

2050Today - Second High-Level Meeting

Tuesday 5 December 2023 - Geneva

Jean-Pierre Reymond, Executive Director of 2050Today

Introductory remarks

Monsieur le Maire,

Mesdames et Messieurs les Représentants permanents,

Monsieur le Recteur,

Madame la Directrice de l'Institut des Hautes Etudes internationales,

Monsieur le Secrétaire général adjoint de l'Organisation météorologique mondiale,

Madame la Directrice de l'administration de l'Office des Nations Unies à Genève,

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Chers amis,

Je vous souhaite une très cordiale bienvenue à la deuxième réunion de Haut-Niveau de 2050Today. C'est un immense plaisir de vous accueillir aujourd'hui au Palais Eynard. Nous nous réjouissons vivement de votre impressionnante participation qui témoigne de notre engagement commun.

Je dois malheureusement excuser l'absence de Monsieur Antonio Hodgers, Président du Conseil d'Etat de la République et canton de Genève, qui en raison de circonstances imprévues a dû annuler cet après-midi sa participation avec grand regret.

Il me prie de vous transmettre ses excuses et il nous adresse ses meilleurs vœux confirmant que le canton de Genève sera toujours à nos côtés pour nos efforts de décarbonation.

Pour le programme de ce soir, nous vous proposons une introduction de ma part avant d'écouter notre hôte, M. le Maire. Nous procéderons ensuite à la signature de la Charte. Nous aurons ensuite la joie d'entendre signataires et témoins nous exprimer l'importance qu'elles et ils accordent au défi sans précédent auquel nous sommes confrontés. Après une photo de groupe, nous aurons enfin le plaisir de célébrer notre engagement par la réception aimablement offerte par la Ville de Genève.

J'aimerais ainsi vivement remercier M. le Maire, cher Alfonso, de nous accueillir ici avec cette chaleureuse hospitalité. Si nous avons choisi ce lieu ce n'est pas seulement pour son histoire et sa beauté mais aussi pour témoigner que dans la lutte contre le dérèglement climatique Genève et la Genève internationale ne font qu'un. L'an passé nous avons signé la Convention de coopération à quelques mètres du Palais des Nations, cette fois nous signons la Charte de décarbonation 2050Today au Palais Eynard, siège de la Mairie de Genève. C'est un beau symbole de cette unité d'action.

Je souhaite exprimer à vous toutes et tous, chers membres de 2050Aujourd'hui, ma gratitude puisque cette Charte c'est votre œuvre. Nous l'avons édifiée et définie ensemble avec votre concours et celui de nos partenaires que je remercie également vivement : la Confédération et en particulier la Mission suisse, le canton et la ville de Genève, l'Université, les SIG, Beelong, Mobilidée et l'Institut du numérique responsable. Nous avons non seulement élaboré conjointement une référence, surtout nous nous sommes dotés d'un mécanisme établissant des principes directeurs et proposant des objectifs clairs nous offrant plus de 300 actions concrètes.

J'en suis convaincu ce cadre nous servira pour agir rapidement et répondre à l'urgence à laquelle nous devons faire face.

Permettez-moi aussi de remercier toute l'équipe 2050Today pour avoir permis cet aboutissement et organisé l'événement de ce soir.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before going on and sharing some introductory remarks, allow me to briefly present the results of our CO2 emissions measurement over the last few years, from 2019 to 2022, using the new digital platform we have just created this year with GRID. As you know, these results are both our compass and the gauge of our progress.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we have seen, we must continue to make progress. We have no choice when it comes to the exceeding of the planetary boundaries that we have collectively, some more and some less - let's be fair - engendered.

Allow me then to place our action and the signing of the Charter in a global context by focusing on two words, or more precisely two frameworks: the Earth and the world.

The Earth, on our scale and even on that of the universe, has a long history of 4.5 billion years. If we measure the arrival of the human species on Earth over the course of a year, we arrived at 11.30 pm on 31 December. It means in the last 30 minutes of the history of our planet, our home. On a 24-hour scale, that's just 5 seconds before midnight. That shows how freshly landed we are. But if we are not masters of the world, we have become "masters of the Earth", so to say. Unimaginable as it may seem, our impact is such that the future of this ecosystem - to maintain a safe living space for our species - now depends on us, all of us.

In 5 seconds, or even less as our impact has been felt mainly since the industrial revolution, we have depleted a third of the planet's resources and affected 95% of the land by degrading 60% of it. We have increased our global energy consumption by a factor of 32 over the last 200 years, with unprecedented disparities between low and high energy consumers.

If we imagine this cumulative energy consumption - for what we consume in goods and services - were to be of human or animal origin, as we have lived it for millennia, we would need some 400 energy slaves or 60 draught animals for every single European person - 24 hours a day. It's certainly prodigious, you might say, what mankind has been able to achieve with these resources and energy, but at what cost to our ecosystem.

To give just a few figures, we have caused an 85% fall in the mass of wild mammals since we first appeared. Between 1970 and 2018 alone, the average size of wild vertebrate populations declined by 69%. In other words, in less than 50 years, the numbers of more than 32,000 populations of mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and fish have fallen by two-thirds ! Let's pause for a moment to figure out what it means : Very concretely 2 out of 3 of them have disappeared, even though we, the human beings, only represent 0.01% of the biomass of the planet.

Wild animals now represent only 4% of the planet's mammals; humans make up 34% and our livestock 62%. What's more and due to our CO2 emissions, the oceans have warmed at a rate equivalent to one atomic bomb per second over the last 150 years. Our impact is such that geologists call our era the Anthropocene. As I said, we are the "masters of the Earth".

But, I'm sure you'll agree, we are clearly not the best masters, or even the good ones, and certainly not the ones who could be described as good managers.

So let's turn now to the world, because our impact on Earth is a reflection of our world, of what we - human civilizations - have organized and continue to organize. And here too it's clear that the systems in place are not yet sustainable, as you, who work daily to improve them, know better than I do. So we are coming to a conjunction, perhaps a fatal one, of trajectories that are, to say the least, unbalanced for the world and the Earth. It's a new situation, totally different from what we have experienced before. It's a reality we have to face up to, whether we like it or not, because for the first time in our human history world affairs have an impact on those of the Earth and vice versa.

It is therefore a new system and new operating mechanisms, for our modest 0.01%, that we must put in place if we are to avoid a planetary collision of uncharted consequences. The challenge is as great as the stakes: ensuring a sustainable future. The choices we make today will have an impact not only on tomorrow but on the generations to come.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Very modestly and perhaps with a dose of candor, allow me to believe that with the Charter we are about to sign, the 40 institutions we represent are giving a modest example of this necessary new organization, of these new mechanisms needed to create a space of convergence and sharing, combining the needs of the world and the needs of the Earth.

Coming from all horizons with such different contexts and sizes, we and our institutions have united without preconceptions to create a frame of reference, a framework that institutes cooperation and solidarity for the common good while respecting planetary limits.

After all, reducing our greenhouse gas emissions means creating a new world.

It means calling everything into question in order to find the right balance :

the one that combines the balance of the world and the balance of the Earth.

Thank you for your attention.