

Nobel Peace Prize Speech continues

Tennessee. Cordell Hull was described by Franklin Roosevelt as the “Father of the United Nations.” He was an inspiration and hero to my own father, who followed Hull in the Congress and the U.S. Senate and in his commitment to world peace and global cooperation.

My parents spoke often of Hull, always in tones of reverence and admiration. Eight weeks ago, when you announced this prize, the deepest emotion I felt was when I saw the headline in my hometown paper that simply noted I had won the same prize that Cordell Hull had won. In that moment, I knew what my father and mother would have felt were they alive.

Just as Hull’s generation found moral authority in rising to solve the world crisis caused by fascism, so too can we find our greatest opportunity in rising to solve the climate crisis. In the Kanji characters used in both Chinese and Japanese, “crisis” is written with two symbols, the first meaning “danger,” the second “opportunity.” By facing and removing the danger of the climate crisis, we have the opportunity to gain the moral authority and vision to vastly increase our own capacity to solve other crises that have been too long ignored.

We must understand the connections between the climate crisis and the afflictions of poverty, hunger, HIV-Aids and other pandemics. As these problems are linked, so too must be their solutions. We must begin by making the common resource of the global environment the central organizing principle of the world community.

Fifteen years ago, I made that case at the *Earth Summit* in Rio de Janeiro. Ten years ago, I presented it in Kyoto. This week, I will urge the delegates in Bali to adopt a bold mandate for a treaty that establishes a universal global cap on emissions and uses the market in emissions trading to efficiently allocate resources to the most effective opportunities for speedy reductions.

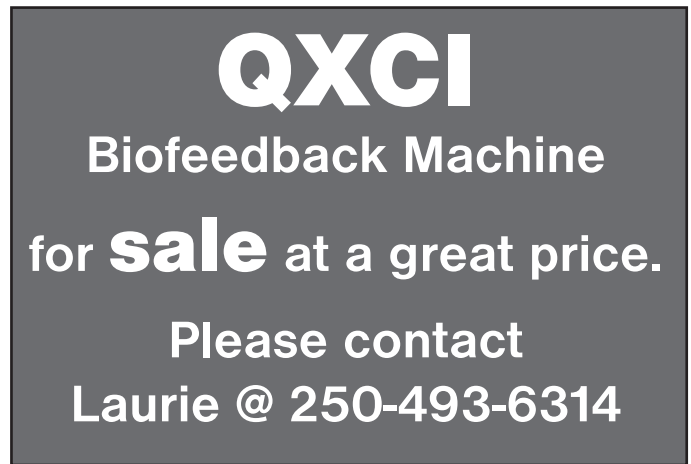
This treaty should be ratified and brought into effect everywhere in the world by the beginning of 2010 – two years sooner than presently contemplated. The pace of our response must be accelerated to match the accelerating pace of the crisis itself.

Heads of state should meet early next year to review what was accomplished in Bali and take personal responsibility for addressing this crisis. It is not unreasonable to ask, given the gravity of our circumstances, that these heads of state meet every three months until the treaty is completed.

We also need a moratorium on the construction of any new generating facility that burns coal without the capacity to safely trap and store carbon dioxide.

And most important of all, we need to put a price on carbon – with a CO² tax that is then rebated back to the people, progressively, according to the laws of each nation, in ways that shift the burden of taxation from employment to pollution. This is by far the most effective and simplest way to accelerate solutions to this crisis.

The world needs an alliance – especially of those nations that weigh heaviest in the scales where earth is in the balance. I salute Europe and Japan for the steps they’ve taken in recent years to meet the challenge, and the new government in



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Australia, which has made solving the climate crisis its priority.

But the outcome will be decisively influenced by two nations that are now failing to do enough: the United States and China. While India is also growing fast in importance, it should be absolutely clear that it is the two largest CO² emitters – most of all, my own country – that will need to make the boldest moves, or stand accountable before history for their failure to act.

Both countries should stop using the other’s behavior as an excuse for stalemate and instead develop an agenda for mutual survival in a shared global environment.

These are the last few years of decision, but they can be the first years of a bright and hopeful future if we do what we must. No one should believe a solution will be found without effort, without cost, without change. Let us acknowledge that if we wish to redeem squandered time and speak again with moral authority, then these are the hard truths:

The way ahead is difficult. The outer boundary of what we currently believe is feasible is still far short of what we actually must do. Moreover, between here and there, across the unknown, falls the shadow. That is just another way of saying that we have to expand the boundaries of what is possible. In the words of the Spanish poet, Antonio Machado, “Pathwalker, there is no path. You must make the path as you walk.”

We are standing at the most fateful fork in that path. So I want to end as I began, with a vision of two futures – each a palpable possibility – and with a prayer that we will see with vivid clarity the necessity of choosing between those two futures, and the urgency of making the right choice now.

The great Norwegian playwright, Henrik Ibsen, wrote, “One of these days, the younger generation will come knocking at my door.” The future is knocking at our door right now. Make no mistake, the next generation will ask us one of two questions. Either they will ask: “What were you thinking; why didn’t you act?” Or they will ask instead: “How did you find the moral courage to rise and successfully resolve a crisis that so many said was impossible to solve?”

We have everything we need to get started, save perhaps political will, but political will is a renewable resource.

So let us renew it, and say together: “We have a purpose. We are many. For this purpose we will rise, and we will act.”