

Copenhagen climate summit: Prince Charles warns climate change will drive starvation and terrorism

The world has only seven years before climate change causes a “point of crisis” that will drive food shortages, terrorism and poverty, the Prince of Wales has warned.

By Louise Gray, Environment Correspondent, in Copenhagen
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Prince Charles warned that the 'survival of the species' was in peril, as he spoke at the Copenhagen climate conference. Photo: AP

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the ministerial segment of the Copenhagen climate conference, the Prince said the “survival of the species” was in peril.

The talks have been dogged by walk-outs and protests as the poor world becomes increasingly frustrated at the lack of refusal by richer countries to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

Yesterday Yvo de Boer, the head of negotiations, admitted things are moving “too slowly” as pressure grew on the world’s two biggest emitters China and the US to compromise over cutting carbon emissions and committing money to climate change.

Prince Charles said world leaders owe it to “our children and grand children” to make a difference.

“The future of mankind can be assured only if we rediscover ways in which to live as a part of nature, not apart from her,” he said. “The grim reality is that our planet has reached a point of crisis and we have only seven years before we lose the levers of control.”

He pointed out that climate change is a “risk multiplier”.

“Reducing poverty, increasing food production, combating terrorism and sustaining economic development are all vital priorities, but it is increasingly clear how rapid climate change will make them even more difficult to address,” he warned.

The Prince, who flew in by private jet, joined Arnold Schwarzenegger the Governor of California and Al Gore, the former US Senator, who also flew in to add impetus to the talks.

Gordon Brown, the Prime Minister, is also working hard behind the scenes to “bash heads together” over key issues like the amount of money

the rich world is willing to pay poor countries to help them reduce emissions.

Prince Charles, who was invited by the Danish government to make the keynote speech, has been following the talks closely and urged the different nations to forget their differences.

"When it comes to the air we breathe and the water we drink, there are no national boundaries," he said. "We all depend on each other - and, crucially, on each other's actions - for our weather, our food, our water and our energy.

"These are the 'tectonic plates' on which the peace and stability of the international community rest.

"The inescapable conclusion, therefore, is that a partial solution to climate change is no solution at all.

"It must be inclusive and it must be a comprehensive approach - one that strengthens the resilience of our ecosystems.

"Crucially, it must be embraced by the public, private and NGO sectors, as well as by local communities and indigenous people, while also encouraging individual responsibility."

The Prince was particularly keen to encourage world leaders to reach an agreement on forests. The scheme would pay poor countries not to chop down trees and even establish pension schemes and other financial bonds that invest in rainforests.

"The simple truth is that without a solution to tropical deforestation, there is no solution to climate change," he added.

On Friday, about 130 world leaders will attend the summit's final session including President Barack Obama.

Prince Charles said he appreciated negotiators are "profoundly weary" and world leaders have a huge task ahead but warned it was the last chance for a better future.

"We live in times of great consequence and, therefore, of great opportunity. With issues of such magnitude, it is easy to focus solely on the challenges, the worst-case scenarios, the "what-ifs" of failure," he said.

"But take a moment to consider the opportunities if we succeed. Imagine a healthier, safer and more sustainable, economically robust world. Because if we share in that vision, we can share the will to action that is now required."

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/copenhagen-climate-change-confe/6819392/Copenhagen-climate-summit-Prince-Charles-warns-climate-change-will-drive-starvation-and-terrorism.html>