

The Climate Solution

By Kevin Mercurio

The camera zooms in on a dimly lit room. Rows upon rows of white desks are accompanied by people from across the world. In front, the wide stage is illuminated by soft blue tones surrounded by colourful flora. The back screen displays the Virtual United Nations Climate Change Crest and a rotating, high-resolution Earth. A counter in the corner of the screen starts from 10 and descends. The room becomes muted.

Announcer: Your Royal Highnesses. Your Excellencies. Lords. Ladies and Gentlemen. Welcome to the opening ceremony for the world leaders #virtual summit of #COP55. This will be the final summit as, we are proud to say, we have solved the #ClimateCrisis. Look to your left. Look to your right. For the very first time, every nation's leader from the real world is here with us in this room today.

The camera blurs as it pans to the right. A starry field resembling the Milky Way galaxy appears. In quick succession, the camera dives deeper into this model until we reach our solar system and finally Earth itself.

Announcer: Let's imagine that the Earth is the only place in a galaxy where intelligent life exists. The only place where collections of atoms as old as time have come together in improbable patterns, that can think and feel, and can bring meaning to an otherwise meaningless universe. How should we behave? Surely, notwithstanding the fact that we're tiny, fragile things, but a mote of dust, orbiting around one star amongst 400 billion. We must consider ourselves and our new world to be inconceivably valuable.

Fade. The camera zooms inward into Earth until the stage reappears.

Announcer: With their poem #Binary written for #COP55, we are joined by #virtual writer and storyteller @ScaleneWriter1993.

@ScaleneWriter1993:

Seldom is there ever a moment in time noticed
That does not consist of obvious obscurity,
But subtle uneasiness.
Topics that define previous generations' normalities
To later generations' irregularities.
Discussions that persist in the ambiance like humidity;
The undiscovered ether waiting to be understood,
Waiting to be articulated,
Propagated through minds using neuronal electrical potential—
Exactly like neuronal electrical potential.
To plant ourselves on the surface of a planet filled with billions;
Shared interests, shared disinterests,
Shared experiences, shared non-experiences.
Created categories to better describe individuals for what they are
Instead of why they are,
Despite how we come from one group, existing or non-existing,
One value, one or zero.
But labels bring the inevitable fall of orderly men.

Breaking bridges recently built,
Severing ties recently strengthened,
For the purpose of identification—
The antagonist to collaboration.
Let us think in specifications.
Immorality in social behaviours, environmental endeavours, racial non-amalgamation...
Where does one start when the path begins in the median?
When these complex ideas are so blatantly clear
But the words just seem to crumble off the tongue,
Opposite of sense.
To an end, we juxtapose with stupidity:
Can one know the opinions to grasp in a sea of nonsense?
Which actors scream rational afterthought rather than immediate impulse?
In this performance we did not buy tickets for,
The catastrophic debacle of the century
Summarized in simple terms:
How do we talk?
How do we explain ideas that we do not yet fully comprehend?
But want to be a part of the conversation,
Not left out of quintessential decisions,
Since how else do we determine a spectrum of reason?
The solution:
Stutter, stammer, tongue-twist hesitation fillers into a string of phrases,
Hoping that trust outweighs the conflict.
A tremendous inferno blazing within
To puncture a hole in an already capsizing argument.
Rather than securing the break;
Forget ego, forget pride.
Remember that we are binary.
Not in the sense most frequently fought about,
But existing or non-existing,
One or zero.
We are one, literally one.
So listen!
Empathize with those who have good intentions,
Abstain from gladiatorial vernaculars
And be one!
One or zero?
Literally one every time,
As we will mean to be.

Fade. The camera stabilizes.

Announcer: Please #react to the Prime Minister of the #virtual United Kingdom, @BOjohn_StillGettingItDone.

@Bojohn_StillGettingItDone: Welcome to #COP55. Welcome to #virtual Glasgow, whose most grimly famous fictional son is almost certainly a man called @JamesBondReal, who generally comes to the climax of these highly lucrative films strapped to a doomsday device desperately trying to work out which coloured wire to pull to turn it off, while a red digital clock ticks down remorselessly to a detonation that will end human life as we know it. And,

we are finally not in roughly the same position, my fellow #virtual leaders, as @JamesBondReal today. Yes, it was going to be hard, and yes, we did do it. And so let's get to celebrating with all the customizability, enhancements and goodwill that we possess. Thank you very much and good job to all of us. Thank you.

Fade. The camera stabilizes.

Announcer: Bringing voices from the real world into #COP55, please #react to #virtual climate campaigner, @BriFree_Samoa.

@BriFree_Samoa: When I was in the real world, I was taught the importance and impact of words. How #virtual action can be vastly different from climate justice. How two degrees meant the end, but how one solution led to a fighting chance. You all had the power here to be better, to remember that in your breakout rooms and drafting documents are more than just #NFTs, to remember that in your words you wielded the weapon that saved us by selling us out. We literally drowned, but we continue fighting virtually for access and succeeded. Thank you.

Fade. The camera stabilizes.

