# Opening Speech – “Why This Moment Matters!”

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Act Now, Change Forever Mass Lobby
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Good morning, friends.

What a blessing it is to stand with you today—citizens from across this land of the UK and around the world—people of faith, conscience, courage, and hope.

We are gathered here at Westminster not simply to raise our voices, but to lift a moral call—a call that echoes through history and demands attention now: This is the moment. Act now, change forever.

We have come because we care—about our health, our communities, our children, our common home. And we have come because the stakes are too high to look away.

Why does this moment matter?

Because the world is on fire. From the floods in Kenya to heatwaves here in Britain, from failed crops in Zambia to storms in Cornwall—creation is groaning. This is not tomorrow’s crisis. It is today’s emergency.

And it is a deeply unjust emergency.

Those who contributed least to this crisis are suffering the most. In Africa—where I come from—people are losing homes, harvests, and hope. In the UK, families are facing unbearable choices between heating and eating.

This is not just a crisis of emissions. It is a crisis of empathy. Not just a crisis of nature. It is a crisis of justice.

But I come to you today not only with warning—but with remembrance, and with hope.

I remember Gleneagles. Twenty years ago, in 2005, the UK helped lead the G7 to historic action.
Inspired by the voices of citizens—by campaigns like “Make Poverty History”—the UK played a decisive role in cancelling debt, restoring hope, and saving lives.

As a result, millions of African children returned to school. Life-saving medicines reached hospitals again. Families received food. Futures were rebuilt.

That was not just economic policy. That was moral leadership.
That was the UK at its best—a force for good in the world.

And I’ve come to say this to the people and leaders of this country: You can do it again.

The UK has a privileged platform in global finance, diplomacy, and climate negotiations. Africa looks to you. The Global South looks to you. Indeed, humanity looks to you.

That is why this moment matters.

And let us be clear: the climate crisis cannot be solved if developing countries are drowning in debt. How can nations invest in adaptation, in clean energy, in resilience, if every dollar goes to servicing old loans? Climate justice and debt justice are two sides of the same coin. To act on one and ignore the other is to fail both.

As a Jesuit priest, I speak from the wellspring of faith. And every faith tradition present today tells us the same truth:
We were not made for greed or indifference. We were made for love, for justice, for stewardship.

The command to love our neighbour is not abstract.
Today, our neighbour is the mother walking five miles for water in Malawi.
The nurse suffering from heatstroke in a London hospital.
The farmer in Ghana watching his crops die in the sun.
The child who wonders if she will inherit a world worth living in.

We are not here because we have lost hope.
We are here because we dare to hope.

Hope is not naïve. Hope is revolutionary. Hope refuses despair.
And today, hope is marching through Westminster.

To the leaders of this land, I say: history is watching.

You have a choice—to bend toward justice or to retreat into complacency.
Let your legacy be courage, not convenience. Vision, not delay.

To every person gathered here—young and old, of every creed and conviction—know this:
You are not simply protesting. You are prophesying.

You are the moral wind behind the political will. You are the light in a time of confusion.
And together, you are igniting a movement rooted in love, guided by justice, and sustained by solidarity.

So let us rise, with one voice and one resolve:

The time is now.
The responsibility is ours.
And the future is listening.

Let it be said that when the world wavered, we stood firm.
When power hesitated, people acted.
When hope was fragile, we made it strong.

Act now. Change forever.

Thank you.