

The Future We Choose PDF

Christiana Figueres

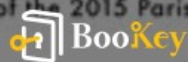
THE FUTURE WE CHOOSE



Surviving the Climate Crisis

Christiana Figueres and
Tom Rivett-Carnac

Architects of the 2015 Paris Agreement



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About the book

Exploring "The Future We Choose": A Call to Action

In her book, "The Future We Choose," Christiana Figueres, a pivotal figure behind the Paris Agreement, delivers a striking and urgent perspective on the climate crisis. This work serves as both a warning and a source of encouragement, laying out two contrasting scenarios for our future: one plagued by climate devastation and the other flourishing in sustainable success.

Figueres skillfully intertwines scientific knowledge with her heartfelt enthusiasm, motivating readers to see how their daily choices can significantly impact the planet. As we face a crucial decade, she urges individuals, communities, and governments to take bold and transformative actions that have the potential to alter our reality.

Join her on this powerful journey and uncover how united efforts can safeguard a habitable Earth for future generations.

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About the author

Profile: Christiana Figueres

Background:

Christiana Figueres, a prominent diplomat hailing from Costa Rica, has made significant contributions to the global efforts in combating climate change throughout her distinguished career.

Key Achievements:

- Position Held: Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) from 2010 to 2016.
- Milestone Event: Played a crucial role in the development and adoption of the groundbreaking Paris Agreement in 2015.

Reputation:

Figueres is widely recognized as a visionary leader who excels in building consensus among a range of stakeholders. Her expertise in environmental policy, paired with her unwavering optimism regarding humanity's ability to tackle climate challenges, stands out in her numerous writings, speeches, and activist initiatives.

Advocacy:

Through her work, Figueres has emerged as a powerful advocate for

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immediate and cooperative actions that aim to protect the future of our planet.

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The Future We Choose Summary

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The Future We Choose Summary Chapter List

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1. Chapter 1: Understanding the Urgency of Climate Change and Its Impact on Our Future

The opening chapter of "The Future We Choose" lays a foundational understanding of the critical state of our planet due to climate change, highlighting its urgency and the various implications it has on our future. Christiana Figueres, one of the lead architects of the Paris Agreement, underscores the profound reality of climate change and its impact on our daily lives, ecosystems, and future generations.

Central to this discussion is the concept of climate change as not just a distant threat, but as an emergent crisis that is already influencing weather patterns, sea levels, and global biodiversity. The rise in global temperatures resulting from carbon emissions is manifesting in extreme weather incidents, including hurricanes, droughts, floods, and wildfires, all of which are increasingly becoming commonplace. For instance, the devastating wildfires in Australia during the summer of 2019 and 2020 were intensified by climate change, highlighting why the urgency cannot be understated. These fires didn't just obliterate landscapes, they took human lives and caused unprecedented damage to wildlife and natural habitats, solidifying the reality that climate change is not an abstract concept, but a harsh truth that creates immediate and lasting harm.

Figueres elucidates that the most alarming aspect of climate change is the

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unprecedented rate at which it is occurring. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) provides a stark warning: we have about a decade to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions to avert the worst aspects of climate disruption. This time frame showcases the urgency of immediate and strategic action; we are standing at the threshold where choices made today will inevitably shape the living conditions of future generations.

Diving deeper, Figueres emphasizes the interconnectedness of various global issues exacerbated by climate change. Economic inequality, displacement due to climate-related disasters, and food security are intricately tied to environmental health. Vulnerable populations in developing countries are disproportionately affected, as they often lack resources to adapt to changes, illustrating the social justice dimensions of climate change. For example, parts of Bangladesh and subsistence farmers in the Sahel region of Africa are facing severe challenges due to changing precipitation patterns leading to food shortages and increased poverty—a cycle that perpetuates inequality and instability.

Moreover, Figueres argues that climate change is not merely an environmental issue but a multifaceted crisis that demands holistic solutions. Health problems related to pollution and changing climates are on the rise—respiratory diseases from poor air quality, and heat-related illnesses exacerbated by rising temperatures present serious public health challenges,

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that intersect with climate impacts. The global COVID-19 pandemic, while a separate crisis, highlighted systemic weaknesses in our society and has brought to light the necessity for sustainable living and resilience in the face of threats, including those posed by climate change.

Ultimately, the chapter embodies a call to action—a recognition that while the scenarios ahead may seem grim, they are not set in stone. Understanding the urgency and impact of climate change is the first critical step in mobilizing society towards effective action. Figueres invites readers to acknowledge that the choices we make today—individually and collectively—can lead us towards a more sustainable future. In exploring the negative trajectories, it becomes evident that hope lies not in despair, but in adapting to and mitigating climate impacts through innovative solutions, societal transformation, and global cooperation. The chapter concludes with an empowering reminder: that while the challenges may be daunting, they are not insurmountable if we act decisively and urgently.

