

Dear World Leaders,

We write to sound a warning; a warning that 2015 will be a year of huge opportunity, but also of huge risk.

What is at stake here could not be greater, for it is not less than the future of our human family and the world upon which we all depend. Two global processes – the replacement of the current UN development framework and the conclusion of a new climate treaty – culminate within months of each other at the end of 2015. They require us to decide which future we want for people and planet. For there are two dramatically different futures we could live in by 2030.

Down one hopeful path we have built on progress, and learned how to eradicate extreme poverty, hunger, as well as put an end to preventable maternal, newborn and child deaths. In so doing, we will give everyone everywhere opportunity and the right to lead their lives with dignity without jeopardising our planet's ability to provide for its people now and into the future. This is an entirely possible outcome if we do the right thing.

Down another path we have failed to build on progress, but have allowed the injustice of poverty, hunger and pandemics to spread. A growing insecurity caused by unequal access to increasingly scarce natural resources leads to tragic conflicts from which nobody – no elite, no matter how rich – can hide. This is an entirely plausible outcome of a complacent business as usual approach to 2015.

Which world do you want to live in by 2030? Which world it will be depends upon the decision you make in 2015, and the preparations we make for it now.

The good news is a global movement is coming together for 2015 and the future, inspired by the words of Nelson Mandela: "Like slavery, like apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome by the actions of human beings." Climate change too can and must be remedied by the actions of human beings.

This movement for people and planet will lead to accolades for those leaders who rise to this historic occasion. It will hold accountable those who fail to help secure a better safer world for all. It will speak up for the marginalised and disenfranchised, and demand justice for all.

Let's leave no one behind as we look with confidence towards a future which we can make great, for you have been given an opportunity that will be the envy of history.

Yours

Desmond Tutu, Graca Machel, Bono, Mo Ibrahim, Malala Yousafzai, Muhammed Yunus