

International Carbon Action Partnership

Premier Gordon Campbell

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Prime Minister Sócrates and President Barroso, thank you both for the leadership you've shown in bringing us all together and for the imagination you've shown in allowing sub-national units, like provinces and states, to join you in this effort.

I also want to recognize the leadership we have seen from Governor Schwarzenegger in California. Unfortunately, he's not able to be with us today because of the horrendous fires sweeping across the southern part of his state.

I have experienced living through a firestorm in British Columbia in 2003. I know that in Portugal, you suffered through the same kinds of fires in 2002 and '03 and '05. In Greece, this summer, there were horrendous fires as well.

There are communities and people's lives who are affected by that. I want everyone in California to know that our hearts go out to them, our support is with them, and we're sorry Governor Schwarzenegger can't be with us here today.

It is, I think, a reflection of the challenge that we face as government leaders, that we have embraced a new partnership. The International Carbon Action Partnership calls for partnership between nations and sub-national groups. A partnership that says we can lever the power of our marketplace, around the world, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions at the lowest possible cost for the highest possible benefits. We can do that for the people we all serve; not just for our citizens, but for citizens who are not yet born, the next generation. The partnership we are creating here today is one that overcomes traditional boundaries that separate us, encourages dialogue and encourages learning for all of us.

By designing our respective carbon-trading markets in recognition of each other, we will advance our concrete efforts to mitigate global warming and adapt to its challenges. By liberating the true potential of market solutions to expedite climate action, we foster innovation, technology transfer and, above all, behavioural change. The key in that regard is the opportunity to create commonly accepted mechanisms for properly pricing carbon, mechanisms that provide for a sense of permanence and confidence and stability as we look to the future.

This forum provides a means to develop co-ordinated cap and trade structures that build stability and confidence, as well as flexibility.

We've seen that often, by taking the first active steps, we build a critical mass of support and of change that is so critical to the future.

When California introduced its tailpipe emissions standards, it was by itself. Today, it is joined by 12 states across the United States. It is joined by every province and territory in Canada, with one exception. We believe those changes will help us reduce greenhouse gas emissions and deal with the challenge of global warming.

As we in North America forge ahead with the Western Climate Initiative, which includes California, Oregon, Washington, British Columbia in Canada, Manitoba in Canada, New Mexico and Arizona and Utah, we believe there is much to be learned from the experience of the European Union's emissions trading system and the Norwegian emissions trading system. This knowledge is invaluable in bringing us closer to our common interests in a truly global carbon market.

Time is of the essence. We all know we are in a global race against climate change, and so far it is a race that we are not winning. Global warming carries with it a threat to our planet unlike any we have seen before. Science tells us that the threat is severe, unequivocal, insidious and relentless, yet we have it within our power to curtail global warming.

Reason tells us that we cannot wait to get on with the task at hand. The world must move forward together and marshal all of its constituent parts to expedite meaningful change in human behaviour: first, to arrest the growth of greenhouse gas emissions, and then, to reverse that growth.

More than 40 years ago, a young man stood on the global stage and touched a generation. He said, and I quote: "The supreme reality of our time is the vulnerability of our planet. It is our task in our time and in our generation." That was President Kennedy of the United States.

It is our task. It is our time. The International Carbon Action Partnership brings us together. Reaching out and acting in concert, inviting others to join, we can embrace the world and retrieve the future for generations to come.