



Cleaning Up

LEADERSHIP IN AN AGE OF
CLIMATE CHANGE

Cleaning Up Episode 6: Christiana Figueres

Michael Liebreich: My guest this week on “Cleaning Up” is Christiana Figueres. Christiana was appointed as executive secretary of the UNFCCC, that's the UN framework convention on climate change in 2010 after the failed cop negotiations in Copenhagen. She rebuilt the organization, she led the negotiations which terminated in 2015 with the historic Paris Agreement.

Christiana comes from probably the most prominent diplomatic and political family in Costa Rica. Her father was president of Costa Rica three times, her brother was a president of Costa Rica, her mother was an ambassador and a member of the legislative assembly. She's an extraordinary person. She's become a good friend of mine during that whole period, leading up to and including the climate negotiations, where I was privileged to be able to provide her with some information, which may have helped in some tiny, tiny way. She's now leading up an organization called "Global Optimism". She's on the board of the World Resources Institute. She's written a book called "The Future We Choose" and she has a new podcast, which she is going to tell you about in the course of our conversation.

So, one other piece of information. Today, as we film this, it's actually my birthday, so I'm going to get myself a beer. It's evening here in Europe, Christiana is in Costa Rica... but it's evening here so I'll get myself a beer, and then we'll bring Christiana Figueres into the conversation.

Good evening here in Europe, and you're in Costa Rica, is that right?

Christiana Figueres: Yes indeed, so good morning to me and Michael. I have to thank you because you are one of the few people, English-speaking people, who pronounce my name very beautifully and you always have done so, and I have always appreciated it but I have never thanked you, and I certainly have never thanked you in public so here is my gratitude.

ML: Well that's very kind of you and I think, you know to our viewers, I think we already can see some of the skills, some of the diplomatic skills, that led to the success that

Christiana's success in getting the world to the Paris Climate Agreement. Where I want to start is actually go back to sort of the day you walk through the door, in the office in Bonn at the UNFCCC, this is the framework body that is supposed to help the world negotiate its way through the climate challenge, and to a deal that bends the curve and does all the good things about saving the world from climate change, but it has been a traumatic few months, or actually longer than a few months of lack of delivery for the UNFCCC culminating in 2009 with the Copenhagen COP meeting, and there was such high expectations and it's generally regarded as a huge failure. So you walk in the door, the organization presumably is quite demoralized, what did you do? How did you turn it around?

CF: Well you know yes absolutely correct. The organization was very demoralized, or rather let's be very specific: the colleagues who work at the organization were very demoralized and rightfully so, because you know that is the group of people that devotes their entire profession, their entire life to working on climate change. Now, since then there are many others that also do that but at that time, in 2009, most people dabbled in or were double dipping - they did climate and they did something else, but that was the group of 500 people who were totally devoted to climate change, and to supporting governments to get an agreement. So of course, they were completely demoralized; trashcan would be the best description of where their morale was, because just six months before that we had this absolute dramatic failure. There was a failure of process, of politics, of content, of technology, everything of everything had failed across the board, and I was there so I was a survivor of Copenhagen. I think because I was there, I embodied the pain and the frustration that the world had, and I always say the global mood on climate change was pathetic in 2010, when I took over the responsibility. So, the first thing I knew that I had to do was to pick up the spirits of my colleagues. Because without a highly motivated, highly efficient, highly effective organization at the helm, there was no way we were ever going to change the course of those negotiations. So, for one year, a whole year, my one priority, and probably priorities two and three as well, was precisely to inject the necessary spirit and energy into the colleagues at the UN. I

remember my first day I arrived and my deputy, Richard Kinley - fabulous guy, had organized a huge meeting with all the colleagues of the secretariat, full staff meeting. He had actually built a little platform for me to stand up on, since I'm not exactly the tallest person around, and he basically said: "Well, welcome Christiana, you're the new executive secretary, and so now give us your vision". I stood up there on the platform and I basically said two things: number one, I consider it an enormous privilege and in fact a blessing that we are devoted to climate change at this point in history; and number two I am not going to work with demoralized people because we will not do anything, and so I asked everyone to take, I handed out little cards, you know, the four by four and I think I gave three to each person and I said: "Write down what do I have to do, so that you can come to work every day, with a smile on your face". Then it took me hours and days to organize all of these cards out on the floor of my office, and out of that we created the smile project, which was a project to deal with so many pressure issues, that team was dealing with. It took us almost three years to deliver the entire project, but, at the end of it, we had a highly motivated, highly efficient, highly disciplined and very hard-working team to whom I am eternally grateful.

