

**Final version of Mary Robinson Remarks given at Wilton Park  
Delivered Monday 2 March 2026, can be shared and attributed to Mary Robinson**

Thank you Alison, Jean, the Wilton Park team and all the organisers and partners involved in this convening. It is truly wonderful to be with many of you again, and I am looking forward to also getting to know new faces.

I only wish I could say that we gather at a moment when the global outlook has improved, but since many of us last came together in October 2024, the world has shifted, and not in the direction we had hoped. Hard-won commitments have come under strain and inequalities have widened.

I think we meet at a moment of profound consequence. I want to acknowledge what is unfolding in West Asia — in Iran and across the Gulf States.

Many of us come into this gathering with heavy hearts. The escalation of violence, the widening strikes and retaliation, and the deepening uncertainty are heartbreaking. We are witnessing such grave violations of international law that threaten regional and global security. And they continue to do so as we gather here together.

We hold in our hearts all those living with fear, loss, and instability at this time. We also hold our friends and colleagues who had hoped to be here but cannot travel because of closed airspace and disrupted flights. I hope those missing in person might at least be able to join us virtually if they can.

It can feel almost wrong to gather — to speak of climate justice — while such suffering and turmoil unfold. Our attention feels torn. And understandably so.

The challenge, dear friends, is that we are living in a time when our hearts are asked to stretch beyond what feels bearable. There is so much happening in the world, and much of it is terribly dark. But we cannot afford to press pause on climate justice because other crises demand our grief and attention. The climate and nature crisis does not pause for war.

So my first ask of us today is this: even though it is difficult, we must allow our hearts and our minds to hold space for multiple tragedies at once. Moral leadership in this moment requires a compassion that does not narrow, and a resolve that does not falter.

Though there are so many competing crises, we must not neglect our mandate to the climate and nature crisis. We cannot afford to put action for climate justice on pause.

At its root, the climate and nature crisis is a spiritual crisis. It is a crisis of what we live for, what we hold sacred, and what we are prepared to confront.

We have built economic systems that reward extraction over care and consumption over community. In doing so, we've normalised a profound disconnection from the natural world, from one another, and from the deeper moral frameworks that once shaped our societies.

Yet, faith traditions remind us that a crisis can be a turning point. Brokenness is never the end of the story.

We meet this week as many of us celebrate major religious holidays that all have stories of relationship at the heart of them. These stories remind us that darkness is not the end of things:

Ramadan is sometimes described as a time to heal the parts of the heart that no one else sees.

Purim, as I am sure we will hear more on, is a story fundamentally about the reversal of fortune: the intense brokenness, fear, and hopelessness of Esther's initial situation with ultimate triumph and joy.

And Lent is a time for inverting the world's values - power and control are replaced with values of humility and service.

These are just three examples of the many ways faith practices remind us there is a greater story at play than the one our fear-driven social media feed or television screens would have us believe.

This is why the leadership of women of faith matters so profoundly at this moment and am excited to think more about this as we progress through our time together. This work of the Women, Faith, and Climate Network is already grounded in solidarity, but we must go further!

I want to suggest three commitments that are essential for leadership this moment requires.

**The first is that we must allow ourselves to practice broken-heartedness — together.**

I am not talking about despair, rather about the need for moral clarity.

A broken heart is not a weak heart. It is an open heart. If we insulate ourselves from the grief of what is happening in our world — the loss of species, the displacement of communities, the anxiety of young people — we risk becoming indifferent. Our compassion cannot be selective. The suffering caused by climate breakdown demands of us the same moral seriousness as the suffering caused by war. These must not be seen as competing claims on our conscience.

Our faith traditions should draw us closer to the world's grief, not protect us from feeling it.

And that grief is not abstract. It is present in communities already living on the frontlines of climate breakdown. It is present in the quiet despair of those who feel the world becoming more unstable by the day.

Grief, when carried alone, can lead to paralysis. But grief shared in community can become a source of courage. It reminds us what we value and it sharpens our sense of urgency, binding us to one another in common purpose. In doing so, we strengthen, rather than weaken, our capacity to act.

**The second commitment is to practice healing — together.**

Healing requires us to confront what is harmful and to remove it. Women have long experience of challenging what is stagnant or unjust, often in spaces where our voices were not readily welcomed. We are also experts in calling others to action. But we must not be fooled into thinking women faith leaders are *only* mobilizers, in this room we have consciousness shapers and systems builders!

To be prophetic and to be healers in this era is not only to denounce what is wrong, but to articulate — and model — what is possible. I want us to think a lot about what is possible this week together, and to push for ideas that stretch that understanding of what is possible.

**The third commitment is to work together with a depth of solidarity that matches the scale of the crisis.**

Solidarity is not just a nice thought. It echoes Article 29.1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a part of the declaration I had not really fully appreciated until recently. It reminds us that ‘Everyone has duties to the community’, which is the setting for ‘the free and full development of his personality’. Though I like to say *their* personality, rather than his!

Eighteen months ago in Frascati, we spoke about radical collaboration. We recognised that silos are a luxury we can no longer afford and we committed to building alliances across faith communities, with secular actors, with Indigenous leaders and with youth movements.

That remains essential. But I believe that for collaboration to be truly radical it also needs to be *courageous*.

Courage can mean many things. Here, I am thinking specifically about the courage to relinquish the instinct to control: asking your networks to share platforms rather than guard them, to share data rather than hoard it, to share credit rather than compete for visibility.

Truly radical collaboration also asks us to take risks. Challenging fossil fuel dependency, confronting entrenched economic interests, addressing gender and racial inequities in decision-making — these are not comfortable tasks. They will provoke resistance. But courage is strengthened when it is collective.

Collaboration also requires trust. As noted in the work emerging so far from this group, building “genuine relational connectivity” means engaging in difficult conversations, acknowledging differences and historic exclusions too. It means welcoming scientific expertise as an ally in moral imagination. It means rejecting tokenism.

If our collaboration costs us nothing, it will achieve little. If it challenges us — personally and institutionally — it has the potential to transform.

Ultimately, this climate and nature crisis is not only a test of technological innovation. It is a test of solidarity. Can we move beyond narrow interests to embrace a shared responsibility for our common home?

I want to finish with some words often attributed to Francis of Assisi:

*Such love  
does the sky now pour  
that whenever I stand in a field,  
I have to wring out the light,  
when I get home.*

This week, let us stand in the field attentive to both grief and grace so we allow our hearts to be opened, not hardened. But let this also be a pivotal moment that will allow us to return from here, into our communities and our institutions ready to wring out the light! We need as much light as possible in these dark times. Women of faith, and our good male allies, we must be those light bringers!

This is the work before us. It is demanding, it is urgent. And it is, at its core, a moral call.

Let us answer it, together.