

BIANCA JAGGER

KEYNOTE SPEECH TO THE 4TH INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL LAUREATES.

FREIBURG, GERMANY 12th MARCH, 2015

INTRODUCTION

Thank you Eicke Weber for your kind introduction, I would first like to thank the European Environment Foundation for inviting me to the 4th International Environmental Laureates Convention.

Good evening dear friends. It's a pleasure and a privilege to be addressing you. It's inspiring to see so many Laureates present, committed to protecting and safeguarding our environment.

For over three decades I have campaigned for human rights, social justice and environmental protection throughout the world. I founded the Bianca Jagger Human Rights Foundation (BJHRF) in 2005, a year after I received the Right Livelihood Award. I set up the foundation to be a force for change and a voice for the most vulnerable.

Tonight I will speak to you about the threat of climate change, climate justice, my experiences at the United Nations Conference of Parties (UNFCCC) and my hopes for COP21 in Paris in December. I will also talk to you about three important issues of climate justice: climate refugees, REDD+ and protecting indigenous peoples' rights.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change will affect everyone, everywhere, in every nation and in every echelon of society in the developing and developed world. We will all suffer the catastrophic consequences of: rising sea levels, desertification, food and water scarcity and political unrest. But some of the most vulnerable communities in the world are bearing a disproportionate burden of the harm without having significantly contributed to the cause. This is a terrible injustice.

Everyone here knows that climate change is the greatest threat we face today. According to [NASA](#) 2014 was the hottest year since records began in 1880, NASA also found that nine of the 10 warmest years in the modern meteorological record have occurred since the year 2000.

The BJHRF is calling for a comprehensive, just and legally binding climate treaty, the transfer of technology to developing countries, adequate adaptation, mitigation and implementation mechanisms, and a REDD+ agreement with safeguards for communities and indigenous peoples' rights. I hope that COP21 in Paris in December will deliver the global binding agreement that is necessary. I am concerned that there is a serious disconnect between what we have been negotiating since the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

Conference Of Parties (COP) started and what the science requires to keep temperatures under a 2 degree Celsius rise. According to the 2014 [UNEP Emissions Gap Report](#) even if the most ambitious current pledges from countries to cut emissions are honoured, we are still emitting more than 4 times the yearly carbon budget for the atmosphere to stay within the 630-1180 Gigatonnes limit of CO₂ by 2100.

To avoid catastrophic climate change we need to keep carbon dioxide levels below 350 parts per million (ppm). In May 2013 levels passed 400 ppm for the first time. This was very significant and alarm bells should have been ringing. Levels remain above the advisable limit of 350 and are currently at 400.26 ppm.

COP21 is fast approaching, and although it is only 8 months away few national pledges have been made. On 27th February the Swiss government was the first to make their pledge. They announced a cut of greenhouse gas emissions of 50% by 2030, of the levels of 1990. Two days before the European Commission announced a 40% cut by 2030 of the levels of 1990, which the UK's climate secretary Ed Davey called a "[watering down of ambition](#)". So far those pledges are woefully inadequate.

We are all hoping for pledges that limit the rise in average global temperatures to 2 degrees Celsius. In June 2012 the World Bank released a very disturbing report titled "Turn Down the Heat: Why a 4°C warmer world must be avoided". It warned us of summer months rising by 9 degrees, of sea level rise of between half and one metre. If action is not taken immediately the world will be a dramatically different place.

While the world waits for COP21, our irrational model of development, of growth and profit continues unabated: Oil exploration, megadams, mining, large-scale agriculture and logging. The fundamental rights of communities, indigenous people and individuals continue to be violated and irreversible environmental destruction continues to contribute to climate change.

The International Bar Association's Presidential Task Force on Climate Change Justice [report](#) titled 'Achieving Human Rights in an Era of Climate Disruption' was released in July 2014. The report confirms what many of us have long argued: that "international and domestic laws must be used to strengthen, not stifle, climate change justice" and protect people from the adverse effects of anthropocentric climate change.

The report is a significant achievement and an important contribution to human rights and climate justice. I made recommendations to the Task Force at the IBA's Annual Conference in October 2013 and spoke at the launch of the report at the House of Lords on December 1st 2014.

I have the report here with me. I urge you to read it. It can be found [online](#) at IBANET.ORG. We are urging world leaders to take note, and implement the recommendations contained in the report; to promote governance and legal reform, which will promote climate justice.

COP PROCESS, HISTORY

Looking forward to COP21 I can't help but remember the failure of COP15 at Copenhagen to deliver a comprehensive legally binding, global climate change treaty. Once again there is much expectation as to what world leaders will achieve when they meet in Paris in December.

