policies, some of which are simply irreversible in the Anthropocene. In his 1979 work “The Imperative of Responsibility”, Hans Jonas boiled this issue down to the following essence: “Act so that the effects of your action are compatible with the permanence of genuine human life on earth.”

When I think about how we can strengthen this principle in our democracy more systematically, how we change the political economy in favor of the transformation, then it is mainly the young generation that comes to my mind. In our educational processes, I believe we should pay much more attention to issues of sustainability, but also to issues of political participation. And I think that reducing the general voting age to 16 would do our country good. Anyone who is allowed to smoke should also be able to vote - If we permit someone to inflict long-term harm on their own body, then we should also trust them to take part in decisions about the future of our society.

Forward-looking and foresighted policies are not only a moral issue, but also an economic one. Clinging on to the use of coal for too long has already resulted in enormous political and financial costs to us. In the automobile sector, such learning costs could prove to be even higher: The longer we put off certain adaptation processes, the harder and the more expensive that adaptation will ultimately be, once it becomes inevitable. This is also the reason why I find the often-heard ‘jobs’ argument, which also served as an excuse for the interventions in Brussels, so disingenuous. Yes, about 800,000 jobs in Germany currently depend directly on automobile production. And yes, the long-term loss of any such jobs is painful, both for the individual and for society. Still, that cannot serve as an excuse for constantly postponing the necessary structural transformation. On the contrary, it describes perfectly well the responsibility to secure jobs through timely innovation, and not to endanger them by closing our eyes to unpleasant realities! And the reality is that the decarbonization of economies will come. Now finally, it appears that a change in thinking is taking hold in the automobile industry. The fact that German car manufacturers have recently decided to arrange for the necessary recharging infrastructure for electric vehicles across Europe, can be seen as a positive sign: The struggle for the jobs and profits of today must not be allowed to hamstring the struggle for the jobs and profits of the future.

The difficulty of reconciling a company's short-term profits with safeguarding its long-term business model is a recurring issue for all responsibly-led businesses in a market economy. This tension will continue to exist. But I also believe that we must come to a new relationship between the market and the state. This relationship is the second area of conflict I would like to speak about.

Market and State: for us here in Germany that is a rather ideologically loaded topic, riddled with distorted pictures and ideal images. Some think of the market as a universal remedy, while for others nothing will ever work without state intervention. Some sense an eco-dictatorship in every instance of government interference, while others accuse every private enterprise of harming the common good by pursuing its profit interest. But these ritualized oppositions are only a distraction – of course, we need both market and state for a successful transformation. Markets create innovation through the competition of ideas as well as through creative destruction. (Browsing through the list of recipients of DBU's German Environmental Award, by the way, one finds many good examples for the ability of markets to bring about ecological innovation). But the market simply does not change everything for the better. The 'invisible hand' only operates under certain conditions, which have to be enforced by the state. These preconditions include free competition and prices that tell the truth, that is, prices which reflect the actual costs of a product. And here, the free market is currently playing a very dishonest game. For we live in a global economy that is systematically externalizing the actual social and ecological costs of products to other continents as well as to future generations. This has very little to do with free competition, since those who – out of their own responsibility - attempt to include all costs in their prices have a much harder time competing, and are effectively dependent upon sustainability-conscious consumers.

This is why global warming is the greatest market failure in the history of mankind. Since emitting carbon dioxide is still mostly free of charge, the CO<sub>2</sub> party continues unabated in absolute numbers, and the resulting costs of climate change are absorbed by the general public. The forefather of the market economy, Adam Smith, would be turning in his grave.

That is why we finally need an effective price on CO<sub>2</sub>, either through a tax or a system of emissions trading that actually works. Only then will those entrepreneurs be rewarded who make lasting adjustments towards a decarbonized economy. A genuine and global price on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions would trigger a global race in the laboratories and think tanks of corporations and universities for the best solutions for a climate-neutral economy.

And it is only the state that can send out such long-term price signals. Due to the inherent tension between entrepreneurial freedom and government regulation, it will always be necessary to wrestle over the appropriate balance. But in light of the requirements of the transformation, the state should get over its inferiority complex toward the market – and I say that as a dyed-in-the-wool free market economist. Smart and clear regulatory policies do not block innovation. Rather, they enable them. To this end, regulatory policies must provide the proper direction and framework, facilitate competition and cost transparency, and thereby

send long-term signals to the economy. The state should refrain, however, from engaging in the specifics of technical solutions. It is only between these poles – political regulatory stability on the one hand and change through entrepreneurial freedom on the other – that the quest for this transformation will ultimately bear fruits.

## VII.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There is no change without contradictions and without conflicts. But I am firmly convinced – if these conflicts are brought out into the open, if their complexity is not concealed but articulated, then politics will not lose but gain credibility. This way, the envisioned transformation could in fact reinvigorate faith – faith in our state’s capacity to act as well as in the future viability of our social market economy.

I firmly believe that market economy and democracy, not planned economy and authoritarianism, are the more suitable systems for implementing the transformation: Because they unleash the necessary creativity, because they allow for a learning process of *trial and error*; and because they can accommodate the fact that there exists no master plan for the transition ahead; that rather there are countless decentralized transformations which must grow from the ground up and eventually come together to form a comprehensive whole.

And I strongly believe that democratic politics is more than the sum of all individual interests. What would overwhelm each of us individually is what politics must and can accomplish: Namely, amidst the thicket of contradictions and dilemmas, clearing a path toward a world which offers a life in dignity to everyone, without jeopardizing the future of our planet along the way.

That path will produce new winners and new losers, so is the nature of all substantial transitions. But the choice of how to go about it is ours – and yes, in the face of technological change and the automatization of predictable labor, we will have to fundamentally rethink redistribution policies, as well as whether wage labor continues to be the only way to let people participate in society. This is just one of many unresolved questions that we are confronted with in this transformation. But, as with all the others, it is a question to which there exist solutions. Resolving them will not least require political courage. And in those solutions lie unexpected opportunities for new modes of collaboration and partnership.

This is my last point for today: I believe, we must not frame the great transformation as a horror story but, instead, as a story of hope. In spite of all the unease about this “new world”, our societies are full of curiosity and show an enormous appetite for change. Many people know and understand that “business as usual” is no longer possible and that the unresolved contradictions within our economic model push the system to its limits. The great

transformation can give hope and direction in times of disorientation. And so the story goes: It is possible to maintain our prosperity and to breathe new life into our societies, if we become active agents of change and do not try to evade it. It is possible to live a life in dignity while allowing people in other parts of the world, as well as our grandchildren, to live such a dignified life too. All people have a natural longing for a peaceful world, and every one of us needs clean air to breathe. What follows is that the basic principle of the great transformation, namely respect for the interdependence and permanence of human life on this planet, is inherent in our very human condition. Never has there been a time more important than today, to remind ourselves of that.

And that is why I say tonight, particularly to those of you who have been fighting for global cooperation and environmental protection for years and decades now: Do not be let astray, do not allow anyone to talk down the relevance of your work. Respond with courage and pride that you are working to bring about this transformation not *in spite of*, but precisely *because of* all the crises. For the great transformation is not the origin of but the answer to the apprehensions and unease of many people. But dare to challenge yourself wherever you have become too comfortable; dare to leave the silos of your specialist communities; talk to those who have a different world view; talk even to those who cannot relate to you at all; and talk to those who are afraid of change.

Listen to them. And then: tell them a story of hope.