ML: It's an incredible story and I suppose I was kind of aware of it, because you and I spoke actually fairly early, I had written the most horrible things about the UNFCCC process, so you know, you thank me for pronouncing your name correctly and you're so nice because you should really hate me, if you were aware of the thing that I wrote. I'm gonna quote from it in 2011. It's important for people to realize just how off track the process was. I actually wrote what is needed at COP 17 in Durban, so that was still during your smile project years - "COP 17 in Durban what is needed is a modern day Oliver Cromwell, someone who had no time for drama or light entertainment, who will stand up and say to the assembled negotiators and politicians - you have sat too long for any good you've been doing lately, depart, I say and let us have done with you in the name of the planet: go". That's what I wrote in 2011, shortly before you actually reached out to me, and I think you sort of framed it as asking my advice, I'm sure you didn't really need it, but you turned me around. It's kind of I do have some kind of window into what

you were undertaking at that point.

CF: No, I was sincere Michael actually about asking for your advice, as well as many other people because, to be totally honest... I mean I knew that we needed to regenerate the team - that was you know our number one priority. Then, how do you construct or reconstruct a negotiating process, that takes everyone into account, that is transparent, that is credible, and that delivers what the planet needed and what science was demanding? I had no idea, frankly, no one had any idea, no one is the operative word in that sentence - because no single person could have told you what to do. It was totally a work of collecting wisdom and empowering collective leadership that led to the outcome.

ML: And that's very brave to say, that you didn't know at the time what was kind of going to emerge as a process. I'm always struck by the words of Steve Jobs, who says that you can only join the dots looking backwards. Of course looking backwards, it's absolutely obvious what you did, you turned it from a top-down sort of government-to-government, state to state process. We'll all negotiate one huge carbon budget, we'll allocate it to each country, and spend 50 years implementing it, which was sort of the Copenhagen model - very top down, and you simply turned it into a bottom-up process where there were everybody could sort of do their bit, whether they were a nation, or a city, or a region, or an individual, or a corporate, or anybody. It's so blindingly obvious, but you're now saying that you didn't know that at the time.

CF: No, that really emerged out of conversations with many people, what emerged was the wisdom of not confronting self-interest with planetary need. Because if those two things are confronted with each other, you know which one wins. When you align enlightened self-interest, whether it be a nation, a city or a corporation, a financial institution, whether you know whoever it is but if you shine a light for them to be able to understand and identify what their enlightened self-interest is, and then you look for the alignment with the planetary needs, and with what science is demanding, now you have a very powerful motor behind your dinghy! Because we all operate out of self-interest and

so if you can align those two things, that actually is a much more promising space in which to work. The issue however is, because there's always a shadow side. The shadow side was of course that the collectivity of interest, which eventually were expressed in, what we call, the nationally determined contributions, which is every country's contribution to the global need; what they could promise and they could commit to in 2015 was definitely not going to be enough to meet the reductions that were needed at the global level. That was the delta that we struggled with for quite a while, because we were committed to this bottom up and alignment of self-interest with global need. We were totally committed to that as a concept, but we were also painfully aware that from a science point of view it was not enough. So that's when the second piece came in the second piece of the logic, of the Paris agreement to say: okay, fine, in that case let us allow for a process that increases ambition periodically (and then we decided every five years or the government's decided every five years), where by every five years governments come together and figure out what have they done, and how has technology advanced, and you are the expert in knowing how that it has advanced, how has finance advanced - you are the expert in that, and how policy has advanced and again, Michael - you're the expert on that. But if you know those things advanced, then countries can take on bolder commitments every five years. That in technical terms is called the ratchet mechanism, because it ratchets up every five years, and what it ultimately does is get to a global economy, that is at net zero by 2050, which is in accordance with science.

