

**Speech by H.E. Sylvie Bermann**  
**French Ambassador to the United Kingdom**  
**at the Franco-British conference on climate change**  
**30 April 2015**

Jacqueline,

Richard,

Distinguished speakers,

Ladies and gentlemen,

First, let me thank the European Commission Representation and the French Chamber of Commerce for organizing this event with us – the second in a series of Franco-British conferences on climate change we have planned in the run-up to the Paris Climate Conference in December.

As you all know, exactly six months from today, Paris will be hosting the 21st UN Climate Conference. These high-level talks will determine the future of global action against climate change. Mme Ségolène Royal, our Minister of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy, was in London last week, and although she had to cut short her visit because of the plane crash, she reminded us of what was at stake in the coming months – or rather weeks, since the main features of a draft agreement must be endorsed by political leaders well ahead of the Paris conference.

I am very happy for this opportunity to discuss what I see as the major turning-point in the fight against climate disruption: the growing realization that in today's world, the economy and the environment – far from being pitted against each other or competing – are intrinsically

linked. Green and blue growth that effectively reduces our greenhouse gas emissions, stimulates innovation, creates business and protects our land and marine biodiversity offers the most exciting promise of prosperity for all the countries in the world.

I'd like to thank our expert panel – an inspiring and informed cast of some of the leading minds in green business and climate regulation – as well as our attendees. Among them, I can see some young people belonging to that generation for which, I believe, the “new climate economy” will go without saying!

Some of you may remember seeing in *The Economist* at the end of last year a cartoon by Kal: it showed a standoff between two rather overheated characters wielding banners with opposing messages, one proclaiming “Save our planet” and the other “Save our economies”. A joke, of course, but above all an archetypal representation of a conflict that is today being overtaken, because the environment is an opportunity for the economy, and the economy is an opportunity for the environment.

Today we're seeing an increasing shift towards green growth among businesses, big corporations and start-ups. A “great transformation” is under way, to quote Karl Polanyi, a major economic historian who found refuge in London. Having been in London for seven months, I am struck by how many business leaders and heads of insurance companies and investment funds are now convinced that low-carbon growth is our economy's new frontier and an engine for competitiveness. I am also struck by how committed many businesses are to the path of sustainable development: not only out of a sense of citizenship, but because energy efficiency will allow them to save huge amounts of money, whereas continuing as before would be increasingly costly.

Ultimately, who can contribute the most to a reduction of the emissions? Who will be in a position to invest in the green economy? Who can create green jobs? You, of course. Companies, big and small, investors, venture capital, utilities, transport, energy, industry, housing and infrastructure are the main players of this historical change. Of course,

governments have to shape the regulatory environment, but businesses also have to take action.

The Business and Climate Summit, which will be held in Paris in May, will bear witness to this mobilization of businesses, the operational solutions they are implementing and the commitments they are making to a strong link between the environment and the economy.

On this note, may I wish you all an engaging and fruitful debate. But first, a few words from Richard Brown, President of the French Chamber of Commerce of Great Britain.