



## The Commitment of New York

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#MayorsCare Summit on

*Modern Slavery and Climate Change: The Commitment of the Cities*

New Synod Hall, 21 July 2015

Bill de Blasio – Mayor of New York City

Buongiorno a tutti!

Mayors and governors, leaders from cities all over the globe, it is so encouraging, it is so motivating to be with you here today and to be in your company. I would like to extend a special acknowledgment and thanks to Mayor Ignazio Marino, a powerful advocate for justice who is doing so much to help the people, and Mayor, it is a joy for all of us to be in this place where such great history has been made in the past, and I know will be made again, including today.

I humbly give all respect to His Holiness Pope Francis who has awakened people across the globe to the dangers we face as a planet. He has brought us together today in that spirit of action. I think it is fair to say he is the most powerful voice on this earth for all those all over the world whose voices are not being heard, and he has brought the issue of inequality to the fore in this world and has shown how it directly connects to issues of climate change and undermines the stability of all of our societies.

His Holiness did not convene us here to ratify the status quo, but in fact to upend it. The very name of this gathering indicts the resurgent reality of human trafficking and demands that each of our governments act urgently to end this scourge, but His Holiness chose a harsher and a perfectly just term as part of the title, the words “Human Slavery”. Those words should jolt us, they should jolt us into realization that a part of our global history that was supposed to have been in our past is all too alive today and has simply taken another form.

And I will argue there’s another way to think about this conference’s title and it’s consistent with the Pope’s recent encyclical, *Laudato si’*: His Holiness challenges us, he challenges us not to be captives, not to be slavish to consumerism, as citizens to rise above it. He also challenges us not to be captive as leaders to powerful corporate interests. The Encyclical is not a call to arms, it is a call to sanity. It is a reminder that we, as leaders, have a sworn duty to protect, but how can we protect our people if we accept a status quo that is slowly killing our earth?

I humbly submit that we were called here not to be congratulated for whatever progress we’ve made, although it is certainly worthy. We were called here to take *Laudato si’* and give it life, to systematically address the danger of climate change with every tool we have, and it’s increasingly clear that we, the local leaders of the world, have many tools, more than we may have in fact realized, and that we must use them boldly, even as our national governments hesitate.

In my city it has become painfully obvious that we have to set difficult goals for ourselves. The extent of the climate crisis demands it. Any city, any nation, any corporation not straining to reduce emissions simply isn’t doing enough. The facts of this crisis make that self-evident. Our hope is that each of us, and thousands more like us all over the world, will act boldly, and in doing so will jolt our national paradigms and the collective global paradigm.

His Holiness has implicitly demanded that we give new meaning to the phrase, “We will do all within our power”. It’s now a matter of survival. Who in their right mind skimps on the things that allow them to sustain life? How do we justify holding back on any effort that may meaningfully improve the trajectory of climate change? Which political allies or generous financial backers, or vocal constituencies, are more important to us than preserving life for future generations? How good any version of “business as usual” makes sense at this moment in history?

We now ask the same question of nations. Is it not the definition of insanity to propagate governmental policies and consumer habits that propagate the destruction of the earth? And yet somehow expect some other result.

Pope Francis’ Encyclical burns with urgency and demands answers to these questions. It holds individuals accountable for the fate of our planet but it rightly asks the most of governments. So we will remember Rome, we will remember this moment as a time and a place where we weren’t offered soothing, reassuring words, but were in fact pushed by the highest moral authority to take the next step, no matter how challenging it appears to be.

It is my honour to be here speaking on behalf of New York City as we take our next steps for the future. *One New York*, a plan for a strong and just city, has within it ambitious goals to fight both climate change and poverty. As I announced last September at the United Nations Climate Summit, we are committed to an 80% reduction in greenhouse gases by 2050, mirroring the pledge of so many of you present here today, and we're proud to be the largest city in the world to make that commitment and hope that the scale of our effort helps to inspire others to go farther and to be even more ambitious.

Today I'd like to add to all that we are doing in New York. I'd like to announce our next big step to 40 by 30, on our way to 80 by 50, a reduction of our emission levels by 40% by the year 2030. In this we follow the example of our colleague here today, Governor Jerry Brown. We thank him for his leadership, he is a leading voice in our nation, who first set this goal for his state. We're proud to emulate that action, Governor Brown.

We look ahead to Paris, Mayor Hidalgo, the Paris Summit is just months away. We need to see it as the finish line of a sprint. Each of us should take every local action we can in the coming months, as quickly as possible to maximise the chance that our national governments will act boldly when they gather.

Paris has a rich history as a city of revolutions. We will need another revolutionary moment in December, a revolution of decisiveness. It's not an overstatement to say that Paris may constitute our last best hope and for that reason we need to foster the kind of public discourse worthy of such a critical moment. Let's demand of our friends in the media, gathered here and all over the world, that they give the airtime and the column inches to the lead-up to Paris that such a crossing of the Rubicon deserves. It isn't unfair to say that the media gives immeasurably more attention to the results of climate change, meaning our ever more dramatic weather, than to the causes and the solutions. And again when the issue at hand is our survival, we shouldn't tolerate "business as usual", and that includes for those who cover the news.

I conclude with the most helpful and hopeful element of this puzzle: the people, the people we all represent. Their wisdom and their perceptions of our new reality may be the thing that saves us. I learned long ago that the people often lead the leaders, and in recent years I've seen this phenomenon come to life with respect to the change in climate. I've seen it vividly in my hometown. Nearly three years ago, in our city, Hurricane Sandy left 44 dead and thousands lost their homes and their businesses, and this tragedy made the people of New York City understand climate change in a very different way. It became personal, it became real, it was no longer an abstraction.

And in that same city we saw an immense outpouring of focus and determination in 2014. Few thought that the protest march connected to the UN Climate Summit would be that notable, but it ended up being a signal event. Hundreds of thousands marched in the streets of New York and many more in cities around the world. My friends, they weren't deniers, they were demanders, making clear their readiness to act, to sacrifice, to change, and asking the same of us as leaders. It's our job to be as good as them.

Thank you.