

# **The London Climate Hearing**

## Summary Report

December 2009





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**Greater London Authority**

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# Foreword



Climate change affects people all over the world. It is already affecting us here in London and will do even more in years to come.

In climate change, as in many other ways, London is closely connected to the rest of the world – our carbon emissions contribute to climate change globally, and global emissions affect us here in London. This is why Londoners join in the worldwide conversation about climate change, what is happening and what to do about it.

We know that our lifestyles and policies have contributed to climate change, and still do, so our choices now and in the future can play a role in fighting it. All of London is involved – policy makers at every level of government, commercial businesses, social enterprises, community and third sector organisations, and each of us as individuals. This hearing showed how we are all affected and can all make a difference.

The job of the London Assembly's Environment Committee is to look at the Mayor's environmental policies for London. Reducing climate change and adapting to its effects are two of his most important strategies, so the testimonies and discussions that we heard at the hearing will help us to suggest improvements to his proposals. Therefore we were very pleased to welcome Oxfam, all of our speakers and all of the audience to City Hall.

**Murad Qureshi AM,  
Chair, London Assembly Environment Committee**

# Oxfam's Climate Hearings



This month world leaders, negotiators and politicians will gather for the Copenhagen climate change summit. Scientists tell us that time to avert catastrophic climate change is running out, and it is hard to exaggerate the importance of this opportunity to secure a global deal to tackle it. These negotiations need to hear from people who are affected most yet struggle to be heard: those whose lives and livelihoods are already being damaged by climate change.

Oxfam's climate hearings throughout 2009 have collected the stories of half a million such people. In the Peruvian Andes we met farmers whose crops are rotting in the ground due to changes in rain patterns. At our pan-African hearing a stadium of people described how reduced rainfall has meant local women have to travel much further to collect water and in Nepal we heard that the harvest that used to sustain a community for seven to eight months now only produces enough food for two months.

And in the final weeks before the Copenhagen summit it was the turn of Londoners to tell their stories.

I want to thank the London Assembly for this opportunity to hold a London climate hearing in City Hall. I would also like to recognise the support of Capacity Global, the Women's Environment Network, Tomorrow's Company, the C40 Blue Elephant theatre and Ben Okri in putting this event together, as well as our inspiring witnesses.

Oxfam is taking London's stories along with those from people all over the world to the UN climate negotiations at Copenhagen, to back our call for a fair, ambitious and binding deal.

**Penny Lawrence,**  
**International Programmes Director, Oxfam**

# Participants

## Our Climate Witnesses

Our climate witnesses came from a range of communities and backgrounds in London and each gave a short testimony focused on their personal experiences. Put together these testimonies described the human causes and the human effects of climate change in a city that really is a home to the world. They also present us with a picture of a capital that it is both a source of major emissions, and a centre of real environmental innovation.

**Charlie Olisanekwu**, Just Cities

**George Eric James**, 3plant Groundation

**Khaled Moyeed**, Environmental Action for Bangladesh

**Barry and Dot Palmer**

**Richard Derecki**, GLA, on behalf of C40 Cities

**David Vigar**, Tomorrow's Company

**Caroline Fernandez**, Women's Environmental Network

## Our policy panel

**Murad Qureshi AM**, Chair of the London Assembly's Environment Committee (chair)

**Darren Johnson AM**, Chair of the London Assembly

**Mike Tuffrey AM**, Liberal Democrat lead on the Environment

**Maria Adebowale**, Director of Capacity Global

**Penny Lawrence**, International Programmes Director at Oxfam GB

**Special guest Ben Okri OBE**,

We were very happy to welcome poet and author Ben Okri to close the hearing with a reading.



# The City Hall Climate Change Hearing

World leaders are gathering in Copenhagen to discuss the latest scientific understanding of how mankind's activities are changing our global climate and to discuss coordinating national responses within a framework of complex regulatory and financial incentives. These will be difficult and often painstaking discussions. But, somewhere within the cacophonous conferences halls, amid the arguments over clauses and missing commas, there needs to be a moment's reflection on the true meaning of climate change. It is into that small space that we want this report to open out. It is into that small space that we want these voices to be heard.

## Many voices: Climate Witnesses

The London Assembly and Oxfam came together to host London's first Climate Hearing at City Hall on 26 November. Climate hearings have been held across the world to collect the stories of those people who are affected most yet struggle to be heard: those whose lives and livelihoods are already being damaged by climate change.

City Hall heard voices from all over the world – five Londoners told of their experiences and views of climate change and environmental justice. Their roots spread from Newham to the Caribbean, Nigeria and Bangladesh.

