**Planet`s future**

BY C H R I S T I A N T U R N E R 2020-12-13

WE are at a critical moment for the future of our planet. Temperatures are rising, floodwaters are spreading and crops are failing.

Pakistan remains the fifth most vulnerable country in the world to climate change despite only contributing one per cent of global emissions. For Pakistan, climate change could be catastrophic. It will mean glaciers melting. Pakistan has more glacial ice than any country in the world outside the Polar regions. The glacial outflow from lakes has risen five times since 2015 as ice melts.

The summer monsoon flooding which hit Karachi and parts of Sindh was a stark reminder of the tragic consequences of climate change. Temperatures rising as a result of climate change are having an impact on rainfall patterns, making some areas drier and some wetter. All this in a country which is reliant on the Indus River Basin for more than 65pc of its irrigation. It will ultimately mean more pressure for water on the very poorest in society.

Pledges to protect our planet have been made across the world, but all of us must do much more. Next year, the UK will host the UN`s climate change conference, COP26, in Glasgow. We will use our co-presidency with Italy to make sure the priorities of the most vulnerable countries are heard and acted on.

As part of the preparation for COP26, Prime Minister Boris Johnson co-hosted a Climate Ambition Summit yesterday to mark the fiveyear anniversary of the Paris Agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. World leaders at the summit came forward with more ambitious commitments.

Prime Minister Imran Khan spoke to those leaders to set out Pakistan`s commitment and leadership on nature-based solutions. But then he went further and took the bold step of announcing a moratorium on new coal power plants. This ground-breaking commitment from Pakistan was a powerful message to other countries. It shows the world there does not need to be a choice between economic growth and protecting the environment for future generations.

The cost of renewable energy is falling quickly, and over its lifetime will be cheaper than coal. So Pakistan`s ambitious transition to renewables 60pc by 2030, including hydropower will lead to cheaper electricity. A recent World Bank report showed that the rapid adoption of renewable energy in Pakistan would lower costs, improve energy security and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This should help Pakistan save up to $5 billion over the next 20 years.

The UK is leading the fight against climate change. We were the first country to enshrine in law a commitment to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. The UK also has ambitious renewablestargets, and a commitment to cut emissions at the fastest rate of any major economy so far. Last month, Prime Minister Boris Johnson committed us to a new green industrial revolution, which will support up to 250,000 British jobs by 2030. The plan has the potential to deliver over £40 billion of private investment in the next 10 years, helping us develop innovative technologies and make strides in cutting emissions across energy, transport and buildings. It also creates a roadmap of further steps the UK will be taking to reduce emissions in the coming decades, encouraging businesses, organisations and nations around the world to do the same. At the same time, the UK has committed to end direct aid for overseas fossil fuel projects.

Last week, Pakistan joined the first meeting of the Energy Transition Council, chaired by the UK COP26 president Alok Sharma and the UN. The council will help ensure countries like Pakistan access investment and scale up renewable energy. As part of this, the UK has committed over £11.6bn ininternational climate unance over the next five years, and will invest £13 million in Pakistan this year on tackling climate change. This includes supporting local communities adapt to climate change, improving resilience through emergency disasterplanning, and helping to increase renewable energy usage and improving energy efficiency.

In October, when I visited the northern areas of Pakistan, I was lef t awestruck by the beauty of the area. I saw for myself the devastating impact of climate change on fragile and remote communities, and how UK aid is working in partnership with local agencies to make communities more resilient. Pakistan has one of the world`s most beautiful landscapes. The potential for global tourism is immense. I want people to experience Pakistan`s beauty for themselves. The important arrival of Virgin Atlantic this week is yet another step to help open up the country to more visitors. The UK and Pakistan with our historic ties and close international friendship are natural partners to secure a lower carbon future for the world.

This world is a gif t to us all. Protecting it is all our responsibility. Our future generations are depending on all of us to get this right.

There isn`t a plan B.  The writer is the British High Commissioner to Pakistan.