

# Thunberg has hope for climate, despite leaders' inaction

By FRANK JORDANS  
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Climate activist Greta Thunberg during a radio statement at the 'Sveriges Radio' in Stockholm, Sweden, Sunday, June 14, 2020. In a wide-ranging monologue on Swedish public radio, teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg recounts how world leaders queued up to have their picture taken with her even as they shied away from acknowledging the grim scientific fact that time is running out to curb global warming. (Photo/Mattias Osterlund)

BERLIN (AP) — Preparing for her appearance before the U.N. General Assembly last fall, Greta Thunberg found herself constantly interrupted by world leaders, including U.N. chief Antonio Guterres and German

Chancellor Angela Merkel, who had formed a queue to speak to her and take selfies.

“Jacinda Ardern, the prime minister of New Zealand, waits in line but doesn’t quite make it before it’s time for the event to start,” Thunberg recalls.

Such surreal memories for a teenager form the opening to a [75-minute monologue](#) broadcast on Swedish public radio Saturday that soon shifts to the serious matter of climate change that’s at the heart of Thunberg’s work.

The 17-year-old has become a global figurehead of the [youth climate movement](#) since she started her one-woman protests outside the Swedish parliament in 2018.

Thunberg’s [blunt words](#) to presidents and prime ministers, peppered with scientific facts about the need to urgently cut greenhouse gas emissions, have won her praise and [awards](#), but also the [occasional pushback](#) and even death threats.

To Thunberg’s disappointment, her message doesn’t seem to be getting through even to those leaders who applaud her work.

The message is certainly stark: Thunberg [cites a U.N. report](#) that estimates the world can only keep emitting the current amount of carbon dioxide for the next seven-and-a-half years. Any longer and it becomes impossible to meet the Paris climate accord’s ambitious goal of keeping global

temperatures from rising by more than 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) this century.

Most governments refuse to accept the idea that the world has only a fixed “carbon budget” left, because it implies that a sudden shift away from fossil fuel will need to happen in just a few years.

“Do you remember the London Olympics? ‘Gangnam Style’ or the first ‘Hunger Games’ movie?” Thunberg asks her audience on Swedish radio station P1. “Those things all happened about seven or eight years ago. That’s the amount of time we’re talking about.”

Her months-long journey from Sweden to America’s West Coast and back — by train, [sailboat](#) and an electric car loaned by Arnold Schwarzenegger — highlighted the impact that global warming is already having, from melting glaciers to fiercer forest fire seasons, Thunberg said.

It also opened her eyes to economic and social disparities affecting in particular [Indigenous, Black and minority communities](#), [voices she has sought to amplify](#) in the climate debate.

“The climate and sustainability crisis is not a fair crisis,” Thunberg says. “The ones who’ll be hit hardest from its consequences are often the ones who have done the least to cause the problem in the first place.”

Her frustration extends to journalists who want to know about “the real Greta” but interrupt her when she talks about the science of climate change.

“People want something simple and concrete, and they want me to be naive, angry, childish, and emotional,” Thunberg says. “That is the story that sells and creates the most clicks.”

Thunberg blasts governments and businesses that use what she calls “creative accounting” to make their emissions look lower than they are and apply the word “green” to industries that are not.

“The emperors are naked. Every single one,” she says. “It turns out our whole society is just one big nudist party.”

Some critics have accused Thunberg of being a doom-monger. But she insists that her message is one of hope, not despair.

“There are signs of change, of awakening,” she says. “Just take the ‘Me Too’ movement, ‘Black Lives Matter’ or the school strike movement (for climate action) for instance,” she says, adding that the world has passed a “social tipping point” where it becomes impossible to look away.

The global response to the COVID-19 pandemic may provide a necessary wake-up call, she suggests.

“The corona tragedy of course has no long term positive effects on the climate, apart from one thing only: namely the insight into how you should perceive and treat an emergency. Because during the corona crisis we suddenly act with necessary force.”

# Greta Thunberg hits out at leaders who use her fame to 'look good'

Climate change campaigner said after UN summit, Angela Merkel queued up for a selfie with her

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jun/27/greta-thunberg-hits-out-at-leaders-who-use-her-fame-to-look-good#img-1>

PA Media

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Environmental campaigner **Greta Thunberg** has hit out at world leaders for wanting to be pictured with her to “look good”.

The 17-year-old became a global star thanks to her activism, and gave a **powerful speech at the United Nations** climate change summit in September in which she told world leaders: “You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words ... how dare you!”