Copenhagen should have been the turning point. It was a unique opportunity to set the world on the right path to avoid catastrophic climate change. For two days, most of the world's leaders congregated under one roof for a common purpose. Attended by 119 Heads of State, COP15 was the largest gathering of its kind held outside of the annual UN General Assembly in New York. The highlight was the attendance of US President Obama.

The two weeks of meetings, extending late into the night, marked the culmination of two years of intensive negotiations. The conference was the focus of unprecedented public and media attention. And yet, the result - the Copenhagen Accord - was a shameful compromise.

The words "legally binding" were conspicuously absent from the three-page text of the Copenhagen Accord. The Accord was merely "politically binding" for those countries that chose to sign up to it. Furthermore, it did not set emissions reduction targets for either 2020, 2030 or 2050, nor did it set a deadline by which the action points should become legally binding.

The French newspaper *Liberation* lamented the speed and commitment to saving the planet compared with saving the global financial system: "We must make the bitter observation: when it comes to rescuing the banking system, the dialogue has been far more effective and determined. It is clearly easier to save finance, than it is to save the planet." Since COP15 expectations have been declining steadily with each conference. At COP20, they were at an all-time low.

At the closing Plenary on the final day of COP20 in Lima, I wondered how much we've learned since Copenhagen. I truly hope that COP 21 in Paris in December will deliver the global binding agreement that is so necessary. This is fundamental to humanity and the planet's survival.

CLIMATE REFUGEES

When we talk about climate justice one of the first things that comes to mind is the tragedy of climate refugees.

It is hard to imagine how it would feel to stand on the ruins where your house stood only hours before, or watch the land you depend on for food and income turn to dust, or to fear that your country will disappear before your grandchildren have the chance to see it. Yet this is the reality facing millions of people throughout the world.

Many communities are on the frontlines fighting a losing battle with nature, while politicians fail to bring real commitment and solutions to climate change. In the negotiations and positions adopted by individual nations, seeking to ensure the best

'deal' on climate change for their narrow national interests, collectively the world's leaders have failed to deliver and have lost sight of the reason why we so urgently need effective and concrete action.

Climate change is not just an environmental threat, but a critical human rights issue which impacts every aspect of our lives: peace, security, human rights, poverty, hunger, health, mass migration and economics. Climate change is changing rainfall patterns, making places hotter, storms worse, raising sea levels. As climate change kicks in, the tropical and subtropical countries in Africa, South Asia, and Latin America will heat up more and more, with temperatures becoming increasingly intolerable. Droughts are affecting large parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Melting glaciers will flood river valleys and then, when they have disappeared, unprecedented droughts will occur. Such environmental disasters don't always make the headlines, but they are, or will become, the most pressing issue for a large part of the global population.

Some of the world's poorest, most vulnerable and least able to adapt are being worst affected, with small island states such as Kiribati and the Maldives and low-lying developing countries like Bangladesh already on the 'frontlines'.

Speaking in 2009 at the Copenhagen summit, then President of the Maldives Mohamed Nasheed said it may already be too late to help low-lying island states: "If all the developed nations stop their emissions today, and if we take business as usual, we will still drown." Nasheed is now in prison, absurdly charged with abducting a judge. He has no chance of a fair trial.

Where conditions deteriorate greatly, people will have no choice but to leave their homes and land. This is already happening on a huge scale.

Estimates of 150 million 'climate refugees' by the mid-century are conservative. The Environmental Justice Foundation estimates that as many as 500 to 600 million people – nearly 10 per cent of the world's population – are at risk from displacement. We should not forget that when Hurricane Katrina hit the United States, one of the world's most developed countries, 800,000 left their homes – arguably the largest diaspora in the history of the United States. Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines in 2013, killing more than 10,000 people.

Unlike for refugees fleeing persecution or human rights violations, there is no legislation, agency or institution specifically mandated for the protection and assistance of 'climate refugees'. The UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol contain no provisions for refugees of climate change.

The UN Refugee Agency, the primary body for assisting displaced persons, only intervenes in environmental crises in "exceptional circumstances". Because of this we are witness to millions of vulnerable people forced from their homes and land whose entire future rests upon the ability – often extremely limited – of their national governments to respond or mass mobilisations of aid in response to single disasters.

This gap in international legislation represents a serious humanitarian and human-rights issue. Climate change is eroding the rights of some of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people; rights such as the right to health, food, water, housing and

self-determination. Their rights are universal and the international community must commit to defend them.

