

Speech of President of the Republic of Hungary, János Áder in New York at the opening of the High-Level Meeting of the UN General Assembly on Climate Change and Sustainable Development

29 March 2019

Esteemed Secretary General,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Yesterday, I met six professors of the MIT in Boston, where we talked at length about issues of climate change, water crisis and sustainability. Based on their recent research, the scientists reiterated that we underestimate the impact of climate change on humanity, that we had no time to spare, the longer we wait, the greater the price we pay.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have been negotiating and coordinating under the auspices of the UN for twenty-five years on the dangers of climate change. For twenty-five years we have been seeing the forecasts, which portrayed an increasingly gloomy future. For twenty-five years now, we have been unable to resolve the problem of Earth's population increasing 3,5-fold during the past one hundred years, while our energy consumption increased more than ten-fold. Thanks to the use of fossil fuels we have started to heat the planet and disrupt a ten-thousand-year-old state of equilibrium.

A political agreement was reached finally in Paris to keep temperature increase under two degrees Celsius. Three years have passed since. Looking at the most recent emission figures we have to say: the Paris Agreement is in trouble. Our carbon-dioxide emissions have been increasing continuously over the past three years. The latest figures show an even greater increase, especially in the United States, China and India.

Despite us producing more solar, wind and nuclear energy than ever before, the share of fossil fuels in our total energy consumption remains unchanged, our carbon-dioxide emissions are higher than ever. If we acknowledge that emission reductions depend on four factors: population growth, the evolution of the GDP per capita, energy intensity and carbon intensity, then we also have to know which the areas are, where we already have a chance of acting fast. Can we stop the demographic explosion? No. Do we want to slow down our economic growth? Clearly not. Do we want to avert the climate disaster? Yes.

What is the solution? It is not enough to improve the share of solar, wind, nuclear and hydro generation, we also have to improve energy intensity, in other words, we have to produce the same product using less energy, which means modern energy

appliances and a technology change. Beside energy intensity we also have to improve carbon intensity, which means we have to use less and less fossil fuel for producing a unit of the GDP.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The only sustainable economic growth will be the one, where the ratio of carbon-dioxide emission to unit of the national product will be gradually decreasing. The only sustainable economic growth will be the one, where we recycle waste as a raw material. The only sustainable economic growth will be the one, where beside the economic growth numbers, we also factor in so-called external costs.

I just said that the Paris Climate Agreement was in trouble. The UN Secretary General António Guterres wants to help. We have to help the implementation of the Paris Agreement, we have to help the Secretary General of the UN, but most of all, we have to help ourselves.

In closing and thanking you for your attention, let me leave you the words of Abraham Lincoln, the sixteenth President of the United States of America, who led the country in perhaps the most difficult period of US history. President Lincoln said the following: "You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today."

Thank you for your attention, I wish you a successful conference.

(Edited version.)