

Canadian Group
Inter-Parliamentary Union



Groupe canadien
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**General Debate
“Getting to Zero: Mobilizing Parliaments to Act on
Climate Change”**

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GETTING TO ZERO: MOBILIZING PARLIAMENTS TO ACT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Dear colleagues,

Those of you who know me are aware that fighting climate change is my number one priority. I am encouraged to see this item on the agenda at our 144th Assembly. However, I do not think we should be talking about mobilizing only parliaments. It is society as a whole that we need to mobilize; parliamentarians, yes, but also the citizens we serve, governments and the private sector.

Further, the time has come for us to stop talking about climate change as an abstract threat that will only affect us in the future; climate change is real—there is no debating it—and it is already happening. The climate crisis is worsening and yet we remain bogged down in debates about the nature and extent of the problem. Now is the time to talk about solutions and to find ways to implement them. Now is the time to look forward to the future and to face it with resolve rather than fear.

The current discourse around climate change is gloomy, leaving no room for hope. We are faced with a relentless onslaught of bad news; how must this make younger generations feel? The challenges ahead of us are undeniably significant, but they are not insurmountable.

We need a paradigm change. Rather than focusing on the magnitude of the challenges we face, we should talk about the magnitude of the opportunities that lie ahead. While climate change is—and needs to be—a “wake-up call” for humanity, it should be one that pushes us to seize the opportunity to collectively build a better, cleaner, and more inclusive world.

The message around climate change must be one of hope, not despair. This is how we can mobilize society to act on climate change. We must stop talking about challenges and costs; we must start thinking in terms of opportunities. What kind of jobs can we create through the green transition? What can we do to ensure that tomorrow’s world is more inclusive than today’s? What metrics must the private sector adopt to properly measure the impact of their investments?

There is a reason why major oil companies are investing in renewable energy: the future is green, and they are not willing to miss these new opportunities. The world’s institutional investors, including public pension funds and sovereign wealth funds, are also beginning to embrace the green transition.

For instance, the *Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec*, Canada’s second largest pension fund, presented its new climate strategy a few months ago, announcing its intention to hold \$54 billion in green assets by 2025 and to complete its exit from oil production by 2022.¹ Why? Simply because climate change is a risk and green assets are an opportunity; it is a simple calculation of costs versus benefits.

And that is how we, as parliamentarians, should frame it. This is the type of initiative we need to talk about. We must find new ways to push public and private institutions to innovate and think outside

¹ Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec, “[Climate Strategy](#),” *News release*, 28 September 2021.

the box. We must disrupt market forces and incentivize them to use their capital towards the green transition. The world's natural capital—its ecosystems and carrying capacity—is not limitless.

In closing, I want to quote the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which stated in its February 2022 report that

Climate resilient development is enabled when governments, civil society and the private sector make inclusive development choices that prioritise risk reduction, equity and justice, and when decision-making processes, finance and actions are integrated across governance levels, sectors and timeframes. Climate resilient development is facilitated by international cooperation and by governments at all levels working with communities, civil society, educational bodies, scientific and other institutions, media, investors and businesses; and by developing partnerships with traditionally marginalised groups, including women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, local communities and ethnic minorities.²

I agree with this view: it is time to fully mobilize all sectors of society to act on climate change.

Thank you. Merci. Terima kasih.

² Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, [Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability](#), Summary for Policymakers, Working Group II contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 27 February 2022, p. 32.