ML: I think this is the brilliance. You're absolutely right, there's the sort of the bottom up, there's the voluntary commitment but then there's the ratchet. Actually I wrote something, I think it was back in 2007, so even before Copenhagen, saying that from a sort of game theory perspective this idea of turning all into one negotiation was completely wrong - because that turns it into this famous prisoner's dilemma: you get one negotiation and if your country simply holds fast during the negotiation, and it's called defecting in game theory terminology, then you're sort of saw this. I mean, I hate to name names, but you know we saw this in that process with countries like Australia,

who could have done so much more, but just sat out the negotiations at that point, and you know, turning it into the what the ratchet does is it turns it into a repeated game. You know it's a game we're going to play every five years and it completely changes the dynamic of the game. There's no point defecting because you know that you could be punished next time for defecting and so there's kind of an incentive for good behavior. So it's sort of completely resonated with me from the perspective of you know the game theory, as well as you know the policy and so on and of course, the fact that my constituency mainly as I observed all this, was the business community and the investor community. They absolutely are only interested in bottom-up sort of voluntary activity; you can't force somebody to invest in something - that's a bad deal. And so you know I just you know it was an extraordinary turnaround and I'm still not sure if many of the particularly the younger viewers of this video, or listeners to the podcast will realize just how sort of untraditional your approach was, compared to really 20 whatever it was 20 years prior to that point.

CF: Michael you know again, let's remember that this didn't come out of my little brain, right? This was the result of many conversations, with many negotiators, with many experts such as yourself. It really wasn't, and that's the I think the beauty and the strength of the Paris Agreement, that it really is the result of collective wisdom. If it had come out of any person's little brain, it would be very brittle, and not have the shelf life that the Paris Agreement does. The Paris Agreement will be with us for decades until we're at zero net by 2050 at the latest, I'm actually thinking that we will be there sooner, but it is the fact that it was based on bottom up and on collective wisdom, on you know... The way I think about the Paris Agreement as a magnum tapestry, where there were many, many threads that came together and that were woven in both directions, and each thread particular color that is only visible to that thread. But once you weave it together you see the emerging figure in the emerging design that is there; but without all of those little threads that go in there you would never have the design.

ML: Well, look, I think you're being too modest. I think that you played a much bigger

role than you're making out there, but you know, that is how you got it done: by giving credit, by sharing credit around and so on. I think that you know if we're going to use the analogy of the thread, I think a few days ago was handloom day around the world to celebrate this textile technology that is that brought wealth and jobs, and actually clothed us for so long. If there's one person who was actually manning, moving the strap loom during that process, I'm afraid it was you, you have to admit that.

CF: Well it was quite a few, I mean just in the secretariat, the executive team there was a fantastic team and all decisions were always collectively taken - so there you are. Anyway, the point is, Michael, that you know what needed to be done was done and we did it in a timely fashion and that's I think the important part of it.

ML: But we've talked about the shifting from the top down to bottom up, we talked about the ratchet, but really when you say, well, you know what needed to be done was done, actually more than that was done. Because you got this extraordinary statement in, about staying well below two degrees, holding the increasing global average temperature to well below 2 degrees centigrade above pre-industrial levels, and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels. I mean that was an extraordinary achievement to get that wording in there, and I know it surprised some participants. I want to read to you an email that I got from probably a very good friend of both of ours. Laurence Tubiana, who was the French climate ambassador and led the negotiations or held that role for France during that process and she emailed to me when I congratulated her, she said: "Thank you I can't believe it. I prepared myself to be happy, but disappointed as logic of short-term interest prevails, and finally it did not happen talking about compromise. And it was far beyond my expectations". Was it beyond your expectations or did you know that you could land that extraordinary ambition of one and a half degrees in the text of the document?

