

**Franco-British bilateral conference on Climate change**  
**UCL, Tuesday 2 June 2015**  
**Climate change – Adaptation, resilience and risk**

Vice-Provost,

*Mme le maire-adjoint,*

Professors, students,

Distinguished friends,

It's a great pleasure for me to open this conference today.

What brings us together here is not only one of the most important global issues but also an issue on which our two countries are closely aligned.

As you all know, on 30 November [*the thirtieth of November*] France will begin hosting the 21<sup>st</sup> [*twenty-first*] United Nations Climate Conference, and the whole country is mobilized in the run-up to this landmark meeting for our civilization.

In its first report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said the current concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> [*see-ô-two*] in the atmosphere had reached a level unprecedented for 800,000 [*eight hundred thousand*] years and that this was due to human activity. The World Meteorological Organization has classified 2014 [*twenty-fourteen*] as the hottest year on record. These scientific observations, which are being confirmed by the day, are leading a growing number of players to take action.

The people already facing the impact of global warming have been at the forefront in reminding us of the urgent need for collective action. And major global voices are getting involved. On 21 July [*the twenty-first of July*], France will also bring together key ethical and religious figures for a Summit of Conscience for the Climate, which will end with a call to all the world's leaders to shoulder their responsibilities.

This year, as we commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> [*fiftieth*] anniversary of his death, I'd like to remind you of this shrewd observation by Winston Churchill: "We must take change by the hand or, rest assuredly, change will take us by the throat." No doubt he wasn't thinking about it at the time, but it's also true of climate change!

Today we're going to focus together on the issue of adaptation to climate change and our societies' resilience to the risks it entails. Even if the Paris conference is a success and we manage to limit global warming to an average of 2°C [*two degrees Celsius*], those risks are

considerable: they concern the future of major infrastructure, public health and the protection of elderly people, our urban planning systems, and the development of our agricultural and forestry practices. So the stakes will be huge, both in terms of social organization and public expenditure.

The UK and France are already preparing for this: that's the purpose of the national, regional and local adaptation plans you discussed this afternoon.

But the less developed countries are even more exposed to these risks than us, while enjoying neither the same technologies nor equivalent financial resources.

Thanks to UCL and everyone present, we're going to make a much-needed contribution to the joint effort to raise awareness: three workshops were held this afternoon, devoted to three key issues: Cost and Value, Public Engagement and Global South Implications. Their conclusions are going to be presented to us and discussed by our panellists.

I hope today, 2 June [*the second of June*], will be a new demonstration of our two countries' shared efforts to combat climate disruption. Ségolène Royal, Minister of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy, was in London a few days ago. She met her counterpart, Amber Rudd, and the Prince of Wales, who has been invited to the Paris conference.

And she pointed out that, although some choices may differ (I'm thinking in particular of shale gas), our two countries have a great deal in common when it comes to fighting climate disruption and promoting a low-carbon economy:

Over and above their differences, France and the UK share the same proactive approach: an enlightened approach insofar as, since the disappointment of Copenhagen, many things have changed: a revolution in mindsets and practices is under way.

Our responsibility is to speed this up by combating global warming, but also by tackling head-on the issue of adaptation to climate change. This requires an effort of solidarity at national and global level, with technology transfers and the establishment of innovative finance; these efforts are needed to build a global alliance and practical cooperation projects commensurate with the current challenges.

If Paris fails, we'll be facing a rise of not 2 but 4 or even 6°C [*degrees Celsius*]. So there is an urgent need to make Paris 2015 [*twenty-fifteen*] a success.

Thank you.