Title: Accelerating Climate Action Toward 2030: An Opportunity the World Cannot Pass Up

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A rapidly changing climate combined with rising inequality will particularly impact the poorest and most vulnerable: Business-as-usual growth could mean over 140 million climate migrants by 2050. Unless we make a decisive shift, by 2030 we will pass the point by which we can keep global average temperature rise to well below 2°C, unleashing the potential for runaway climate change.

Thankfully, the world's greatest challenge is also our greatest opportunity. The transition to a low-carbon, resilient economy is not just good for the climate: it is also good for the economy and communities. The New Climate Economy's 2018 Report finds that bold action on climate could deliver a net benefit to the global economy of US$26 trillion between now and 2030 compared to business-as-usual. Furthermore, ambitious climate action could also generate over 65 million new low-carbon jobs in 2030 and avoid over 700,000 premature deaths from air pollution, compared with business-as-usual.

The challenge now is to accelerate the transition to a new climate economy. This requires finance to be mobilised and aligned with sustainability principles across all sectors of the economy. Over the next 10-15 years, the world is expected to invest about US$90 trillion in infrastructure – more than the value of what exists today. Ensuring that this infrastructure is sustainable will be a critical determinant of future growth and prosperity. This requires governments to set out robust, well-articulated sustainable investment strategies over the next 1-2 years, as well as and standards that will guide these investments. In short, we don't have much time to get this right.

Fundamental shifts in growth strategies that integrate climate action with development priorities, once in place, will facilitate the flow of private investment to sustainable infrastructure. And international finance institutions (IFIs) can be a catalyst for change by establishing replicable, scalable approaches to crowd-in finance for sustainable infrastructure at scale from the private sector. Aside from providing support for countries to revise national growth plans, IFIs can work with countries to develop bankable projects, offer early stage support, and to blend capital by de-risking investments to crowd in private capital.

However, unless this economic transition is carefully and responsibly managed, there is a real potential for stranded communities and workers from the old economy, exacerbating social exclusion of the poorest and most vulnerable, and for stranded assets. Ensuring a just transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy is fundamental to building a safe, sustainable and prosperous future. For example, as China had delayed or stopped work on 151 coal power plants, it has also created a US$15 billion fund for retraining, reallocating and early retirement of the estimated 5-6 million people who will likely be laid off due to coal or steel sector overcapacity.

Women will also play a critical role in this inclusive growth agenda. Ensuring their full participation in the economy could, by some estimates, boost global GDP by as much as US$28 trillion per year by 2025. Furthermore, bold climate action could increase female employment and labour participation. Grameen Shakti in Bangladesh, for instance, has trained 3,000 women as solar technicians to install and maintain Solar Home Systems (SHSs) in rural areas. Since 2003, 4.12 million SHSs have been installed in Bangladesh, increasing per capita income 9-12% as of 2014, creating 115,000 jobs as of 2017, and reducing carbon emissions by 160,000 tonnes per year.

Leaders are already seizing the exciting economic and market opportunities associated with a transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy. We can turn better growth and better climate into a reality. To do so, we must consciously and conscientiously legislate, innovate, govern and invest our way to a fairer, safer, more sustainable world.