

June 25, 2022

United Nations Ocean Conference Special Event:
“Localizing Action For The Ocean – Local & Regional Governments”

- I would like to begin by expressing my sincere gratitude to:
 - The United Nations for hosting this critically important event,
 - Especially 2022 UN Ocean Conference co-hosts, the countries of Portugal and Kenya,
 - And the City of Matosinhos.
- I would also like to thank all the participating groups for their collaboration in arranging the programming for this special event.
- I want to send out a special “Thank You” to:
 - Portuguese Minister of Foreign Affairs, João Gomes Cravinho,
 - Portuguese Secretary of State for the Sea, José Maria Costa,
 - And the Mayor of Matosinhos, Mayor Luisa Maria Neves Salgueiro.
- I am incredibly grateful to have been given this opportunity to discuss our ongoing climate emergency, the urgent need for bold political action, and, lastly, a new initiative for the Atlantic region to help address the existential challenges before us.
- Make no mistake: our planet – and, in particular, our oceans - are in the midst of major crisis.
- According to the IPCC 6th Assessment Report, 2010-2020 was the hottest decade ever recorded, with the highest average global surface temperature increase seen in approximately 125,000 years.
- In our atmosphere, Carbon Dioxide is at a 2 million-year peak.

- Other greenhouse gasses, such as methane and nitrous oxide, are at the highest levels they have been over the past 800,000 years.
- The ocean has taken up more than 90% of the excess heat in our climate system, and since 1993 the rate of ocean warming has more than doubled.
- According to the IPCC “Special Report on The Ocean and Cryosphere” from 2019 - global climate change is drastically reducing the remaining stores of frozen water on earth.
- Every coastal community on earth is in danger from the negative impacts of climate change on our oceans, which threaten our food security, water quality, public health, infrastructure, transportation, tourism, and human societies in general.
- We also know communities further from the coast are impacted by our changing oceans, through extreme weather events and long-term changes in weather patterns.
- And though this existential crisis has the potential to cause unprecedented destruction throughout our world, the magnitude of these effects ----- *still* remain within our control.
- We are the masters of our climate destiny.
- While impressive progress certainly has been achieved, thanks to the tireless efforts of dedicated leaders, so many of whom are here today...
- Our primary obstacle continues to be the lack of political will --- to enact the bold climate policies we need.
- Now - the need for our government leaders to demonstrate the political will to act boldly on climate is *hardly* a “novel” concept.
- At this point, it’s practically a cliché.

- But for all the countless times climate leaders and advocates have pointed to the “lack of political will” as the primary culprit for our collective inaction on this issue....
- Far less often do we *actually talk* about where political will comes from, or how it is established.
- Political will is a combination of successful advocacy achieved through effective communication and, at its core, is about political leadership and taking action – despite the risk of political consequences, for you know you are doing what is right.
- For decades now, IPCC reports have been critically important vehicles for raising awareness regarding the worst effects of our ongoing crisis, and driving global conversations on climate in the right direction.
- I do fear, however, that although these reports have routinely provided invaluable scientific research – a *significant* gap still remains between this data and the specific policies needed to address the urgent issue before us.
- We need to get those policy reports off the shelf, and use them to design the laws we need to enact.
- But bridging that gap? Easier said, than done.
- While Massachusetts, like California, has a long history of environmental leadership, our statewide effort to reduce carbon emissions began in earnest after the release of Al Gore’s documentary, “An Inconvenient Truth” in 2006.
- Official political action on emission reduction started in 2007, with the establishment of the Standing Senate Committee on Global Warming and Climate Change - the first committee of its kind established under state law in the U.S.

- This committee took on the responsibility of examining the scientific evidence behind climate change, and the policy options at our disposal - first, at a number of public hearings at the State House, and then at regional hearings throughout the state.
- This critical feedback from scientific experts, policymakers, and civil society ultimately resulted in the creation of the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2008.
- At that time, this landmark legislation implemented ambitious emission reduction requirements of achieving a 25% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels by 2020 and an 80% reduction by 2050.
- After passing in the Senate, however, the bill then stalled in the House of Representatives due to opposition from oil and gas industry advocates, and a number of business groups.
- In order to counter rhetoric from the fossil fuel lobby, we then released a report entitled “*The Cost of Inaction: Climate Change in the Commonwealth*” detailing the myriad of negative economic effects that climate change would bring our coastal state, if left unaddressed.
- Ultimately, this advocacy effort was successful, and the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2008 passed just minutes before midnight on the final day of legislative session of 2008.
- I am also very pleased to say, earlier this session in 2021, the Massachusetts Legislature successfully enacted a climate bill with updated language now requiring Net Zero Emissions by 2050.
- The point is, in order to act swiftly and strategically on climate, legislators throughout the world need best practice policy solutions that they can implement without an overly prolonged process.
- We have no time to waste!

- Apart from clear information about climate impacts and solutions, legislators also *especially* need information linking the benefits of climate action to their pre-existing legislative priorities – such as job creation, economic growth, and cost savings, and improved public health.
- Years ago, several members of the Massachusetts Legislature – myself included – had the opportunity to travel here to Europe and witness the deployment of offshore wind first-hand.
- Simply by showcasing the clean energy transition to my legislative colleagues in-person, the trip I’m referencing has repeatedly proven itself to have been an invaluable step in passing on the knowledge to legislative decisionmakers that has advanced our statewide decarbonization policies.
- Since that time, Massachusetts has successfully conducted 3 separate solicitations, and procured a total of approximately 3200 Megawatts of offshore wind energy.
- These initiatives are expected to provide Massachusetts \$1.4 - \$2.1 Billion in total economic benefit and create 2,200-3,000 direct jobs for construction and installation alone.
- With all three solicitations combined, these initiatives will eliminate roughly 4.2 million tons of carbon emissions annually - the equivalent of taking 900,000 cars off the road.
- When it came to enacting offshore wind legislation in Massachusetts, advocates wisely focused on the beneficial aspects of offshore wind that would attract the greatest level of support among legislators and their constituents.
- *Thousands* of new jobs. *Billions* in ratepayers savings. Improved public health, and cleaner air for our residents.