The UN Advisory Group on Climate Change and Human Mobility, working with the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (OHCHR) seek to achieve a new framework for climate change and other environmental migrants, but it would be non-binding. A change in political thinking would be required for countries, such as Australia currently, who have a severe anti-immigration stance, shoreline defences, robust maritime surveillance of 'infiltration' of its waters and who intercept 'boat people' and deport them. In the run up to COP21 the Advisory Group will urge world leaders to stop ignoring this paramount issue.

The Bianca Jagger Human Rights Foundation advocates an agreement that protects and assists people displaced by climate change. The international community should plan a rational strategy for the growing numbers of climate refugees, particularly those from vulnerable island states, who are at greater risk. Increasing frequency of severe weather events, natural disasters and loss of land due to rising sea levels are leading to changing migration patterns within and between states. Displaced people are placing more and more pressure on existing infrastructure, social relationships and economic institutions.

Whilst we may struggle to predict the next Katrina or Haiyan, flood in Latin America, drought or earthquake, we are becoming more and more proficient at predicting trends in nature. We know that the frequency and magnitude of climate-related natural disasters are on the rise. So we have an opportunity to act now to protect some of the world's most vulnerable people and pre-empt humanitarian crises of unprecedented scale. Political leaders must act now to commit to protecting climate refugees.

With a threat of 2, 3, 4C rise or more in global average temperature, large-scale population shifts will be inevitable, to find basic necessities to survive catastrophic climate change. Millions have already fled from particularly climate sensitive areas, the Andes, the Himalayas, the Sahara.

What has been the world's response you may wonder? Stronger environmental protections? A legal recognition of climate refugees? Adequate humanitarian aid? No, none of these. Currently, the response has been to build bigger and stronger borders. There are [five times](#) as many borders today than there were 25 years ago.

African nomadic tribes are particularly affected. For thousands of years the Tuareg, Amazigh and Fula have moved throughout the Sahara, and the smaller deserts, the Libyan and the Nubian. A 1,559km border between Algeria and Morocco has forced a change to the lives of the nomads. The border is permanently closed. A sandstone barrier divides Morocco and the Western Sahara territory. To the east, in 2009 Saudi Arabia signed a contract to secure all its borders—a 9,000km security system. Nomadic movements to protect themselves from famine and severe drought are being prevented. This is another appalling injustice.

The Guardian reported a few days ago that, "in 2014, around 3,500 boat people died trying to cross the Mediterranean to enter Europe. They risked their lives and lost."

That people are prepared to risk their lives to get to land that can house and feed them should convey the urgency of this climate change impact.

REDD+

REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) is one of the important mitigating measures that will be negotiated in Paris in December. It is the “[collective] aim to slow, halt and reverse forest cover and carbon loss, in accordance with national circumstances.”

REDD+ initiatives should be promoting policies and practices that incentivise forest protection and sustainable land management as well as providing local training and technical assistance. REDD+ should represent the interests of local communities, guaranteeing Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). It should work to maintain rainforest water cycles, keep soils fertile, regulate regional climate processes and provide a home for flora and fauna.

REDD+’s aspirations are interconnected. As Bryson Ogden, analyst at the Rights and Resources Initiative [informs us](#) “securing land rights for local peoples can help ensure that the investment in REDD+ has stronger and more sustainable results.”

REDD+ is an important opportunity to make progress on reducing carbon emissions through the global reduction of deforestation practices.

Although in recent years there has been a growing awareness in UNFCCC negotiations that safeguarding the rights and traditional governance systems of Indigenous Peoples is critical to a successful REDD+ agreement, and in the race against climate change, I was very concerned by the breakdown of the negotiations at COP20 in Lima.

In 2010 Parties to the UNFCCC agreed to safeguards that must be guaranteed as part of REDD+ activities. These protections are:

1. Consistency with international obligations
2. Respect for the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities
3. Full and effective participation of stakeholders
4. Good governance systems
5. Avoided damage to biodiversity and ecosystems.

Global commitments to forest conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks should respond to the concerns of indigenous people and guarantee their full and effective participation in all processes, programmes and actions at all levels, including their access to funding mechanisms, financing and capacity building. This must include a robust and enforceable system of social, environmental and human rights safeguards.

REDD+ is beset by fundamental differences in thinking. Some see it as an important framework that will bring both forest preservation and will benefit indigenous tribes. [Rainforest Foundation Norway](#) for example advocate “a rights-based approach to rainforest protection” and that “people who have for generations developed their

cultures and societies in balanced interaction with the highly complex yet vulnerable ecosystems of the rainforest have fundamental rights to these areas. Legal recognition of the collective territorial and cultural rights of forest-based peoples and communities is crucial to the fulfilment of their human rights. It is also a major prerequisite for protecting the rainforest.” Unfortunately there is another school of thought, dangerous dissenters who see REDD+ only as a profit making new market that exists to be exploited.