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2. Chapter 2: Exploring the Two Scenarios: A World of Hope Versus a World of Despair

In Chapter 2 of "The Future We Choose," Christiana Figueres provides a compelling comparison of two divergent futures shaped by our current responses to climate change: a world of hope and a world of despair. Each scenario serves as a reflection of the choices we make today and highlights the significance of our collective actions. The exploration of these two scenarios lays the groundwork for understanding the ramifications of climate change, the potential of human ingenuity, and the urgent need for decisive action.

The world of despair is characterized by an unmitigated climate crisis, where failing to act, and the continuation of business as usual, leads to increased global temperatures, catastrophic weather events, and widespread ecological collapse. In this scenario, rising sea levels inundate coastal cities, displacing millions and causing vast humanitarian crises. Heatwaves and droughts affect agriculture, leading to food shortages and increased competition for resources. The social ramifications are severe: economic instability, mass migration, and geopolitical conflicts arise as countries struggle to cope with the impacts of climate change. In this bleak reality, the degradation of the environment intensifies issues such as poverty and inequality, leaving vulnerable communities to shoulder the burden.



Figueres emphasizes the urgency of this scenario by illustrating recent events that highlight these risks. For instance, the devastating wildfires that swept through Australia and California in recent years serve as a stark illustration of what happens when the climate warms. These natural disasters not only led to loss of life and property but also had lasting effects on air quality and public health. Similarly, hurricanes like Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Maria showcased the amplified power of storms fueled by warmer seas, decimating infrastructure and leaving viable communities struggling to rebuild. Such occurrences are no longer isolated incidents; they are increasingly recognized as the new normal in a world failing to act on climate change.

In stark contrast, the world of hope is a powerful vision of what is possible when humanity chooses to unite against the climate crisis. Figueres imagines cities buzzing with clean, renewable energy; designed with sustainability in mind, where public transport is predominant, air quality is enhanced, and green spaces flourish. In this hopeful future, global economies are transformed by the embrace of green technology and eco-friendly innovations. There is a shift from fossil fuel dependency to an economy powered by solar, wind, and other renewable resources, drastically reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

A shining example of the hopeful scenario can be seen in the strides made

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by countries like Denmark, where wind energy has become a significant part of the national energy grid—providing more than 47% of its total energy consumption as of 2019. By investing in renewable technologies, promoting energy efficiency, and fostering a culture of sustainability, Denmark demonstrates the potential to create a resilient economy while combating climate change.

The chapter also highlights the role of collective action in shaping this hopeful future. Communities around the world are embracing sustainable practices, advocating for policy changes, and driving business innovation in green technology. Responses to climate change are no longer isolated efforts; they are becoming global movements. Initiatives such as the Fridays for Future movement mobilized by youth climate activists, who demand urgent action, exemplify the power of grassroots engagement and public pressure on governments.

Figueres ultimately encourages readers to envision these futures not as distant possibilities but as reflections of the choices we make right now. The narrative is one of empowerment; by recognizing the ramifications of our actions—be it complacency leading to despair or decisive actions leading to hope—we have the power to steer our future. The chapter concludes with an appeal for visionary thinking, basic ethical responsibility, and the courage to seize the opportunity to create a sustainable world, underscoring that it is



still within our grasp to choose the world of hope over the world of despair.

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3. Chapter 3: The Path to a Sustainable Future: Key Actions and Innovations We Must Embrace

In Chapter 3 of "The Future We Choose," Christiana Figueres highlights a range of crucial actions and innovations that are paramount to transitioning towards a sustainable future. Emphasizing urgency and opportunity, Figueres argues that the actions we take today will define the world of tomorrow. She presents a roadmap that includes not just technological innovations but also systemic changes in policy, economy, and societal behavior.

A fundamental action needed is the swift transition to renewable energy sources. Figueres discusses how the adoption of solar, wind, and other renewable energies can drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions. For instance, she points out that in countries like Denmark and Germany, significant investments in wind energy have pushed them to the forefront of renewable energy production, showcasing a successful model that others can emulate. These countries serve as proof that commitment to green technology can yield both environmental and economic benefits, creating jobs in the energy sector while reducing dependency on fossil fuels.

Figueres also stresses the importance of improving energy efficiency. Innovations in building designs that prioritize energy use can lead to



substantial reductions in emissions. Smart grid technologies, for example, enable better energy management and increase the efficiency of electrical systems. The emergence of green architecture, evident in projects like the Bosco Verticale in Milan, Italy, which integrates nature into urban living by utilizing vertical forests, demonstrates how innovative design can lead to sustainable urban development.