- *These* are the type of talking points that really matter to legislators, and equip them with the tools they need to take bold action --- and exercise political will.
- Political will, established through effective advocacy and communication -- - is undoubtedly the key to enacting climate adaptation, resiliency measures, and mitigation policies that work.
- Unfortunately, this feedback process has historically taken far too much time – precious time, we simply no longer have.
- Despite isolated victories on climate strategy throughout the Atlantic coastal region, the exchange of information between scientific experts, innovators, stakeholders, and policymakers must *rapidly accelerate* --- to match the pace of our *rapidly accelerating* climate catastrophe.
- Historically, these efforts have been proven most effective at the subnational level.
- For decades, subnational governments throughout the Atlantic region have served as cradles of innovation for bold climate policy solutions.
- In the absence of national climate policy action, they have risen to the occasion and achieved critical progress in the enactment of decarbonization and sustainability legislation.
- Of course, the leading American states owe a major debt of gratitude to several countries within the European Union who have *truly* paved the way for progress across the world.
- Recently, the “Green Futures Index 2022” – an MIT report ranking 76 different nations from around the world based on their ability to develop a sustainable, low-carbon future - recognized many of these pioneers including: Denmark (#2), the Netherlands (#3), and France (#7).

- And in a manner similar to the European offshore wind sector expanding into Massachusetts, subnational climate action can often trigger a “positive” domino effect among regional competitors.
- Following the successful implementation of offshore wind policy in Massachusetts, neighboring states in the Northeast Region - Rhode Island, Connecticut, and now New York and New Jersey – initiated their own procurement policies.
- This increased market activity has attracted new developers as market participants, while also opening the door to interstate partnerships on procurement and renewable energy collaboration.
- When it comes to preventing the worst effects of climate change, we will need to implement the full spectrum of strategies, engaging experts in every relevant sector.
- To that end, I would like to formally announce today, the development of an exciting new initiative - the Transatlantic Alliance for Subnational Climate Action.
- The Transatlantic Alliance for Subnational Climate Action will be a private non-profit NGO foundation aimed at accomplishing the imperative goal of informing climate and ocean policy solutions and advocating for best practices.
- It is an alliance of legislators & policymakers, leading scientific & academic experts, clean energy sector developers & innovators, climate advocates, & community voices - brought together to inform and enact bold climate solutions.
- Our central mission is to empower subnational political leaders to successfully achieve rapid, region-wide decarbonization, secure a sustainable future, and prevent the worst effects of our global climate emergency.

- The Alliance will include leaders from the scientific community and higher education who are conducting critical research on the impacts of climate change and cutting-edge adaptation, resiliency, and mitigation technology.
- Experts from organizations such as the Atlantic International Research Center here in Portugal.
- For those of you are unfamiliar, the “AIR” Centre is an international collaborative that promotes integrative approaches to space, climate, ocean, and energy in the Atlantic.
- Within the past several weeks, I have had the opportunity to visit the AIR Centre and meet with many of the individuals behind this powerful data and research “engine”.
- And I am confident that the AIR Centre - and other organizations like it, so many that are here today - have the capacity to provide critically important information on the latest climate and ocean data and research.
- The Transatlantic Alliance for Subnational Climate Action will collaborate with leading private sector innovators in the development of clean energy and climate resilient technology as well.
- These developers are actively working on honing their approaches and developing better pathways for decarbonization and sustainability, and their input will continue to be instrumental.
- In order to most effectively advance the policy changes needed, the initiative will specifically focus on communicating with policymakers about the urgency of our ongoing crisis, the dire consequences of inaction, and the invaluable benefits of embracing a swift and strategic clean energy transition.

- I am humbled by the tremendous positive feedback and interest in this initiative, including leaders and representatives from every one of the various sectors I have mentioned.
- And I remain confident that with a more efficient exchange on relevant data, technological developments, and best practices among government leaders – this new Transatlantic Alliance will achieve unprecedented progress in the enactment of meaningful climate and ocean policy throughout our region.
- As they saying goes, this initiative aims to “think globally and act locally” by creating a Transatlantic Alliance for this region of the world.
- And we must - for if we fail to enact bold policies capable of preventing the worst effects of climate change, the consequences will be *far* too great.
- As United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres recently said at the conclusion of COP26 in Glasgow, referring to the level of progress achieved at the conference:

“The approved texts are a compromise. They reflect the interests, the conditions, the contradictions, and the state of political will in the world today.

“They take important steps, but unfortunately the collective political will, was not *enough* political will, to overcome some deep contradictions.

“Our fragile planet is hanging by a thread. We are still knocking on the door of climate catastrophe. It is time to go into emergency mode — or our chance of reaching net zero will itself, be ‘zero’.”
- In closing, I would like to invite all those interested in participating in the Transatlantic Alliance for Subnational Climate Action to visit / contact:
(617) 286-2542