

## Speech for the United Nations Association

Hello my name is Ziana Kotadia; I am 14 years old and presently a student at King Edward VI Camphill School for Girls. I was selected by the government to be one of nine youth ambassadors on climate change. I am so glad to be here today to talk to you about my achievements, my thoughts and why it is essential that younger people are engaged in this debate. Before I start I would like to thank the United Nations Association for inviting me.

Climate change is an issue that concerns all the inhabitants of the earth, each animal, each plant and each human being. Whether suffering the effects of global warming or contributing to climate change, we all have a role to play. What is significant progress at this point is whether we recognise our role and question it. Are we being good citizens of the earth, or are we mimicking the actions of those before us, in hope that this matter will disappear making no further need for concern. I questioned my responsibility in the global community and my thoughts and doubts about my actions lead me here. We are all in a predicament, where we have two options about the apprehensive fate of the world. Either we can continue to act the way we are at present and watch the world sail into unfamiliar territory or we can act, change our attitude, increase awareness and put into action a greener cause. I chose to initiate small steps and make a difference. Little did I know that I would be faced with the opportunity that would allow me to put my words into actions.

In 2007 DEFRA launched a competition, in search of nine climate change champions, one to represent each region of England. The champions aim while in office is to provide a young persons perspective on climate change and to ensure the youth population are represented on this agenda. To achieve this, the champions attend events, such as this, are featured in the press and media and are given funding to organise their own public awareness events.

I entered this competition, in anticipation for my voice to be heard, my thoughts to be recognised and most importantly to change the outlook that the population of today have on matters regarding the environment. After officially being announced as a climate change champion, outside 10 Downing Street, by the Prime Minister I went on a European expedition to learn more about climate change. I visited the Netherlands because it is a country of diverse extremes, on one hand with 60% of the Netherlands below sea level the threat of flooding is putting the country at severe risk. On the contrary the Netherlands is one of the most advanced countries in the fight against climate change, all waste is recycled and environmentalists have developed new technology that consider ways of adapting to live with the threat of water levels rising. I discovered many new ways in which the UK can improve, one of which is by aspiring to be like the Netherlands. My challenge began, when my year in office as the, 'Climate Change Champion for the West Midlands' commenced.

Although Global Warming is a phrase that has been constantly highlighted in the media, and is used frequently among scientists it is a title that can often be misunderstood and misinterpreted. I believe that breaking through the ignorance that many of us have and raising awareness of this important issue is one step closer towards tackling climate change. As many of you recognize Global Warming is the warming of the earth due to, surplus greenhouse gases being released into the atmosphere. Greenhouse gases are those which absorb heat and collect to make a blanket around the earth. This blanket is called the ozone layer, the ozone layer is essential to keep the globe at a temperature that we can survive in, however when the blanket gets thicker and thicker the earth becomes warmer bringing varied temperature levels and other penalties as a result. Examples of greenhouse gases are carbon dioxide and methane, and I am sure you are aware that appliances which rely on fossil fuels, such as cars release the gases into the air.

Education about the issue is vital, we need to break the naivety that many of us carry and start looking at the reality of the situation. The younger audience I feel, are particularly important being the future leading generation. If the youth of today are taught and brought up with good habits they are more likely to then continue with them throughout their lives. To tackle climate change it is important that vital messages about greener and more sustainable living are adopted and passed down from generation to generation. We need to make it as socially unacceptable to be unsustainable and polluting as it is to drink and drive.

Furthermore young people are going to be most affected by climate change so therefore should have an opportunity to input our valid points to an authoritative figure that will have the status to put our ideas into something that can affect the way people think and behave. Many are unaware that the youth have massively influenced and changed today's technology. Young people can achieve the most inspirational and unbelievable things. For example, the online social networking phenomina which has revolutionised global communication was invented by a young student from Harvard in America. We take for granted all the contributions the youth population have made to society and only dwell on the minority of youths who are uninterested or who make the headlines for the wrong reasons.

It is my generation that will be the ones that will have to adapt to temperature change, rising fuel and utility costs and episodes of severe weather, which are unpredictable and can be deadly.

However there are things that we can all do to lessen the impact of climate change. By letting the taps in our house drip unnecessarily we waste 13 litres daily. Plastic bags take over 450 years to decompose, by using reusable bags we help reduce our carbon footprint. While it is important that the government

and businesses take the lead in this situation, 40% of carbon emissions in the UK come from domestic households, which emphasises that if we all adopt a greener lifestyle that uses energy efficiently, we can make a huge impact and reduce the UK's carbon footprint and on a larger scale the world's carbon footprint. Many of us have the view that it is impossible for one person to make a difference. I once carried the same view, but realised that if we all thought that like no one would be able to make a change. If every single person in this world contributed to help tackle climate change the force would be a lot greater than any of us could imagine. We need to realise that small, simple gestures that protect the earth build up and eventually can make a big impact, likewise we also need to realise that small, simple actions that are inconsiderate towards the environment effectively aid the progression of Global Warming. People that changed this planet, each scientist and philosopher, do you think that they carried the belief that they couldn't influence people and powers that were above their authority? Do you believe that they thought that their actions and views were too minor to make a discrepancy to the society that they lived in? Albert Einstein, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X are all people that were once in the situation that we are in today. They were similarly asking themselves the same questions and having the same doubts. Can they make a difference, can they make a change? They stopped at nothing until they achieved the unachievable. Each person that has thought like this and has been successful in employing a revolution that has shaped our past, present and future. If these great philosophers, scientists, religious leaders and most importantly ordinary people managed to influence life as we know it, then why can't we?

On many an occasion the world has pulled together as a community to tackle global concerns. We have shown that human nature is not predominantly selfish but rather caring and considerate. Take the tsunami for example, the world showed community spirit by aiding the countries affected and donating money to help redevelop the areas that were devastated. We have made large strides in overcoming racism, defeated sexism and discrimination against sections of communities. If we have previously been able to be victorious over situations that may have once seemed undefeatable, why can't we echo those actions and take the same attitude towards our fragile planet. We all need to work together to make a change. 'Together we stand, divided we fall'

I questioned my conduct, now it is time for you to question yours. Ask yourself this question, 'Are you killing this earth, and making it difficult for your children, grandchildren and great grandchildren to survive in or are you going to use your initiative and contribute to a greater good whilst you still can?'