Another critical area Figueres discusses is sustainable transportation. She emphasizes the need for cities to embrace public transportation, electric vehicles, and biking infrastructure. The case of Amsterdam is frequently cited—where cycling infrastructure has transformed the cityscape and lifestyle, resulting in lower carbon footprints and improved public health. By investing in sustainable transport options, cities can reduce vehicle emissions and encourage healthier commuting habits among their populations.

The chapter also delves into the significance of climate-smart agriculture. Figueres advocates for agricultural practices that not only contribute to food security but also restore ecosystems and reduce emissions. Techniques such as agroforestry, organic farming, and regenerative agriculture have proven effective. For instance, Bhutan's commitment to organic farming has not only improved the yield of crops but also preserved the local ecosystem, enhancing biodiversity and resilience against climate change.

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Moreover, Figueres highlights the role of technology and innovation in addressing climate change challenges. She notes that carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology, while still developing, has the potential to capture CO₂ emissions from fossil fuels and industrial processes, effectively neutralizing their environmental impact. Countries like Norway are pioneering CCS projects that demonstrate the viability of this technology, which could play a significant role in achieving net-zero emissions targets.

The author also stresses the need for policy changes that support these innovations. Implementing carbon pricing mechanisms, such as carbon taxes or cap-and-trade systems, can create economic incentives for businesses to reduce emissions. Figueres points to the positive impact these policies have had in countries like Sweden, where a carbon tax has significantly helped reduce emissions while promoting clean technology development.

In addition to international and governmental actions, Figueres underlines an essential component of the sustainable path—the active engagement of businesses and industries. Corporate responsibility in combating climate change can lead to groundbreaking commitments towards sustainability, as seen with companies like Unilever and Microsoft, both of which have pledged to achieve net-zero emissions in their operations by set target years. These commitments not only set industry standards but also shift consumer

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expectations towards more sustainable practices.

Finally, Figueres calls for a transformation in societal mindset regarding climate change. Engaging communities and individuals in sustainability efforts can be a game-changer. Grassroots movements, local initiatives such as urban gardening, and community renewable energy projects can empower citizens to take climate action into their own hands, fostering a culture of innovation and resilience on local levels.

In summary, Chapter 3 presents a comprehensive and actionable plan towards a sustainable future. By harnessing technological innovations, revamping policies, promoting sustainable practices in various sectors, and engaging individuals, we can create a collective force that propels humanity towards a healthier planet. Figueres' blend of optimism and urgency is infectious, pressing upon us the responsibility we carry in making choices that will not only shape our environment but secure a livable future for generations to come.

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4. Chapter 4: Engaging Citizens and Leaders: The Role of Collective Action in Climate Solutions

In Chapter 4 of "The Future We Choose," Christiana Figueres emphasizes the pivotal role of collective action in addressing climate change. She argues that individual efforts alone are insufficient to tackle the magnitude of the crisis we face; it is through united, organized movements that we can drive significant change and implement effective climate solutions.

The chapter begins by highlighting the power of grassroots mobilization, illustrating how engaged citizens can influence political agendas and policies. Figueres references prominent examples, such as the global youth climate strikes inspired by figures like Greta Thunberg. These movements have not only raised awareness of climate issues but have also pressured governments and corporations to take decisive action. The sheer scale of participation—from schoolchildren to seasoned activists—has demonstrated that collective voices can make substantial impacts, leading to legislative changes in various countries, increased commitments to carbon neutrality, and a reevaluation of energy policies.

Figueres stresses that collective action goes beyond mere protests and awareness campaigns; it requires an active engagement of citizens in the political process. She illustrates this through case studies of community-led



projects that emphasize local solutions to climate challenges. For instance, in various cities across the globe, citizens have banded together to promote urban farming, community solar power initiatives, and local recycling programs. These movements not only reduce carbon footprints but also foster a sense of community and empowerment among participants.

The author also addresses the role of leaders in advancing climate action. Collective action necessitates leadership from all sectors—government, corporations, and civil society. Figueres criticizes a common narrative that positions climate action solely as a top-down initiative, reminding readers that governments need to be responsive to the voices of the people. For example, she discusses how municipal leaders who adopt ambitious climate goals can catalyze change by engaging citizens in the development of local climate strategies. Cities like San Francisco and Copenhagen have not only set rigorous emission reduction targets but have also involved residents in the decision-making processes, proving that inclusive governance can yield innovative, community-backed solutions.