Announcer: Please #react to the Secretary General of the #virtual United Nations, @AntoGut_UNOfficial.

@AntoGut_UNOfficial: We faced a stark choice: either we stop it, or it stops us. And it was finally time to say, enough. We said enough of brutalizing biodiversity. We said enough with killing ourselves with carbon. We said enough of treating nature like a toilet. We said enough of burning and drilling and mining our way deeper, as we were digging our own graves. Our planet was changing before our eyes, from the ocean depths to the mountain tops, from melting glaciers to relentless extreme weather events. Sea levels haven't stabilized to the levels they were years ago. Oceans are hotter than ever and getting warmer faster. Parts of the Amazon Rainforest still emit more carbon than they absorb. Yet, Excellencies, the sirens have ended. Our planet is talking to us and telling us something. And so are people everywhere. Climate action now rarely tops the list of people's concerns, across countries, age, and gender. We have listened, we have acted, and we chose wisely. On behalf of these and future generations, you urged us to choose ambition, choose solidarity, choose to safeguard our #virtual futures and humanity. Thank you.

Fade. The camera stabilizes.

Announcer: Your Royal Highnesses. Your Excellencies. Lords. Ladies and Gentlemen. Please #react to his #virtual Royal Highness, @PrinceOWales_Charles.

@PrinceOWales_Charles: Ladies and Gentlemen. My plea back then was for countries to come together to create the environment that enables every sector of industry to take the action required. We knew this would take trillions, not billions of dollars. We also knew that countries, many of whom are burdened by growing levels of debt, simply cannot afford to #GoGreen. So, how did we do it? How did we get the private sector all pulling in the same direction? After nearly two years of consultation, CEOs then told me that we needed to bring together global industries to map out, in very practical terms, what it would take to make the #virtual transition. We knew from the COVID-19 pandemic that the private sector could speed up timelines dramatically when everyone agreed on the urgency and direction to leave the failing planet behind. So, each sector needed a clear strategy to speed up the process of getting innovations on the #virtual market. Thank you, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Fade. The camera stabilizes.

Announcer: Please #react to the #COP55 People's Resurrected Advocate who has dedicated his lifetime to highlighting the beauty of the natural world, the late @NarratorOfNature_DAttenborough.

@NarratorOfNature_DAttenborough: Your Excellencies. Delegates. Ladies and Gentlemen. As you spend the next two weeks reacting, updating, socializing, and celebrating, as you surely must, it's easy to forget that ultimately your new #virtual climate comes down to yet another single number. The conversion rate of oxygen in your reality domes, a measure that greatly determines yours and the lives of maintenance workers in the #realworld. And the change in this one number will be the clearest way to chart our new #virtual story. The most important number used to be the concentration of carbon in the real atmosphere, which defined our relationship with our #realworld. For much of reality's ancient history, that carbon number bounced wildly between 180 and 300 ppm, and so too did global temperatures. It was a brutal and unpredictable world. Everything that we achieved in the last 10,000 years was enabled by the stability of that number during that time. Burning of fossil fuels, our destruction of nature, our approach to industry, construction, and learning released carbon into the atmosphere at an unprecedented pace and scale. We were already past the point of no return. If working apart we were a force powerful enough to destabilize our #realworld, surely working together we are powerful enough to maintain our #virtual world. During my lifetime, I've witnessed a terrible decline. In yours, you could and should witness a wonderful prosperity. That desperate hope, Ladies and Gentlemen, Delegates, Excellencies, it's why the #virtual world is looking to you, and why you made it here. Thank you.

Fade. The camera stabilizes.

Announcer: Please #react to the #virtual Prime Minister of Barbados, @MAMottley_Democracy.

@MaMottley_Democracy: Your Royal Highness. Excellencies. Distinguished Guests. Ladies and Gentlemen. If the past has taught us anything, it's that #virtual solutions to real problems do not work. We come to the #virtual summit to celebrate our people, and to celebrate the climate solution. But I ask you, what must we say to our people, living in their oxygen-limiting reality domes on the front line, in the Caribbean, in Africa, in Latin America, in the Pacific, where maintenance workers in the real world are not present? What excuse should we give to the failure? How many more voices and how many more #virtual GIFs of people do we need to load into this #virtual summit without being able to minimize, or are we so blinded and hardened that we can no longer appreciate the cries of humanity? I have been— ying to Barbad— any hands make l— correct mix of voices ambi— if one third of the world literally prospers, and the other two thirds of the wor—

The camera shows a glitching @MAMottley_Democracy, and pans away. A loading circle swirls in the middle of the stage in clockwise fashion. Flashing in bolded font is the following: **Low oxygen detected in #COP55 server hub. Potential catastrophic water damage in the Pacific reality dome. Maintenance workers in the Global South are on the scene. Limit oxygen intake. Please remain calm and slow heart rate. Low oxygen detected in #COP55 server hub. Potential catastrophic water damage in the Pacific reality dome. Maintenance workers in the Global South are on the scene. Limit oxygen intake. Please remain calm and slow heart rate.**