CF: No, we didn't know that we could, but we knew that we had to. It's a difference there. We knew that we had to because we fully well understood, that according to

science two degrees is abominably insufficient. The term you always work with at the UN is creative ambiguity; it is the term that we use to work with words. So below 2 was the creative ambiguity outcome of a very tough conversation about whether it was two degrees or below two degrees. Obviously, those countries that are most vulnerable to start with the Pacific and the Caribbean islands wanted something that was much closer to 1.5 degrees because they know their survival depends on that, but the larger nations wanted something that was closer to 2 degrees or 2 degrees in fact. And so the first compromise that was reached over this long process was that term “well below two degrees”. Because that gives the two degrees as a reference point, as the anchor, but the well below as let's say the comfort language for the small islands. That was landed but then, then the islands again came forward and said “well below” is just not going to be good enough for us, because we are disappearing. The sea level is rising, it is rising right now, it's not within 50 years and we cannot sign on to something that is our death. We cannot do it, so they came forward, fortunately, and they pressed for 1.5. But since the well below 2 had already been landed, we had to put a comma there and write draft another text that would give the islands some comfort. So the political balance that was reached is that, if you will, the hard maximum temperature is the “well below”, that's the hard aspiration, and then there's a comma, and then there's a soft aspiration - that says pursuing efforts to 1.5. So, the fact that there was a difference between a hard and soft aspiration allowed those that wanted the two degree to swallow it and gave some comfort to the islands who wanted 1.5. That's not the end of the story, because the other very important part was accepting a 1.5 degree maximum target, that was not a hard target but a soft one, but as part of that package to accept that was the request to have the IPCC do a scientific report on the difference between 1.5 and 2 degrees. Because there were many negotiators who said, oh you know no big deal, there's not that much of a difference between two degrees and 1.5. The islands knew there is a huge difference” like survival, so they can't just stand up and say that. The entire UNFCCC is science based, science driven, science responsive and so there had to be a scientific study that would examine the difference between those two temperatures. Now, in the beginning, when we brought the IPCC in, when we were considering this text we brought

in the IPCC, and we said, guys you know governments are about to request and a study from you that would have you quantify the difference between 1.5 and 2. Impossible. We don't have enough information, nobody has really looked at that how many years are we going to have, well just a few years to do that no completely impossible. Well, in the end, they acquiesced, and you know kudos to the IPCC, they produced in October of 2018, truly within three years, the most groundbreaking, detailed study they have ever produced. Totally for me the most important study they have ever brought on the table on the difference between 1.5 and 2 degrees. Kudos to the IPCC for that and it was an extraordinary, extraordinarily difficult piece of work, but it has told us that there is a world of difference between 1.5 and 2 degrees.

ML: I want to talk about that report because it was a seminal report, I mean, in many ways you know what we see now, in terms of the public engagement a lot of people give the credits to Greta Thunberg. But, of course, Greta Thunberg is brandishing the 1.5 degree report October 2018 of the IPCC. There are also some other, how can I put it, less glorious moments of the IPCC's output, which I've you know personally done battle with this kind of the RCP 8.5, the insistence on positioning these extreme scenarios, as base cases and as business as usual. But before we get into that, I want to say a couple of things. First of all, normally what we do, we rushed into this because you've got limited time. Normally what we do is have a drink, or at least it depends on time zone. So, I've got my drink here next time you're talking just to apologize in advance I'm going to crack my beer, because it is late here and that is the spirit of "Cleaning up".

CF: Be waiting for me up there that I could go and get.

ML: Okay, very good. The other thing is, I don't know if you know, today is actually my birthday. So, that's one of the reasons I'm determined to get my beer because it is my birthday.

CF: You are a Leo!

ML: I am indeed a Leo. Of course, here's the funny thing about being a Leo, is I think all that stuff is utter and complete nonsense, it's rubbish. But I am a completely typical Leo.

CF: Well, here is my little confession. It was my birthday last Friday, and I'm also a Leo, and I also think it's rubbish, until I catch myself doing real things.

ML: Yeah, exactly. Been there, done that. Absolutely, I know exactly that feeling. So...

CF: That's wonderful a fellow Leo. I love it. Well happy birthday to you.