I gave the keynote address at the REDD+ Implementation Working Group: Legal and Governance Foundations, Indigenous Peoples Rights and Safeguards on December 5th in Lima. Morale was low among the negotiators, and sure enough, negotiations reached a deadlock, or REDDLock, and came to a complete halt.

The REDD+ talks broke down in part because there was no agreement on guidance for the safeguards. Countries like the United States and Norway were pushing for more clarity on how these safeguards are reported, but nations like Brazil and Panama among others claimed guidance would be burdensome, slowing implementation of forest protection measures.

The REDD+ Safeguards Working Group stated as far back as Cop15, ‘No rights, no REDD.’

Shamefully, there was no concrete outcome on forest protection at COP 20, despite it being held in Peru, one of the world’s largest rainforest countries. Deliberations concluded and once again, a critical decision regarding the rights of communities and indigenous people and environmental protection was postponed. Time is running out.

The next UNFCCC inter-sessional meeting will take place in June this year. Lets hope that there will be agreement on the guidance for REDD+ safeguards.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Indigenous people should have an integral part in climate change negotiations. They have been proven to be the best custodians of ecosystems. For most of my adult life I have advocated that in order to tackle climate change, we need the forests. In order to protect the forests, we need indigenous people: their wisdom and knowledge.

Indigenous people’s stewardship is critical to forest and rainforest preservation, particularly in the Amazon that is home to about a third of our planet's terrestrial life forms, cycles nearly a quarter of the Earth's freshwater, absorbs around 2 billion tons of carbon dioxide per year and plays a vital role in moderating the climate.

Issues of forests and the rights of communities and indigenous people living within them are issues of climate justice; indigenous tribes and people in developing countries have less responsibility for the state of the environment and are disproportionately affected by the changing climate. Ensuring climate justice for indigenous people protects the environment and mitigates climate change.

As some of you may know, I was born in Nicaragua, at the centre of the Americas. Nicaragua has the largest tropical rainforest north of Amazonia, home to thousands of species of rare flora and fauna. My mother first opened my eyes to the beauty and wonders of nature. I inherited my commitment to human rights and the environment from her. She taught me the incalculable value of the rainforest, and the importance of preserving biodiversity.

Forests of all kinds are essential to our future. More than 1.6 billion people depend on them for food, water, fuel, medicines, traditional cultures and livelihoods. Forests support up to 80% of biodiversity on earth and play a vital role in safeguarding the climate by naturally sequestering carbon.

A [report](#) released on the second of December 2014, titled 'Forest Carbon in Amazonia: The Unrecognised Contribution of Indigenous Territories and Protected Natural Areas' confirms what I have long known – that indigenous people are the best custodians of ecosystems. According to the report, Indigenous territories achieve nearly one third (32.8%) of the Amazon's carbon storage – equivalent to all of the forests in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Since 1978, 750,000 square kilometers of Amazon rainforest has been [destroyed](#) in Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Bolivia, Venezuela, Suriname, Guyana, and French Guiana.

Globally, deforestation accounts for up to 18% of greenhouse gas emissions, or roughly 5.8 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent released into the atmosphere, each year. This is more than global transport and aviation combined. According to the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change, reducing deforestation is the "single largest opportunity for cost-effective and immediate reductions of carbon emissions."

The BJHRF and I are committed to forest conservation. That is why, in 2012, I became IUCN Ambassador for the Bonn Challenge, the largest restoration initiative the world has ever seen. The objective of the Bonn Challenge is to restore 150 million hectares of degraded and deforested land across the world by 2020. There are 2 billion hectares of degraded and deforested land across the world with potential for restoration. Restoring 150 million hectares would capture 47 gigatonnes of CO₂, and reduce the emissions gap by 17%. Forest restoration is invaluable in the race to tackle climate change.

I was in New York at the Climate Summit last September (2014) to announce that as part of the Bonn Challenge a number of countries have committed to restore deforested and degraded lands.

Four countries made new [pledges](#) at the Climate Summit to restore [34] million hectares of forests. This includes Ethiopia (22 million hectares), Democratic Republic of Congo (8 million hectares), Uganda (2.5 million hectares) and Guatemala (1.2 million hectares).

This brings the current pledges up to 50, with 20 million hectares of land having been pledged for forest restoration from countries as diverse as Brazil, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Rwanda, and the United States.

