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Speech for 10th October 2022 public online meeting

We are terrified. We are angry. We are desperate. But more than anything, we still have hope. It is this hope that has allowed us to come together today to discuss how exactly you can help young people. Because we cannot fix the world without your guidance, your teaching.

It is imperative that now, more than ever, you allow us – young people – to speak freely on the issue of climate change and that, most importantly, you listen with open ears. The results of the survey tell you explicitly how we feel – distrustful, worried, failed. So tell me, what are you going to do about it?

I can give you my input, as a young person, on how I would have liked to have been taught, guided and consoled by the adults around me, but it is up to you to implement the changes for the children under your care. So, here is the list that I've decided to call the 'take initiative' checklist.

Point number one: facilitate conversations. Whether it's across the dinner table, within a classroom, or stood on the grounds of a football pitch at an afterschool club, talk to us. Children are very perceptive - we understand the essence of what's going on even if we don't have the vocabulary to explain it in words. So, give us the vocabulary. Or better yet, phrase your questions in a language we can actually understand – climate science is difficult, the geopolitics of the issue even harder to comprehend to the point where most adults don't even fully understand it, but putting content into a digestible format is what makes teachers, or people who work with young people, so crucial to our development.

Point number two: keep your door open. It is clear to me that access to mental health services is crucial. Young people generally are suffering, not just because of climate anxiety. But our survey has made it clear that climate anxiety is prominent and painful – so you must provide the services to combat it. So, keep your door open. This is an issue that, hopefully, is easy to relate to, and, luckily for us, it has a dare I say, simple solution. Action, action, action.

And, as well crafted as this speech is, point number three is about action opportunities. Clever, right? Having been given the opportunity to work within Young ACAN I have experienced first hand how well action works as a remedy for climate anxiety. There is no feeling better than having planted a seed, and grown a tree with your own two hands, metaphorically or, in the case of climate action, literally. Most, if not all, of the schools have some form of eco council, so, give them the opportunity to plan their own projects and initiate them. If we work hard enough, environmental action could be embedded within every aspect of a child's life, from small changes at home, to projects at school and with after school groups. Because action doesn't just reduce anxiety, it also works to teach a range of important skills for the activists of the future.

Point four is a bit more uncertain. It puts a lot more power into your hands and removes a lot more from mine. Perhaps it is this feeling of powerlessness that makes

the 67% of children surveyed feel as though they can't trust our government to look out for them. Voting age is 18. Positions for young people within local councils or governing bodies are rare, and often very limited. On this issue, we need you to speak for us, we need you to take our input, our feelings, our suggestions, and put them into action. To scale up the action of local governments, we need to facilitate conversations between young people and the people in power. Because I refuse to believe that we could not come to an agreement, that the people at the top would continue on as they are, if they heard just how scared we are. It would be inconceivably apathetic. But the fact of the matter is we, as young people, have reached a consensus. Over 80% of us feel we are being failed as young people by our government.

The statistics speak for themselves.

This is not a case of you acting on our behalf, this is a case of collaboration towards a better future. We want to be involved, but as is the case for most young people, we have not been provided with the tools to get involved. So, think of yourselves as the tool suppliers, the Wickes of climate action, and facilitate the growth of a new generation of activists.

Thank you.