

## SPEECH AT DIHAB 15 MARCH 2023

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here in Dubai, and a privilege attending the DIHAD2023.

Yet, if it is an honor to be here today – I also feel strongly that it is an important responsibility, and a sincere commitment.

The responsibility for not only expressing our deepest concern about the state of our planet, and to share best practices on the use of new technologies - but most importantly for continuing to act, to mobilize further, and to advocate at all levels - and this with an utmost sense of urgency.

Caring for the planet – the role of technologies – is the topic of this panel. As the representative of a Child Protection Organisation, I cannot talk about new technologies before not talking about the people. Caring for the planet means first Caring for the people, for the future generations, first and foremost for the children who will be the leaders of tomorrow!

When COVID 19 arrived and put the world to a standstill, we visibly realized the impact of human activities on our planet: skies cleared up, mountains were seen again at long ranges (like the Himalaya seen from Punjab State), animals came closer to our cities. This sudden and striking change called upon us, and voices were heard all over on “the world after will not be the same anymore”, a call for not returning to the status quo ante Covid, a call for a drastic change in our consumption methods, our use of energy, etc...

I am afraid that our consumption has not yet evolved for the better : pollution is hiding again the sun in most major cities, and the treasury of our society, the children, continue to suffer from effects of climate change. More, the pressure to act on the climate continues to be unproportional to the wealth of societies. The most advanced and largest firms are unequally engaged while the pressure is further mounting on the most vulnerable people on the planet, again with the children on the first line.

While new technologies are without any doubt extremely important to collect data, allowing then evidence-based analysis and for taking effective and efficient measures, such as impactful solutions in sea cleaning, water irrigation systems, renewable energy solutions, digitalization of aid services ..., caring for the planet means taking care of the people.

So I want us to listen to the people and involve them in any decision-making impacting directly their lives and their future.

*As 16-year-old climate activist Aniva from the Pacific Islands said to us “We need to be heard, we are the future of the planet, we are the ones who will live with the consequences of decisions, either action or inaction, that are made today. It would be unfair and short-sighted to exclude young people from these vital conversations that determine our future and the future of our world. Children and young people offer different perspectives, solutions and ideas that are crucial in these decision-making processes and that must be heard”.*

Children are and can be powerful agents for change and should be heard.

Now what is the path to walk when talking about caring for the planet?

- 1) We have all evidence available through accurate data and scientific studies.
- 2) We have collectively a great knowledge and an enormous creativity and innovative capacity.
- 3) And we have both, the current and new technology as we heard during the last three days and we have the global financial means.

What is now needed is a sincere political will and courage of the world leaders – public and private alike - to take action, to take systemic measures to change the course of action, and to take it now. The good thing is that some leaders are genuinely engaged to push the political agenda. And others hide themselves behind longer term agendas. I believe that there is no other way to act now if we want to rescue our world and to hand it over to the future generations still in good shape.

You have understood that I am here today to be the voice of the future generation, the children of today who will lead the world of tomorrow. So allow me a brief word on my organization  
FOUNDATION Terre des hommes

Terre des hommes is the largest Swiss Child Protection NGO, founded 62 years ago and count over 2300 staff members to date. We work in three main domains: health for children and motherhood, migration, and access to juvenile justice, and this in more than 30 countries, mainly in West Africa, Middle East, Eastern Europe and Asia.

Child participation and empowerment is key to our engagement and working in partnership with local organizations is our strategic approach in our projects. We work at the systemic level for durable solutions, and provide direct services to children, families and communities.

For my organization, and for me as a mother, the climate crisis is a child rights crisis. Climate change has stark, immediate, and long-term implications for the full range of children's rights. Every day, millions of children are experiencing the devastating impacts of climate change. According to UNICEF, no less than 1 billion children are highly exposed to its most direct risks: water crisis, health crisis, education crisis, protection crisis ...

Let me share some figures published by UNICEF's Children Climate Risk Index:

- 920 Million children are exposed to water scarcity
- 400 Million children are currently highly exposed to cyclones
- 330 Million children are exposed to river flooding
- 2 Billion children are highly exposed to air pollution

If no specific urgent prevention and redress measures are taken now, children themselves expect that this is only going to get worse in their lifetime and for future generations. And if we are here today, it's we are already convinced that new technologies can play a crucial role in preventive action and corrective measures.

My organization is not an environmental organization but a child protection organization. I would like to share one example out of many showing how we use technologies in creating a greater impact on the health of children.

We developed digital health in Burkina Faso, what we call the Integrated e-Diagnostic Approach, to help improve the impact on children and mothers' health care. Today, this tool covers about 85% of the primary health care facilities in Burkina Faso. It allows for improved individual diagnosis, appropriate treatments, health data analysis at the ministry of health level and allows online training for medical staff. Yesterday speakers were talking about a triple A: Accessible, Available, Affordable: And I believe that our digital health system responds to these three criteria. We deployed it to Mali and India.

This example shows that new technologies in humanitarian action bring a real change to the life of people, likewise they can contribute to concrete solutions to save our planet.

At the institutional level, to care for the planet means for my organization to minimize our carbon footprint and energy consumption, while bringing a meaningful response to children in need. This is an institutional responsibility and our legacy to the planet. So we embarked on reducing our carbon foot print by 50% in 2030, with simple, systematic, individual and collective measures that will be enshrined in our "way we do business". Such a journey is even cost effective. , and if done by all actors around the globe would make a huge impact for the good of our planet. And of course, new technologies can support us in this endeavor and fast track the necessary changes

Allow me to give the last word in my intervention to the children. In this little video, they will speak to us about what they are experiencing and their expectations from leaders.

Thank you.

(Show the video of children speaking on climate change effect)