The BJHRF is a signatory of the [New York Declaration on Forests](#), which was signed in September during the Climate Summit. The Declaration calls for: '[the] strengthen[ing] of forest governance, transparency and the rule of law, while also empowering communities and recognizing the rights of indigenous peoples, especially those pertaining to their lands and resources.' The New York Declaration is "the first global timeline to slow, end and reverse natural forest loss." At the summit Germany, Norway and the UK announced that the Bonn Challenge would be extended to 2030 with a new goal of restoring 350 million hectares. Over 100 countries signed up to the New York Declaration on Forests.

As IUCN Bonn Challenge Ambassador I will be in Bonn next week to work with world leaders and delegates to ensure the pledges can be achieved.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES (AS CUSTODIANS OF THE FOREST)

We can talk at length about the value of the rainforest in combating climate change, of forest carbon sequestration, about the benefits of REDD+ and the need for a legally binding global climate deal.

But these discussions are rhetorical at best if we ignore the critical role indigenous people play in preserving the rainforests. As I have said, indigenous people have proven to be the best custodians of ecosystems. Ensuring that indigenous people are protected and that they can participate in preserving their forests and rainforests is an issue of justice. They have a wealth of knowledge, invaluable wisdom and techniques developed over thousands of years of relationship with the land, the forest, and the water. Their knowledge and understanding is needed for climate resilience and is a key adaptation method.

The Palangka Raya Declaration on deforestation and forest peoples' rights was signed by hundreds of indigenous groups and NGOs who met in Indonesia in March 2014. It states: '[W]hen our peoples' rights are secured, then deforestation can be halted and even reversed. We call for a change in policy to put rights and justice at the centre of deforestation efforts.'

Throughout the Amazon, formal collective title is lacking on nearly 100 million hectares of native land, according to the [Coordinator of Indigenous Organisations of the Amazon Basin](#) (COICA).

Campaigning for the rights of indigenous people is at the heart of the BJHRF's work. During my three decades as a human rights defender, I have witnessed their desperate struggle to protect their ancestral lands and way of life. I have supported the Miskitos and Mayangna in Nicaragua, the Yanomami, the Guarani, and the Surui Paiter, Kayapó and Mundurukú in Brazil, the Cofán, Siona, Secoya, Kichwa, and Huaorani tribes in Ecuador, the Kondh in India - among many others.

As the world's leading environmentalists I urge you to do all you can to bring about the protection of the rights of indigenous people, whose knowledge and wisdom is critical to the protection of the rainforest, critical to tackling climate change and therefore critical all of us.

INDIGENOUS RIGHTS - MURDERS

Climate injustice is endemic. Indigenous people are under siege from unscrupulous governments, mining, drilling, dams, logging and development. Rather than being empowered to use their ecological wisdom and understanding to protect and restore the rain forests, they face persecution in many corners of the world: murder, abuse and human rights violations.

This was a particular irony during the COP20 climate negotiations that took place in Lima, Peru, in Latin America, the heartland of so many indigenous tribes - while their rights are being violated. And some were being murdered.

As natural resources become scarcer, and the pressure upon them increases with increasing population, disputes over land rights, particularly where oil exploration, mining and logging are concerned, are intensifying.

Indigenous communities are particularly hard hit. Their fundamental rights to life and land are violated in many countries throughout the world.

In the decade up to 2013, 908 people were killed protecting their land and environment. In a [list published](#) on the 31 December 2013, [Global Witness](#) named Brazil the worst country in the world for such killings, with 448 murders. Honduras was in second place with 109, the Philippines in third with 67 and Peru, with 59.

CONCLUSION

Climate change is a global threat and we will only solve it through global collective action. We will need world leaders, governments, policy makers, the legal profession, the business community, NGO's, grassroots organisations, individuals, and all of you to continually put pressure on the politicians and diplomats who will attend and negotiate at COP21.

Our fate and the fate of future generations depend on it. As a mother, a grandmother, and recently a great grandmother, I am deeply concerned about the kind of world my daughter Jade, granddaughters Assisi and Amba, grandson Ray and my little great grandchild Ezra will inherit.

With less than 8 months to go until COP21 we must do all we can to ensure a comprehensive, just and legally binding climate treaty is produced with effective deadlines that will prevent catastrophic climate change.

We still have time to save our planet by changing the way we live, eat, travel and interact with each other. We can all have a real impact on the world. As Laureates, as visionaries, and as investors in current and future generations, we can ensure this call to action is heard and acted upon. At this critical juncture in history we will either stand or fall together.