The Blue Elephant youth theatre group from Camberwell, south London, performed a mask and shadow play with a script based on south Asian climate change hearing testimonies. They told us about the impacts of climate change – in particular of rising sea levels in low-lying parts of south Asia such as the Bay of Bengal. The panel and audience heard about farmland and wildlife habitat destroyed, livelihoods and schools washed away, people killed and made homeless.

We also heard about other impacts of our London lifestyles, such as the effects of oil extraction in Nigeria to satisfy London's demand for energy. Closer to home, we heard about how the flights from London City Airport bring dirt, noise and toxic fumes to the much less wealthy residents of local social housing.

But faced with these challenges, the Blue Elephant play told us: "We are not born to suffer: we are born to fight." The witnesses also spoke about their positive actions on climate change and the environment in London. In many small but significant ways individuals are making changes to the way our economic relations are organised. We heard



"Everyone has a right to a clean and healthy environment."

George Eric James



"The greatest cost has been to the quality of life of local communities."

Barry and Dot Palmer



"We are not born to suffer: we are born to fight."

Blue Elephant Theatre Company



"Even though Nigeria is supplying the oil, they do not have good enough living conditions."

Charlie Olisanekwu



"Natural disasters are going to get bigger and deadlier."

Khaled Moyeed



"We need to see scientists, the IPCC, governments and businesses as a single system."

David Vigar

about the work of 3plant Groundation to promote sustainable food production and to build skills in conservation, and of Just Cities which works to raise young people's environmental awareness.

Londoners are also taking action to promote practical steps around the world, such as help with reforestation projects in Ethiopia using indigenous trees to prevent soil erosion, and through the work of Environmental Action for Bangladesh raising awareness of environmental issues in that country. Oxfam is supporting south Asian women to prepare ways of coping with flooding. Al Muntada Al-Islami is providing food parcels in drought-affected parts of sub-Saharan Africa.

### **A multi-level response: government, business and community**

Climate hearings bring together the voices of those whose communities are affected by climate change with policy makers and those who have influence to keep up the momentum and to discuss new ways forward. The London Climate Hearing heard from a range of influential partners about the steps they are taking to respond to the voices calling for change. We heard from the C40 network, which brings together world city leaders to share ideas, knowledge and buying power so that cities reduce their emissions. Cities consume 75% of the world's energy and so contribute a large proportion of greenhouse gas emissions. The C40 is actively sharing best practice across cities. For example, pooling the buying power of cities to help reduce the cost of energy saving technology. The C40 is also encouraging the exchange of technical knowledge and creating and deploying new measurement tools so that cities can track their best efforts to reduce emissions.

The hearing also heard that businesses are involved in almost every activity that causes or mitigates climate change. Many London businesses are world leaders in sustainability, but there needs to be an orchestrated effort by business as a whole. Markets are not spontaneously meeting carbon reduction targets; the public sector has a role in catalysing the economy and overcoming market failures, as Isabel Dedring, the Mayor's Environment Adviser said to another meeting of the Assembly's Environment Committee recently.

Scientists identify the need for climate change action; governments set out the policies to guide action; and businesses and their customers join in taking action. Many businesses are pushing governments for a better policy response, so that business can 'take

up the baton'. The Copenhagen Communiqué, calling for action now, has been signed by 800 major companies. Across the globe businesses should use just a little of their understanding about how to communicate with customers to support governmental efforts to promote the agreements on climate change. This would transform the dynamic of policy delivery.

The community sector supports people to take practical action, like growing their own food, campaigning to influence decision-makers, and sharing knowledge and know-how with each other. With a little support and funding, people can take the initiative and help themselves to socialise, exercise, and enjoy the outdoor life – and to reduce their carbon footprint.

### The London policy response

In a Question and Answer session that followed the witness statements, a number of clear messages emerged that we want our Mayor to take to Copenhagen and into the discussions he will be having with other city leaders.

The transition to a low carbon economy begins at home. There are a number of significant ways in which our Mayor, working with all levels of government, can lead that transition:

Some 12,000 energy and industrial plants across Europe now have to factor in the price of carbon through the European cap-and-trade scheme. This means that roughly 46 per cent of European emissions are covered by this agreement. But how can this system evolve further to cover all emissions? London, which is the home of carbon trading, has an incredible pool of scientific, financial and organisational talent. Our leaders need to harness this talent to address the challenge of evolving the mechanisms for the effective pricing of carbon.

