

Nuclear disarmament and climate action

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Speech to Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference of Youth MPs in Lusaka, Zambia.

I greet you in NZ's first language Kia ora nga mini nui kia koutou kiaora.

I think one of the most interesting part of the speeches here, is people's stories of how they were elected.

I was a young father and six years ago at the age of 28, I was elected to the New Zealand Parliament and held the role of the youngest MP. Now we have an even younger 25 year old in our Parliament, but I joke I still hold the title of the youngest-looking member of Parliament.

I want to thank our Zambian hosts for their generosity and acknowledge you, my colleagues for your leadership and inspiration.

There are only four and a half million Kiwis out of 7.4 billion people on the planet so what's the odds, we'd have two speaking, one after the other here today?

In this short contribution on I want to follow on from Alan and discuss the role finance can play in two specific areas of sustainable development - nuclear disarmament and climate change.

New Zealand isn't often on the world's radar and somehow didn't even make it on the map of the world on the speaker's lectern - but one of my country's proudest moments on the world stage was becoming one of the first nuclear free nations, leading the movement against nuclear testing and seeing a nuclear-free South Pacific established.

A nuclear weapons-free world is something New Zealand has put its money where its mouths is.

We've developed ethical investment policies removing public funds from investing in nuclear weapons corporations. This included our Accident insurance fund, Superannuation Fund, the national retail bank, Kiwibank, the Peace and Disarmament Education trust, Pacific Conservation Trust, the Disarmament Education Implementation Fund and others.

I would note the Norwegian pension fund and Swiss banks have also adopted divestment policies from nuclear weapon corporations.

Every dollar spent on nuclear weapons is a dollar not spent on jobs, or lifting people out of poverty or providing electricity to the 1.2 billion without.

My small country is at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean. This ocean which covers 30% of our planet is also at the front lines of climate change.

In particular, places like the Cataret Islands, and island states like Tokelau and Kiribati risk cultural extinction from rising sea levels.

We've seen terrifying extreme weather events, including the Southern Hemisphere's recent strongest ever cyclone that hit Fiji in February and 2014 was the hottest year in recorded history,

until last year. The impacts of climate change could be in the magnitude of 20% of international GDP and millions of lives.

As emissions inexorably increase so does the global movement for action. The international community, most recently at Paris have committed to halting global temperature increase to 1.5-2 degrees and countries have submitted their emission reduction targets.

Finance and investment is a key part of climate action. In New Zealand, we have seen our universities, local governments and churches divest from fossil fuel investments.

These have been campaigns led and won by youth.

Public and private fossil fuel divestment is important because scientists warn we cannot afford to burn 70-90% of proven fossil fuel reserves if we want a safe climate.

Not profiting from pollution is one part of the solution, another is ending the more than \$600 billion annual fossil fuel subsidies according to the International Energy Agency. This panel is about economic models for sustainable development.

We can debate what is the best economic model. But it's going to be simply academic if the planet burns.

History is replete with economic models and political 'isms': communism, socialism, neoliberalism - for me, the most radical political idea, is a simple one, graphically demonstrated in the space age of our parents - the idea that we have a single planet.

Our planet, small and alone in the hostile vastness of space is our only home.

We have nowhere else to go, there is no planet B and we need to live like we mean to stay.

Yet we currently consume per capita as if we had three planets, and developed nations like mine, as if we had seven.

To protect our planet we need to reach the Sustainable Development Goals and invest in clean energy and climate action.

Despite the great threats to current and future generations there is reason for hope.

We saw not just more, but \$100 billion more invested in renewable electricity generation than fossil fuels last year, China this year announced the closure of 1000 coal mines and the youth-led divestment campaign is bearing fruits.

According to the ILO almost 43 per cent of the global youth labour force are still either unemployed or working but still living in poverty.

Given clean energy and energy efficiency projects create four times more jobs than fossil fuels we can grow jobs and protect our home.

In summary, let all of our 128 nations here today commit to protecting our only home from our two greatest existential threats - nuclear Armageddon and climate chaos.

Collectively the nations of the world spend \$650 billion on fossil fuel subsidies and \$1.7 trillion a year on weapons as part of the global arms race.

As young MPs let us commit to a new arms race - not in making guns and bombs but compete in a new race, using our arms, and our hands to develop, build and prosper.

Let's have a new race to get to 100% clean energy.

We've seen the heights what we can achieve and new perspectives gleaned from the space race, so let's compete in a new race to fill the spaces of our parliaments and institutions with more youth voices.

Let's celebrate the diversity of our races and work collaboratively towards the Sustainable Development Goals; together, as the human race.