ML: Thank you very much. Thanks, that's very kind and with that I will crack my beer. I want to come back to the question of 1.5 and 2 degrees, and also the more extreme scenarios, the 8.5 scenarios, because just you know these get very technical, very quickly and I always think it's helpful, particularly if our audience isn't that technical, to sort of translate it into what has to happen. So, as I look at it, if we're gonna do 1.5 degrees, essentially the global economy has to be decarbonized, has to be net zero by 2050. If it takes longer than that, 2075, 2080, 2090, then we could be on track for two degrees; but if we're not decarbonized by around, then we'll be north of two degrees. And then just to complete the picture, where we are currently headed according the UNEP, the United Nations Environment Program, right? It's a very good report about the gap, and they say we're at about three degrees, maybe a bit over three degrees. I'm more optimistic than for instance the IEA with their scenario, so I think we're probably on about three, maybe 2.7, but of course there's uncertainty it could be as high as four or four and a half degrees, even within that envelope. But then you get these very extreme scenarios and the one that's becoming famous, is RCP 8.5 which is based on massive growth in coal use, leading to five to seven degrees of climate change by 2100, which most people, who are kind of in some way expert, think is actually it's gone from being unlikely to being frankly downright implausible. And yet it underpins so much climate communications, so we've got this huge range from where we're headed, which is about three plus or minus

half a degree, probably, where we want to be which is under two and one and a half, because of the huge difference, but just most of the communications is about these sort of five degrees to seven degrees - extreme scenarios and, I mean, I suppose I'm gonna frame it now as a question with that preamble saying: well, how do you know you're an optimist, right? Your business is global optimism, you won through by being optimistic. The smile project and yet so much communication is about how bad it's going to be, and how terrible, and how, I mean not to put too fine a point on it, how screwed we are? How do we get out of that and on to a more motivating and more positive, sort of arc, which you know that will help us to deal with this problem?

CF: Well, a very good question that I ask myself every day, actually. Now, let's start with acknowledging that we are definitely in a transition, a very difficult transition between a heavily carbonized economy and a decarbonized economy. That's good, it's good news, that we're in a transition, if we weren't transitioning, we would really be in deep trouble. Now all transitions are messy - by definition, and all transitions have data points, easily available to anyone, that belong to the previous reality, the status quo reality, as well as data points that belong to the future reality, because that's what a transition is all about. And so, for me, this is all about a choice. Do you choose, I mean, you can ask me or you can ask Michael Liebreich, who actually knows more about this than any other human being: give me the top five data points that prove that we are going to continue to burn coal. And you can give me those data points. Then I will ask you, give me the five data points that prove that we're actually in an energy transition toward renewables, and you can give me those five data points. Now, my choice is: I don't deny the data points that would convince some people that we're staying in a reality, which for me is already a past reality. I don't deny that that is true, but I choose to focus on the other data points, I choose to focus on the data points and the references of the evidence that we're actually moving forward. And it is a choice, Michael, okay, it is a choice. It is a choice, that we make every day. Do you want to fill your mind with all the bad news because there's plenty of that? Or do you want to be more strategic and go out there, and look for the good news? I choose to be more strategic without denying the bad and look for the good

news. Why? Because I want my energy to push those elements of transformation forward and I invite everyone listening to this to do the same! Because there is a huge, huge power that is developed by our choosing a reality and that's why our book is called "The Future We Choose", because we are choosing the future, and the more we consciously and intentionally choose a good future, a future that is stable, that is healthy, that is productive, that has more jobs... then we're closer to making that a reality. The opposite is also true.

ML: It's what I'm going to have to try to remember, these wise words next time I get an argument on twitter. Because the promise I chose to found New Energy Finance and to focus on the technologies of transformation, and I agree there is a transformation and I spend most of my time trying to either kind of commentate on it, maybe even to accelerate it by providing information. But you know, when I look at what some of the people are saying, you say that you know there are facts that would show that we're going to burn all this coal. I think we're beyond that. You know, when you look at some of those scenarios that are based on a seven to ten times growth in coal use, when you look at a scenario RCP 8.5 is based on not going to electric vehicles, but going to coal to liquids. I mean, it's just deeply embedded in that scenario and I can't just say, well, you know, you can focus on that if you want, because you know what's happening is, we are being bombarded with these stories. Over New Year my daughter Alfie, whom you know, came to me and said: "Daddy, I'm very upset, because all of the penguins are going to be extinct by 2100", and I said that's terrible but wait a minute. And sure enough, you know, we dug into the science, and it's based on a scenario of an energy pathway, that is totally and utterly ridiculous and people are trying to traumatize my daughter with that scenario. So, I just find it very hard to be as calm as you.

