



the nation of plants
la nazione delle piante



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Honoured Secretary-General of the United Nations António Guterres, Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates, colleagues and friends, I am here today, as representative of the nation of plants, to address this worthy gathering with a call to action which can no longer be postponed.

The indiscriminate use of the planet's resources, the increasing pollution of the atmosphere and the consequent climate change, are the most serious threat that man has ever had to face in the course of his very brief existence.

I therefore make an appeal to each of you and your nations, that you begin to change your behaviour, before the consequences of your conduct become fatal. If you do not change this situation immediately, the consequences for mankind and for all the natural systems that support you will be serious and irreparable.

Today, for the first time, our nation, the most populous and long-enduring nation on Earth, wishes to speak, and we turn to you, beseeching you to listen to us and to think about what we have to say with attention and with wisdom.

We have supported animal life, including your own, since its origins. The planet we inhabit is alive because of us. Water, oxygen, the climate, all depend on us. We are the engine of life. Be fully aware of this.

Over time you have learned to use us. We are at the base of your food chain. Everything you eat comes from us. Your most important energy resources come from us. You look after yourselves thanks to us. We provide you with building materials, textile fibres, colours, drinks, beauty, health and endless other benefits.

You have learned very well to use what we produce. But now the moment has arrived for you to also use what we can teach you.

In China, near Beijing, you are creating a unique urban agglomeration, which will soon be home to 130 million people. Within 30 years, more than 70% of the human population will be concentrated in urban areas. Seventy per cent of carbon dioxide, which is the principal cause of global warming, is produced by cities and from there dispersed into the atmosphere.

Unfortunately, our great forests are able to absorb only 40%. Despite the tree population of our nation being 3,000 billion individuals, we are still too few and too distant from the places where you produce carbon dioxide for us to help you effectively.

Make better use of us and do it immediately!
Cover your cities with plants, not only in the parks, in the flowerbeds, along the avenues, in gardens or on terraces, but cover every possible surface with plants! We adapt ourselves much better and much more quickly than you do. In a short time we have learned to absorb more and more carbon dioxide in environments in which it is present in higher concentrations, as in your cities. If we are near a centre of production, we absorb even more... and we use it to grow. Transform your cities into urban jungles and the advantages you will gain will be incalculable.

In 2017, during a seminar at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, one of your leaders who we most admire, Pope Francis, said: "I ask myself if this intermittent third world war that we are experiencing is not actually becoming a world war for water." He was right. Ninety per cent of the wars that afflict your belligerent species have occurred in areas near the so-called drought line. That is, in areas where rainfall is less than 100 millimeters a year – the minimum required for you to be able to cultivate the land.

A billion people do not have access to safe sources of drinking water and more than four billion suffer from a shortage of water for at least one month a year.



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Drought and the parchedness of the soil are creating problems for you that you are unable to handle. Because of the drying up of sources of water, of desertification, of reduced access to fertile land and of famine, hundreds of millions of individuals of your species do not survive. How can you imagine a future in these conditions?

And yet you continue to use more than 70% of the planet's available drinking water for agriculture?

Look around you! Two-thirds of the planet is covered in salt water. Once again, learn from us. We know how to live on just salt water. Our halophyte sisters evolved precisely because of this. Use our knowledge and you will be able to transform the oceans into an immense reservoir from which to feed the planet, without consuming the drinking water that is so necessary to you.

And then, energy. Eighty per cent of your needs derive from fossil fuels: oil, coal, natural gas. The sources of energy created by our nation over millions of years, which you are exhausting with your consumption, are the principal causes of the current climate change.

You need to find more sustainable models of development for the future of your species. Renewable sources of energy are a possible solution, but they are expensive and not as clean as is really necessary.

Be aware that clean and potentially limitless energy is possible. Replicate our photosynthesis. It is a process that transforms sunlight, water and carbon dioxide into sugars and oxygen. Artificial photosynthesis would resolve all your energy problems. Its potential applications could be infinite and would reverse the current process of waste production. It would mean an end to the pollution inherent in energy production and would introduce a system that cleans the air while producing energy.

If only you were to devote to plant research just a tenth of what you spend on your technological research, you would be saved. Until now, you have preferred to do otherwise. Change! Now! We can teach you how to harness energy from the sun, how to depollute our unique planet, bringing it back to its past glory; how to design better working structures which are decentralised and robust, with which to face a future that at the moment frightens you. In 2050 there will be ten billion of you and you wonder how this planet of ours will be able to support you all. Stop worrying! This is not the problem. Stop seeing the other individuals of your species as rivals, as consumers of resources on the way to being exhausted.

Let yourselves be inspired by us. Reason and organise yourselves as we have organised ourselves and three billion more people will become an enormous resource. Because every individual represents a resource, an opportunity, a contribution in solving the problems of collective society. Open your communities. Be cooperative. Borders do not protect your prosperity but make you poorer.

Honoured Secretary, dear delegates and friends, we have spoken because we feel it is the duty of our ancient nation to help you, today we have always done in the past. We are not used to talking so much. We are silent by nature and you animals are so restless... always ready to run away from problems rather than solve them. You are demanding, impulsive, arrogant. You prefer haste to contemplation, short-lived power to the glory of life, and the number of your mistakes is inexcusable, but then you are also a very young and naive species which learns fast. Do not be stubborn, do not persist in the error of your ways. Learn from those who have more experience than you and you will have a positive future.

We leave you our constitution as a gift, with the wish that it may help you find the way to a long and happy cohabitation with us and our marvelous planet.

Take care of yourselves.
I shall now return to the joys of my community.