

Donald J. Trump and Greta Thunberg at Davos

President Donald J. Trump's speech at the 2020 World Economic Forum, Davos, Switzerland, on January 21 was mostly concerned with celebrating the strong U.S. economy achieved under his administration. One section of it, however, briefly touched on the Forum's theme of sustainability, announcing U.S. participation in the One Trillion Trees Initiative. More broadly, Trump decried alarmist views about the future and the associated pessimism. "Prophets of doom," he observed, had "predicted an overpopulation crisis in the 1960s, mass starvation in the '70s, and an end of oil in the 1990s." What such pessimists refused to recognize is that "a growing and vibrant market economy focused on the future" will be "enough to overcome any challenge—any challenge by far."

Also attending the Forum was the Swedish teenager and climate change activist Greta Thunberg. She spoke later on the same day as President Trump, at an event sponsored by the Forum and The New York Times. Rejecting the advice not to panic, she called for urgent action to hold global warming below the 1.5°C limit aimed for in the 2015 Paris Agreement. "Planting trees is good, of course, but it's nowhere near enough of what is needed and it cannot replace real mitigation and rewilding nature." There must be radical cuts to carbon emissions, not least by complete divestment from fossil fuels.

Trump's speech is found at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements>; Thunberg's remarks are at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/21/climate/greta-thunberg-davos-transcript.html>.

Extract from Remarks by President Trump at the World Economic Forum, Davos, January 21, 2020

This is not a time for pessimism; this is a time for optimism. Fear and doubt is not a good thought process because this is a time for tremendous hope and joy and optimism and action.

But to embrace the possibilities of tomorrow, we must reject the perennial prophets of doom and their predictions of the apocalypse. They are the heirs of yesterday's foolish fortune-tellers—and I have them and you have them, and we all have them, and they want to see us do badly, but we don't let that happen. They predicted an overpopulation crisis in the 1960s, mass starvation in the '70s, and an end of oil in the 1990s. These alarmists always demand the same thing: absolute power to dominate, transform, and control every aspect of our lives.

We will never let radical socialists destroy our economy, wreck our country, or eradicate our liberty. America will always be the proud, strong, and unyielding bastion of freedom.

In America, we understand what the pessimists refuse to see: that a growing and vibrant market economy focused on the future lifts the human spirit and excites creativity strong enough to overcome any challenge—any challenge by far.

Speech by Climate Activist Greta Thunberg at Davos, January 21 2020

One year ago I came to Davos and told you that our house is on fire. I said I wanted you to panic. I've been warned that telling people to panic about the climate crisis is a very dangerous thing to do. But don't worry. It's fine. Trust me, I've done this before and I can assure you it doesn't lead to anything.

And, for the record, when we children tell you to panic we're not telling you to go on like before. We're not telling you to rely on technologies that don't even exist today at scale and that science says perhaps never will.

We are not telling you to keep talking about reaching "net zero emissions" or "carbon neutrality" by cheating and fiddling around with numbers. We are not telling you to "offset your emissions" by just paying someone else to plant trees in places like Africa while at the same time forests like the Amazon are being slaughtered at an infinitely higher rate.

Planting trees is good, of course, but it's nowhere near enough of what is needed and it cannot replace real mitigation and rewilding nature.

Let's be clear. We don't need a "low carbon economy." We don't need to "lower emissions." Our emissions have to stop if we are to have a chance to stay below the 1.5-degree target. And, until we have the technologies that at scale can put our emissions to minus, then we must forget about net zero. We need real zero.

Because distant net zero emission targets will mean absolutely nothing if we just continue to ignore the carbon dioxide budget—that applies for today, not distant future dates. If high emissions continue like now even for a few years, that remaining budget will soon be completely used up.

The fact that the U.S.A. is leaving the Paris accord seems to outrage and worry everyone, and it should. But the fact that we're all about to fail the commitments you signed up for in the Paris Agreement doesn't seem to bother the people in power even the least.

Any plan or policy of yours that doesn't include radical emission cuts at the source, starting today, is completely insufficient for meeting the 1.5-degree or well-below-2-degrees commitments of the Paris Agreement.

And again, this is not about right or left. We couldn't care less about your party politics. From a sustainability perspective, the right, the left as well as the center have all failed. No political ideology or economic structure has been able to tackle the climate and environmental emergency and create a cohesive and sustainable world. Because that

world, in case you haven't noticed, is currently on fire.

You say children shouldn't worry. You say: "Just leave this to us. We will fix this, we promise we won't let you down. Don't be so pessimistic."

And then, nothing. Silence. Or something worse than silence. Empty words and promises which give the impression that sufficient action is being taken.

All the solutions are obviously not available within today's societies. Nor do we have the time to wait for new technological solutions to become available to start drastically reducing our emissions. So, of course the transition isn't going to be easy. It will be hard. And unless we start facing this now together, with all cards on the table, we won't be able to solve this in time.

In the days running up to the 50th anniversary of the World Economic Forum, I joined a group of climate activists demanding that you, the world's most powerful and influential business and political leaders, begin to take the action needed.

We demand at this year's World Economic Forum, participants from all companies, banks, institutions and governments:

Immediately halt all investments in fossil fuel exploration and extraction.

Immediately end all fossil fuel subsidies.

And immediately and completely divest from fossil fuels.

We don't want these things done by 2050, 2030 or even 2021. We want this done now.

It may seem like we're asking for a lot. And you will of course say that we are naïve. But this is just the very minimum amount of effort that is needed to start the rapid sustainable transition.