CF: No, no, no, and traumatize adults also. Now, the fun thing about this, Michael, is that you don't really have to, let me say, a psychological discussion on this. I mean, if you want to, you can, but the economics are on our side, right? And that to me is really the watershed. When we know that two-thirds of the coal plants in the United States simply

are not competitive anymore against renewables, and you can go up and down the line, right? I mean, coal in India is completely non-competitive against solar and once we get to that point, the same thing is true now with electrification of vehicles, and we just pass the million mark, just two days ago one million private charging stations installed around the world for electric vehicles. I mean, it's very exciting, why? Because they are becoming much more competitive, more interesting, more reliable, et cetera, et cetera. So, all of the hard-nosed arguments, which are cost, operation, reliability, all of that is on our side. Yes, we can have a psychological discussion about this, but, once you overlay the economic realities, then you know which future is going to win out. Now, those that choose to stick their head in the sand, they stick their head in the ground and deny that all that is happening, I mean, at some point, Michael, I don't know how you deal with these people, but I just sort of bless them and let them go. Because they're never going to change their mind.

ML: I'm dealing with two kinds of people, though, in my role because I deal with the people like that, who say "no, no this is all nonsense and it's not gonna happen", but I also do people who actually are kind of climate hawks but want to pretend we're in a worse situation than we are. We're in a perfectly bad situation, we're not going for two degrees, which is awful as you say, we're going for three degrees right now. The reality is to pretend that we're doing something worse because they've seen extinction rebellion, they've seen the agenda, you know, sort of resonate. And so, then they attack me when I say well look, can we please focus on the problem we've got. We don't need scary stories, we just need to be sufficiently concerned and, as you say, then we need to sort of acknowledge that there are other solutions and let's move towards those solutions. I mean, I'd love to hear more on that, but I'm just concerned time and if I might, I want to get you on to one other topic before we run out of time. That is, when I look at the Paris Agreement and I look at the run-up to the Paris Agreement to me... and I'm not making this up, I really see it as a a women's agreement, it was women that played the key roles at so many stages, up to and including that deal, yourself of course. But then, there was Anne Hidalgo, who was mayor of Paris during the negotiations, played a key role. There was Connie Hedegaard, who was the EU climate commissioner until 2014, shortly before

the deal. There was Laurence Tubiana, we've already mentioned, who was the French negotiator, there was Amber Rudd, who was Secretary of State for Energy and Climate in the UK, and then of course, you know, cascading down through the climate world and through clean energy, there are so many leaders and then, right at the last minute, Laurent Fabius came in and signed this thing, right? And that's how I see it. If you could comment on it, am I right that this thing was driven by women leaders, sort of after the men failed, or is that just too glib, am I just being sort of too woke for my own good there?

CF: Not fair, it's unfair, Michael. It's unfair because, honestly, just because you mentioned Fabius... he did a brilliant job. I have seldom witnessed and been a part of such enlightened political acumen as his. Very impressive, very impressive, the way he could read the politics, the way he could guide the politics - from the back sometimes, from the front, are really truly, truly impressive. We would not have the Paris Agreement without that political acumen, so, you know let us not minimize the role of women and also, it's not minimize the role of men. Yes, there were many women, and you named a few, there are many, many others. Rachel Kyte, me and you know...

ML: Rachel was our second guest on "Cleaning Up", Rachel's also a great friend.

CF: Well, but here's the thing, Michael: why do we name the people, why do we name the women, right? Because it happens to be unusual, that there are women in any space, at any, let's say, influential level. That should not be the case! We should have 50% women, 50% men, making it completely impossible, or at least unnecessary to put names on the list. The fact that we can put names on the list, and the list is incomplete, means that we don't have 50 and 50 yet, right? Honestly, I really think that we did a good job in bringing more women into that negotiation, but we are not there yet. Because everything, every single decision, every single boardroom table, every single negotiation, every single event needs to be 50 and 50. Absolutely! Because that is the only way that we're actually going to be able to harvest the full potential of society. There are 50

percent of us, or 51% women and 49% men and, so, let's call it 50-50. So, we should have 50-50. Input and be able to gather the whole potential of society and not rely on the 50% male input, that has definitely been able to attract most of the education, and most of the professional development opportunities over thousands of years - this is not just now. We have to catch up on the women's side, so that we can, given, the scale and the complexity of challenges that we have ahead of us. We need full potential being harvested and being deployed, and if we continue to only harvest and deploy 50%, which are the males, we're not gonna cut it. We're not going to be able to solve this. So, we have to be able to harvest and deploy a hundred percent of our social, economic, and brain potential.