Moreover, Figueres highlights the importance of building coalitions between diverse groups—environmental activists, indigenous populations, business leaders, and marginalized communities. This intersectional approach is crucial to ensure that climate solutions are equitable and just. She provides the case of the "We Are Still In" campaign in the United States, where

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various actors, including states, cities, and businesses, have united to uphold commitments to the Paris Agreement despite federal withdrawal. This initiative demonstrates that collective determination to act on climate change can transcend political barriers and contribute to the national and global climate goals.

In conclusion, Chapter 4 underscores the necessity of collective action in driving climate solutions. Figueres calls on individuals to engage, organize, and advocate for robust policies that address the climate crisis while also urging leaders to listen and respond to their constituents. The chapter leaves readers with a sense of urgency and empowerment, reinforcing that our commitment to change must be a shared endeavor, with united efforts paving the way toward a sustainable future.

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5. Chapter 5: Embracing Positivity: How Hope and Determination Can Shape Our Climate Future

In the face of a daunting climate crisis, it can often feel overwhelming to confront the scale of the challenges ahead. However, in “The Future We Choose”, Christiana Figueres emphasizes the importance of embracing positivity as a driving force in shaping our climate future. Hope and determination are not merely feel-good sentiments; they are essential components of the proactive mindset required to foster significant change in society and environmental policy.

Figueres articulates the essence of hope—rooted in a clear vision of a sustainable and equitable world. This vision is not abstract; it exists in the tangible achievements that have been made across the globe. From the rise of renewable energy technologies to transformative policy shifts, each step forward demonstrates that a climate-resilient future is possible. By focusing on these successes, communities can galvanize support, build momentum, and catalyze further innovations.

The notion that hope is actionable is crucial. In this chapter, Figueres delves into the stories of individuals and organizations that have taken hope into their own hands. For instance, the story of the Solar Sister initiative illustrates how entrepreneurship can address climate change and empower



women simultaneously. This initiative provides women in Africa with the resources and education needed to sell solar lamps, not only lighting their communities sustainably but also contributing to local economies. Such examples showcase how hope, when nurtured and translated into action, leads to pragmatic solutions that resonate on multiple levels.

Determination is another fundamental pillar of this chapter. Figueres articulates how relentless commitment can drive progress in the face of opposition or setbacks. She shares the story of the Fridays for Future movement, ignited by the courageous activism of young climate leaders like Greta Thunberg. Their determination to demand governmental action on climate change has mobilized millions worldwide, proving that collective will can create a powerful narrative that compels leaders to align policies with the science of climate change.

Furthermore, Figueres emphasizes the interconnectedness of hope and determination. They are not standalone traits; they reinforce and amplify each other. When communities rally around a hopeful vision, they become more determined to overcome obstacles, and conversely, determination fuels hope when faced with dire circumstances. This reciprocal relationship is vital as societies navigate the complexities of climate change, underscoring that actively participating in the solution—whether through civic engagement, volunteering, or advocacy—can lead to a renewed sense of

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purpose.

The chapter also highlights the importance of narratives in shaping public perception and action around climate change. A positive narrative can inspire action and incite change, while a narrative steeped in despair often leads to paralysis. Figueres calls on us to become storytellers of hope, framing the conversation around climate action not only in terms of the problems we face but also in terms of the solutions that await and the new world we can build together. This reframing can make climate action appealing and inclusive, breaking down barriers that previously hindered transformative dialogue.

Additionally, Figueres addresses the need to shift perspectives on climate change from a burden to an opportunity. The transition to a sustainable economy is not merely a necessity but a chance to innovate, create jobs, and enhance quality of life. This reframing invites individuals and businesses alike to envision a future where sustainability drives economic growth. Understanding this potential can make the task ahead appear less daunting and more enticing, encouraging stakeholders across sectors to invest in climate solutions.

Finally, the chapter closes by encouraging a collaborative spirit. Figueres stresses that hope and determination are most potent when celebrated and

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nourished within communities. The power of collective action and support can create a ripple effect that inspires more individuals to contribute to climate solutions. Collaborative efforts, fueled by shared visions of a sustainable future, can break down silos and unite diverse groups in a common cause. From grassroots organizations to corporate responsibility initiatives, every contribution matters, and each effort brings the world closer to a climate-positive reality.

In summation, Chapter 5 of “The Future We Choose” illustrates the profound impact of positivity—hope and determination—as catalysts for change in the realm of climate action. By integrating a hopeful perspective into the broader climate discourse and embracing collective action, society can foster a resilient approach to one of the most pressing challenges of our time. Ultimately, this chapter serves as a powerful reminder that while the journey to a sustainable future may be fraught with challenges, it is also an opportunity for collective triumph.

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