

**Speech by Greta Thunberg, Climate Activist,
at the Congress of the European Economic - and Social Committee on 21.2.2019 in Brussels**

My name is Greta Thunberg. I am a climate activist from Sweden. And today in this room there is also – if you can come up – Anuna, Adelaide, Kyra, Gilles, Dries, Thun and Luisa.

Tens of thousands of children are striking for the climate on the streets of Brussels, hundreds of thousands are doing the same all over the world. We are school strikers, we have done our homework. And some of us are here today.

People always tell us that they are so hopeful. They are hopeful that the young people are going to save the world. But we are not.

There is simply not enough time to wait for us to grow up and become the ones in charge. Because by the year 2020 we need to have bended the emission curve steep downwards. That is next year.

We know that most politicians don't want to talk to us. Good. We don't want to talk to them either. We want them to talk to the scientists instead, listen to them, because we are just repeating what they are saying and have been saying for decades. We want you to follow the Paris Agreement and the IPCC reports.

We don't have any other manifests or demands. Just unite behind the science – that is our demand.

When many politicians talk about this school strike for the climate, they talk about almost anything except from the climate crisis.

Many people are trying to make the school strikes a question of whether we are promoting truancy or whether we should go back to school or not. They make up all sorts of conspiracies and call us puppets who cannot think for ourselves. They are desperately trying to remove the focus from the climate crisis and change the subject.

They don't want to talk about it because they know they cannot win this fight. Because they know they haven't done their homework. But we have.

Once you have done your homework you realize that we need new politics.

We need new economics, where everything is based on a rapidly declining and extremely limited remaining carbon budget. But this is not enough. We need a whole new way of thinking.

The political system that you have created is all about competition. You cheat when you can, because all that matters is to win, to get power. That must come to an end. We must stop competing with each other. We need to cooperate and work together and to share the resources of the planet in a fair way.

We need to start living within the planetary boundaries, focus on equity and take a few steps back, for the sake of all living species. We need to protect the biosphere, the air, the oceans, the soil, the forests. This may sound very naive but if you have done your homework, then you know that we don't have any other choice.

We need to focus every inch of our being on climate change. Because if we fail to do so, then all our achievements and progress have been for nothing, and all that will remain of our political leaders' legacy, will be the greatest failure of human history. And they will be remembered as the greatest villains of all time because they have chosen not to listen and not to act. But this does not have to be. There is still time.

According to the IPCC report, we are about 11 years away from being in a position where we set off irreversible chain reaction beyond human control.

To avoid that, unprecedented changes in all aspects of society need to have taken place within this coming decade, including a reduction of our CO² emissions by at least 50 % by the year 2030.

And please note that those numbers do not include the aspect of equity, which is absolutely necessary to make the Paris Agreement work on a global scale. Nor do they include tipping points or feedback loops, like the extremely powerful methane gas released from the thawing arctic permafrost.

They do however include negative emission techniques on huge planetary scale that is yet to be invented. And that many scientists fear we'll never be ready in time and will anyway be impossible to deliver at scale assumed.

We have been told that the EU intends to improve its emission reduction target. In the new target the EU is proposing to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to 45% below 1990's level by 2030.

Some people say that is good or that is ambitious. But this new target is still not enough to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

This target is not sufficient to protect the future for children growing up today. If the EU is to make its fair contributions to stay within the carbon budget for the 2-degree limit, then it needs a minimum of 80% reduction by 2030. And that includes aviation and shipping. So around twice as ambitious as the current proposals.

The actions required are beyond manifestoes or any party politics.

Once again they sweep their mess under the carpet, for our generation to clean up and solve.

Some people say that we are fighting for our future. But that is not true. We are not fighting for our future, we are fighting for everyone's future.

And if you think that we should be in school instead, then we suggest that you take our place in the streets, striking from your work or better yet join us so that we can speed up the process.

And I am sorry but saying everything will be all right while continuing doing nothing at all is just not hopeful to us. In fact, it's the opposite of hope.

And yet this is exactly what you keep doing. You can't just sit around waiting for hope to come. Then you are acting like spoiled irresponsible children.

You don't seem to understand that hope is something you have to earn. And if you still say that we are "wasting valuable lesson time", then let me remind you that our political leaders have wasted decades through denial and inaction.

And since our time is running out, we have decided to take action. We have started to clean up your mess and we will not stop until we are done.

Thank you.

(The speech from 21.2.2019 was documented by the newspaper „Die Welt“ and put on YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGbf_iaQlws . Transcription of the speech and correction of the translation from English to German (per Google Translate) has been done in best knowledge on 24.2.2019 by attorney-at-law Gisela Toussaint, Geigersbergstr. 31, 76227 Karlsruhe).