So either you do this or you're going to have to explain to your children why you are giving up on the 1.5-degree target. Giving up without even trying. Well I'm here to tell you that, unlike you, my generation will not give up without a fight.

The facts are clear, but they're still too uncomfortable for you to address. You just leave it because you think it's too depressing and people will give up. But people will not give up. You are the ones who are giving up.

Last week I met with Polish coal miners who lost their jobs because their mine was

closed. And even they had not given up. On the contrary, they seem to understand the fact that we need to change more than you do.

I wonder, what will you tell your children was the reason to fail and leave them facing a climate chaos that you knowingly brought upon them? That it seemed so bad for the

economy that we decided to resign the idea of securing future living conditions without even trying?

Our house is still on fire. Your inaction is fueling the flames by the hour. And we are telling you to act as if you loved your children above all else.

2019 Population Data from China's National Bureau of Statistics

There is wide interest in the course of population growth in China following the relaxation of restrictions on second births in 2016. Official data for 2019, just released, show a lower total number of births than in 2018, continuing the downward trend over the last three years. The reported 2019 crude birth rate of 10.48 per 1000 is slightly lower than the UN's estimates for China in 2015–2019 (average 11.9) and 2020–2024 (average 10.6) published in the latest World Population Prospects, suggesting that the UN's currently estimated and projected total fertility rates for these two quinquennia (1.69 and 1.70) may be on the high side. China's total population is estimated to be still edging upward, but with continuing below-replacement fertility the peak will soon be reached—likely earlier than the UN's date of 2031.

[From a press release of the National Bureau of Statistics of China, January 17, 2020:]

Population grew steadily with continuous growth of urbanization rate

By the end of 2019, the total population of mainland China was 1,400.05 million (including the population of 31 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities, and servicemen in CPLA; but not including residents in Hong Kong SAR, Macao SAR and Taiwan Province and overseas Chinese), an increase of 4.67 million over that at the end of 2018. In 2019, the number of births was 14.65 million and the birth rate was 10.48 per thousand; the number of deaths was 9.98 million with a death rate of 7.14 per thousand; the natural growth rate was 3.34 per thousand. In terms of gender, the male population was 715.27 million, and the female population was 684.78 million; the sex ratio of the total population was 104.45 (the female is 100). Population at the working

age of 16–59 was 896.40 million, accounting for 64.0 percent of the total population; population aged 60 and over was 253.88 million, which was 18.1 percent of the total population; population aged 65 and over was 176.03 million, accounting for 12.6 percent of the total population. In terms of urban–rural structure, the permanent residents in urban areas was 848.43 million, an increase of 17.06 million over the end of 2018; and the permanent residents in rural areas was 551.62 million, a decrease of 12.39 million. The proportion of the urban population to the total population (urbanization rate) was 60.60 percent, 1.02 percentage points higher than that at the end of 2018. The population who reside in areas other than their household registration and have been away from there for over 6 months reached 280 million, which was 6.13 million less than that at the end of the previous year. Specifically, the floating population* stood at 236 million, or 5.15 million less than that at the end of 2018.

*Note: Floating population refers to the population who live in places other than their household registration excluding those with current residence different from the place of their household registration but still in the same city. Population who live in places other than their household registration but still in the same city refer to those whose current residences are different from the registered towns or streets in the same district or in different districts but still in the same municipality or prefecture-level city.

[Report from *Xinhua*, January 19, 2020:]

Birthrate on mainland hits record low last year

The birthrate on the Chinese mainland reached a record low last year, figures released by the National Bureau of Statistics on Jan 17 showed.

The total number of babies born last year was 14.65 million, a decrease of 580,000 from the previous year, while the birthrate stood at 10.48 per 1,000 population—the lowest over the past seven decades, according to the bureau.

Meanwhile, total population on the mainland narrowly exceeded 1.4 billion by the end of last year, an increase of 4.7 million year-on-year.

Last year marked the third consecutive year of falling births on the mainland despite the universal second-child policy having been adopted at the beginning of 2016.

The policy, which encourages all couples to have two children, was designed to boost births to cope with rapid population aging.

Births reached 17.86 million in 2016, the highest since 2000, according to the National Health Commission, but they fell to 17.23 million in 2017 and to 15.23 million in 2018.

Ning Jizhe, head of the NBS, said at a news conference on Jan 17 that despite the decrease, the total number of births last year on the mainland was still very big, and the universal second-child policy has played a very important role in encouraging births.

The decrease last year was the smallest, he said. Births fell by 630,000 in 2017 and by 2 million in 2018.

“Of all babies born last year, 59.5 percent were the second or more child, with the percentage rising over the past few years,” Ning said.

The percentage has remained at about 50 percent since the universal second-child policy was enacted, according to the National Health Commission.

Despite the policy, many couples in China were not willing to have a second baby, for reasons such as the high cost of raising children and a lack of nursery facilities, according to a survey organized by the commission.

Before the latest figures were released on Jan 17, many population experts had predicted a continued fall in births last year and in the years ahead, due to a lack of willingness to give birth among couples and a dwindling number of women of childbearing age.

According to figures released on Jan 17, the working-age population between 16 and 59 decreased by 890,000 from the previous year to 896 million, accounting for 64 percent of the population, while the number of people 60 or above increased to nearly 254 million, accounting for 18 percent of the population.

China will conduct the seventh national population census this year, which will provide authorities with better knowledge of China’s population, including its structure and distribution, so it can provide a scientific basis for formulating the next five-year national development plan, Ning said.