ML: I couldn't agree more. I think you know, I'm on the boards of a couple of organizations, that try to achieve that, and I think certainly today we also need to acknowledge that the same goes for minorities. It's not totally...

CF: Thank you for that!

ML: Yeah, that's something working within the UN, you see a lot more inclusion on minorities but the moment you step away, the moment I've worked with the UN, and then in the energy industry, the moment you step away from the UN corridors, it starts to get very, not just very male, but also very white. And that has to be acknowledged and dealt with. Rachel and I talked about that quite a bit on our session. Look, I probably only got a couple of minutes more of your time. I know that you're busy and you had to run to something. There's just one final question. I want to ask you we've got COP 26 coming up in Glasgow. It was of course put off because of the COVID situation, which in my view was a blessing, because it gave much more time for a new prime minister, Boris Johnson, to get his arms around the issues and the challenges, and frankly to up his game, so that we could deliver something very meaningful. The preparations are underway there, if you had any messages to any of the stakeholders going into COP 26, there's unfinished business still from Paris. The article six about sharing voluntary

arrangements between countries, offsets between countries and so on, finance is still a very open issue. If you had any messages, what would it be for the stakeholders going into COP 26 in Glasgow next year?

CF: I think I can boil it down to a very simple message: wake up to the possibilities. We have been talking about the burden of addressing climate change for long enough. We understand that there is a shared responsibility here. We have not delved in with the equal depth, with equal enthusiasm into the opportunities. The fact that we can create a completely different world, that is safer, that has more jobs, that is more stable, that is more productive, that produces more food, that has, you know, much smarter transportation, that makes better use of our time, that has a better urban scape for living, for people who live in urban areas on and on and on and on. I mean how exciting is that. We have the most exciting possibility of any generation of human beings ever alive. No generation, and it includes several generations, all of us adults right now and there are several generations, we have never ever, ever had the technology, the capital and the knowledge of the policy to make such a huge impact and such a positive impact. It is like the nature is raining opportunities on us, raining opportunities, and we have to be able to catch those opportunities and make them real. Because otherwise it's going to really turn on us. So, wake up to the opportunities and get excited about a world that is so much better!

ML: Christiana, just very briefly. You've got a new podcast, it's called "Outrage and Optimism". Tell us what it does and why all of the audience of this podcast should immediately go over and find your podcast and subscribe to it?

CF: Yes. Well, after listening to Michael's podcast I definitely recommend you go over and listen to "Outrage and Optimism". We've been on the air for over a year, have incredibly wonderful people there as guests and we operate out of the premise, that we need to be outraged, but what we have not done yet, and optimistic about what we still can do. So listen and enjoy.

ML: Christiana, it's always incredibly fun and incredibly. It's fun it's informational and it's inspiring talking to you, it's absolutely perfect way to spend an hour on my birthday. Thank you so, so much for joining me. If now all we need to do for COP 26 is take those words of yours and turn it into a program that everybody 190 whatever countries can come and sign. You've done it once, who knows, we may need you to come back and do it again. But meanwhile...

CF: There are many people are doing a great job, but Michael thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity for a conversation on your birthday, what an honor for me.

ML: No, the honor is absolutely mine and I hope once this pandemic is over, we'll get a chance to do this in person; either in London or maybe in Costa Rica.

CF: Yay, much better! Thank you!

ML: Thank you, good evening, good night. So that was Christiana Figueres, and for those of you who are not familiar with her style, and her way of doing business, perhaps you can understand why it was, that she was able to push the world, 190 countries to sign the historic Paris Agreement in 2015. Our guest next week is someone no less extraordinary than Christiana Figures, but in a very different way. He flew around the world in a balloon with a co-pilot. They were the first people to do so. As if that wasn't enough, he then flew around the world in an electric airplane, again with a co-pilot. He comes from a family of adventurers, his father and his grandfather both went higher than anybody had ever done before, and also deeper in the ocean than anybody had ever done before. I hope you'll join me next week for a conversation with Bertrand Piccard. Thank you.