

Transcript of Greta Thunberg speech, 5 November 2021

It is not a secret that CoP26 is a failure

It should be obvious that we cannot solve a crisis with the same methods that got us into it in the first place and more and more people are starting to realise this.

Many are starting to ask themselves "What will it take for the people in power to wake up?"

But let's be clear – they are already awake. They know exactly what they are doing. They know exactly what priceless values they are sacrificing to maintain business as usual.

The leaders are not doing nothing. They are actively creating loopholes and shaping frameworks to benefit themselves and to continue profiting from this destructive system.

This is an active choice by the leaders to continue to let the exploitation of people and nature and the destruction of present and future living conditions to take place.

The CoP has turned into a PR event, where leaders are giving beautiful speeches and announce fancy commitments and targets while behind the curtains the governments of the global north countries are still refusing to take any drastic climate action.

It seems like their main goal is to continue to fight for the status quo.. And CoP26 has been named the most exclusionary CoP ever. This is not a conference.

But the facts do not lie. And we know that our emperors are naked.

To stay below the target set in the Paris agreements and thereby minimising the risk of setting off irreversible chain reactions beyond human control we need immediate drastic annual emissions cuts, unlike anything the world has ever seen.

And as we don't have the technological solutions that will alone do anything to get close to that, that means we will have to fundamentally change our society.

And this is the uncomfortable result of our leaders' repeated failure to address this crisis.

At the current emissions rates, our remaining CO2 budgets to give us the best chances of staying below 1.5C will be gone within the end of this decade.

And the climate and ecological crisis of course doesn't exist in a vacuum. It is directly tied to other crises and injustices that date back to colonialism and beyond. Crises based on the idea that some people are worth more than others and therefore have the right to exploit others and steal their land and resources.

And it is very naïve of us to think that we could solve this crisis without addressing the root cause of it.

But this is not going to be spoken about inside the COP. This is just too uncomfortable. It's much easier for them to simply ignore the historical debts that the countries of the global north have towards the most affected people and areas.

Ant the question we must now ask ourselves is: what is it that we are fighting for? Are we fighting to save ourselves and the living planet or are we fighting to maintain business as usual?

Our leaders say we can have both, but the harsh truth is that that is not possible in practice.

The people in power can continue to live in their bubble with their fantasies, like eternal growth on a finite planet and technological solutions which will suddenly appear, seemingly out of nowhere and will erase all of these crises just like that.

All of this while the world is literally burning, on fire and while the people living on the front lines are still bearing the brunt of the climate crisis.

They can continue to ignore the consequences of their inaction but history will judge them poorly. And we will not accept it.

We don't need any more distant non-binding pledges. We don't need any more empty promises. We don't need any more commitments which are full of loopholes and incomplete statistics and which ignore the historical omissions of climate justice.

Yet that is all that we are getting. And no, it is not radical to say: just look at their track record.

They have had 26 CoPs. They have had decades of "Blah, blah, blah" and where has that led us?

Over 50% of all our CO2 emissions have occurred since 1990 and about a third since 2005. All this while the media report what people in power say they are going to do rather than what they actually do.

Time and time again the media fails to hold the people in power responsible for their action and inaction.

As they continue to expand the fossil fuel infrastructure, opening up new coal mines, new coal power plants, granting new oil licences and still refusing to do even the bare minimum, like delivering on the long-promised climate finance for loss and damage to the most vulnerable and least responsible countries.

This is shameful.

Some people say we are being too radical. But the truth is, they are the ones who are radical. Fighting to save our life-support systems isn't radical at all.

Believing that our civilisation as we know it can survive a 2.7 degree or 3 degree hotter world is not only extremely radical. It is pure madness.

Out here, we speak the truth. The people in power are obviously scared of the truth. Yet no matter how hard they try, they cannot escape from it.

They cannot ignore the scientific consensus, and above all they cannot ignore us, the people, including their own children. They cannot ignore our screams as we reclaim our power.

We are tired of their "Blah blah blah"

Our leaders are not leading. This is what leadership looks like. SW