We heard about the economic opportunities there are for London in the new industries and technologies that will be needed to achieve the transition to a low carbon economy. Because of the risks involved and because benefits can be spread across society rather than just for the firm involved, the Mayor plays a role in making strategic funding available to help develop new infrastructure in areas such as waste and electric vehicles.

We heard about the increasing consumption levels of Londoners and others in the rich world. The Mayor should support people to make



“Women have the right to information to enable them to make fair choices with a focus on practical grass roots action.”

Caroline Fernandez



The hearing panel



“What is London going to do?”

John Bowis MEP



“Only God knows, if young people are not interested about climate change, what is going to happen in the future.”

City University  
student

low carbon choices. Working with partner organisations in both the public, private and third sector the Mayor could address issues such as a lack of information or inertia that prevents people making informed decisions.

Importantly, this transition to a green economy in London must be a just one. Groups taking part in the hearing wanted to ensure that efforts to tackle climate change do not fall disproportionately on the poor, and that opportunities represented by a shift to a greener economy are available to all. Policies such as home insulation, improvement of public transport and training for low-skilled green jobs are good examples that both reduce carbon, and tackle poverty.

And finally we want to reflect the voices we heard that called for London’s decision-makers who are representing us in Copenhagen to make strong, fair and equitable decisions on climate change, which help all of the people affected by it around the world. We pass that challenge on to London’s Mayor with the hope that he will make his voice, and through it the voices we have reflected in this report, heard in the most important debate he will take part in.

Our hearing closed with a reading from prize-winning author and poet Ben Okri, who said:



“It is time we turned our formidable powers of heart and mind to humanity’s solvable problems.”

Ben Okri OBE

...A basic pre-condition of civilisation  
Is a world free from hunger.  
Cannot be done by charity alone.  
Symphony of rich and poor nations  
Of the Earth.  
No them and us.  
No self-satisfaction.  
No superiority thinking.  
Harmony of politics and heart...

...Only free people can make a free world.  
Infect the world with your light.  
Help fulfil the golden prophecies;  
Press forward the human genius.

Our future should be greater than our past.

# Appendix 1 Orders and translations

## How to order

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如您需要这份文件的简介的翻译本，  
请电话联系我们或按上面所提供的邮寄地址或  
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### Vietnamese

Nếu ông (bà) muốn nội dung văn bản này được dịch sang tiếng Việt, xin vui lòng liên hệ với chúng tôi bằng điện thoại, thư hoặc thư điện tử theo địa chỉ ở trên.

### Greek

Εάν επιθυμείτε περίληψη αυτού του κειμένου στην γλώσσα σας, παρακαλώ καλέστε τον αριθμό ή επικοινωνήστε μαζί μας στην ανωτέρω ταχυδρομική ή την ηλεκτρονική διεύθυνση.

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Bu belgenin kendi dilinize çevrilmiş bir özetini okumak isterseniz, lütfen yukarıdaki telefon numarasını arayın, veya posta ya da e-posta adresi aracılığıyla bizimle temasa geçin.

### Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦਾ ਸੰਖੇਪ ਅਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਫ਼ੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜਾਂ ਉਪਰ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਡਾਕ ਜਾਂ ਈਮੇਲ ਪਤੇ 'ਤੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

### Hindi

यदि आपको इस दस्तावेज़ का सारांश अपनी भाषा में चाहिए तो उपर दिये हुए नंबर पर फोन करें या उपर दिये गये डाक पते या ई मेल पते पर हम से संपर्क करें।

### Bengali

আপনি যদি এই দলিলের একটি সারাংশ নিজের ভাষায় পেতে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে যোগাযোগ করবেন অথবা উল্লিখিত ডাক ঠিকানায় বা ই-মেইল ঠিকানায় আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করবেন।

### Urdu

اگر آپ کو اس دستاویز کا خلاصہ اپنی زبان میں درکار ہو تو، براہ کرم نمبر پر فون کریں یا مذکورہ بالا ڈاک کے پتے یا ای میل پتے پر ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

### Arabic

الحصول على ملخص لهذا المستند بلغة،  
فرجاء الاتصال برقم الهاتف أو الاتصال على  
العنوان البريدي العادي أو عنوان البريد  
الإلكتروني أعلاه.

### Gujarati

જો તમારે આ દસ્તાવેજનો સાર તમારી ભાષામાં જોડતો હોય તો ઉપર આપેલ નંબર પર ફોન કરો અથવા ઉપર આપેલ ટપાલ અથવા ઈ-મેઇલ સરનામા પર અમારો સંપર્ક કરો.

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