

Minister Cramer at the Club of Rome's Global Assembly

My friends and colleagues,

As Minister of the Environment I am 'on the road to Copenhagen' almost every day. Therefore I see myself more as a Minister for Climate Change. And change is what we need! Here in Amsterdam we will send a powerful message. We are here to work on the Amsterdam Declaration, which I will carry to the negotiations in Copenhagen, as your ambassador. And as a friend of the Club of Rome, to which I owe so much.

Like so many of you, I was inspired by the Club of Rome to pursue a green career. I read *The Limits to Growth* as a young biology student in 1972.

After I had digested its importance, I couldn't wait to do my part to help save the planet. I have no regrets that I went for green - it has been a lifelong challenge and adventure.

One of the fascinating concepts in *The Limits to Growth* is the equilibrium scenario. Not only did the Club of Rome forecast global overshoot and collapse between 2025 and 2050. It also gave us a promising description of the sustainable economy: the equilibrium scenario. I asked the Netherlands Environment Assessment Agency to produce a report entitled 'Growing within limits' especially for the Global Assembly of the Club of Rome. I asked them to present model calculations of what is possible, feasible and desirable. In other words, how can we achieve a sustainable economy?

This is an urgent question and the answers are promising. But there is a contradiction here: why do we ask ourselves whether it is in our economic interest to save the planet? I have some answers, but I'd like to stipulate two conditions first.

To begin with, we need to revise the policies that are currently driving the world to squander and deplete the earth's natural resources. Secondly, we must drastically increase energy and resource efficiency. Most experts consider this a particularly difficult task, because of the entrenched policies and practices that

reinforce inefficiency. The array of potential and necessary measures can be reduced to two top priorities.

Our first priority should be to stop further losses of biodiversity by halting the expansion of agricultural land and the erosion and desertification of arable land. Secondly, we need to decarbonise the energy system. Both of these priorities can be achieved at a cost of 1 to 2 per cent of GDP by 2050, according to the Environment Assessment Agency report.

To put this into perspective, this would mean an increase in global GDP of 225 per cent instead of 240 per cent in the coming forty years. Even without climate policy, our energy investments would be massive. But with a strong climate policy, they will be 30 per cent higher than in a business-as-usual scenario. But: if we fail to take action, we will pay an even higher price in the future.

We must realise that there is a paradox in taking GDP as an indicator.

GDP accounts not only for the production of goods and services, but also for the destruction, waste and depletion of resources. As Paul Hawken said earlier this year: 'At present we are stealing the future, selling it in the present, and calling it GDP'.

So, in exchange for a slight decline in GDP growth by 2050 we can expect to reap extremely positive results. Particularly if we adapt our method of calculating GDP to the newest insights on measuring real human welfare. We have to abandon the compass that is guiding us into oblivion and design an indicator that goes beyond GDP.

My friends, I would like to return to the two top priorities I identified a moment ago. Our first priority should be to prevent terrestrial biodiversity losses while ensuring food security.

Biodiversity is declining severely all over the world. Pavan Sukhdev and his team are doing impressive work with UNEP. It will be presented to the UN General Assembly today, and here at the Assembly by Ashok Khosla, IUCN President and Co-President of the Club of Rome. The economic costs of ecosystem destruction are high, and so are the risks.

Biodiversity is lost when forests are depleted and cleared for charcoal, firewood, timber, urbanisation and agriculture. To preserve biodiversity adequate protection regimes must be established for ecosystems and nature reserves. It is crucial to decrease pressure from competing demands for land use.

The problem is clear: food production has to increase to feed another three billion people in 2050. Without additional action, this could imply an enormous increase in land use. The technology to increase food-production efficiency exists, and is crucial. Post-harvest losses of agricultural produce are in the order of 30 per cent, so it is not extra land that we need, but expertise. And investment.

Moreover, dietary change to low meat consumption can count for the reduction of land use of another 16 million square kilometres: an area about the size of Russia.

But what if we fail? Nature is not neutral. Nature is the source of all life and of all economic activity. Our survival depends on it. Destroying the planet is easy and perhaps profitable. Saving it is wise, civilised, responsible and difficult.

As elements of the equilibrium economy, rescuing biodiversity and ensuring food security receive far too little political attention. An effective international conservation strategy is urgently needed. Comparable to the international Climate change strategy, we need a global strategy on combating the food crisis. When we do not act now, 40% of all plant and animal species will be extinct in 2050. A speed without precedent in world history.

One of the key challenges is to cultivate an international institutional setting that values the protection and maintenance of biodiversity. Another is to develop means of financing biodiversity protection in low-income countries in a way that benefits local resource users.

Fortunately, the fight against deforestation is part of the Copenhagen negotiations on combating climate change: the second top priority. This December we need to agree internationally on an ambitious strategy to ensure the sustainability of energy supplies for the future. In Copenhagen we have to turn the age of stupid into the age of wisdom. Decarbonising the energy system

is an essential condition for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and limiting global warming to two degrees Celsius.

The outlook for a Copenhagen agreement is both promising and grim. There are enormous stumbling blocks; I need not repeat them here. But as minister for the environment I will do everything in my power to ensure that a deal is made. And many fellow environment ministers are just as eager as I am to reach an ambitious agreement. We cannot afford to delay - we need to start solving the climate crisis today, not tomorrow. There is no plan B!

The rich and developed countries should be leading the charge. We have to acknowledge that our prosperity, our development, our wealth have their roots in a century of uncontrolled emissions. But developing countries need to act too, especially those that have rapidly growing economies: China, India and Brazil. This has to be a collective international effort. Together we can turn the tide. President Kennedy said that he was an idealist without illusions. That is how I see Copenhagen. Fighting climate change requires political and personal conviction, and a strong belief in the power and ideals of international cooperation and solidarity. That conviction will be essential in Copenhagen. I firmly believe that a deal in Copenhagen is not only necessary, but truly within reach. Let's seize this historic opportunity and make it happen.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I was both shocked and fascinated when I read *The Limits to Growth* back in 1972. The famous 'standard run' scenario was shown on television, with the narrator describing the curves. And I remember his words: 'By 2100, mankind will then largely have vanished from the planet'.

Recent updates show that the figures and calculations from 1972 were accurate. In fact, when the graphs based on the 1972 data are superimposed on curves representing actual developments, the accuracy is astounding.

We know that a shared commitment is the only path to a sustainable future. International cooperation is the key to an ambitious Copenhagen deal. And we need this same collective sense of urgency to tackle the food crisis and

biodiversity losses. Integrated policies are needed to achieve both climate and biodiversity goals. For policies to be effective they must set long-term targets and be strictly enforced and predictable, as stated in the report 'Growing within limits'.

The current economic crisis has given us an opportunity for reflection.

Economic recovery has to be the beginning of a new, global golden age, in which climate change is reversed, biodiversity restored and poverty eradicated. Some are calling it the Green New Deal. I am confident that we are ready to enter a new era, in which we grow within limits. There is no other option for the survival of mankind: sustainability has to be an integral part of our production and consumption patterns.

The Amsterdam Declaration conveys a dramatic message of warning, but it also tells us what is possible. We can do it.

Club of Rome, thank you. You identified and put the spotlight on humankind's predicament. And more than that. You inspired me and many, many others to take collective action. And to create an environmentally conscious movement representing all layers of society. I firmly believe that we can only transit to a sustainable economy through such a collective action. Now it is up to all of us to implement the solutions. And of course I will do my part. Thank you!