As part of a series she has made about her campaigning for Swedish radio during the coronavirus lockdown, Thunberg revealed that the German chancellor, **Angela Merkel**, had queued up to have a “selfie” with the teenager at the international gathering in New York.

On the radio programme, she was critical of the way high-ranking figures had behaved after her UN appearance.

She said: “Presidents, prime ministers, kings and princesses came and wanted to talk to me.

“They saw me and suddenly saw the chance that they could take a photo with me for their Instagram account. Then the hashtag #savetheplanet.

“It seemed as if they had forgotten for a moment to be ashamed that their generation had let future generations down.”

In follow-up comments made to the BBC, Thunberg, who has more than 4m Twitter followers, said she had a “dislike” for politicians who wanted to capitalise on her fame by being photographed alongside her.

“To be fair, it was not only her, it was many,” she said, when asked about the situation with Merkel.

“And those kinds of things happen all the time. People just want to stand next to me and other climate activists.

“They can post it on social media and it makes them look good, it makes them seem like they care.”

In January, Thunberg was pictured with the Prince of Wales after he gave a speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Thunberg did not refer to Charles, a longstanding environmentalist, when making her comments, however.

When asked whether global leaders vying for picture opportunities made her feel “used”, the founder of the Schools Strike for Climate movement said: “Yes, people definitely see me sometimes as someone to stand next to, to look good, and that is something I really dislike because that’s not the sort of person I want to be.”

During the 25-minute interview, Thunberg said she was hopeful that the changes made by governments and people across the globe in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic would help to change the perception around the action required to tackle global warming.

The advocate has previously slammed the UK’s declining carbon emissions figures as “creative accounting” and has pushed for firmer action to be taken.

“If anything it [coronavirus] will change the way we perceive and treat crises because it shows that during a crisis you act with necessary force,” she told the BBC.

“And it has also opened up the discussion around how much we value human life.

“For example, people say they are ready to sacrifice the economy.

“They are saying we will do what it takes because we cannot put a price on a human life.

“If you introduce that logic for the climate, for instance, then that opens up many possibilities and it changes the discussion of the debate.”

## Greta Thunberg and children's group hit back at attempt to throw out climate case

This article is more than 1 month old

**Brazil, France and Germany say UN can't hear complaint against five countries of flouting child rights to clean air**



Greta Thunberg addressing a climate rally in Brussels in March. She and 15 other children have brought a legal case with the UN committee on the rights of the child against the most polluting countries. Photograph: John Thys/AFP via Getty Images

**Fiona Harvey** *Environment correspondent*

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**Greta Thunberg** and a group of other children have pushed forward their legal complaint at the UN against countries they accuse of endangering children’s wellbeing through the climate crisis, despite attempts to have it thrown out.

The 16 children, including the Swedish environmental activist, lodged a legal case with the UN committee on the rights of the child against Argentina, Brazil, France, Germany and Turkey last September.

They alleged that the countries – which are legally obliged to protect children under the UN convention on the rights of the child – breached those obligations by failing to protect them from the “direct, imminent and foreseeable risk to their health and wellbeing” posed by the climate crisis.

Three countries – Brazil, France and Germany – have replied to the petition, saying it should not be admissible by the committee.

But on Tuesday the children hit back, arguing that the countries should be judged by their behaviour on the climate crisis. They said the three countries were all failing to cut their emissions in line with the [Paris agreement](#).

In response to the objections raised by Brazil, France and Germany, the children said they had been “directly and foreseeably injured” by the greenhouse gas emissions that those governments had allowed to change the climate.

They have submitted new scientific research on how the countries are failing in their obligations, and said it would be “futile” to argue their case in separate domestic lawsuits in each country, as that “would not provide the type of far-reaching international relief needed to reverse climate change”.

Although 140 countries, excluding the US, have ratified the [UN convention on the rights of the child](#), only 46 governments have adopted a [protocol that allows for this kind of legal action](#). Of those, the five biggest greenhouse gas emitters – Argentina, Brazil, France, Germany and Turkey – are targeted in the lawsuit, which has been brought by the children with the backing of the green campaigning group Earthjustice and the international law firm Hausfeld.

There has been no decision yet from the UN committee on whether to hear the legal complaint.

The lawsuit joins a growing number of attempts to bring climate cases to court, alleging that government or businesses have flouted the law or failed in their international obligations. One of the most successful has been in the [Netherlands, in the Urgenda case](#), in which judges found the government must change its policies to tackle emissions and the climate crisis.

In the UK, campaigners brought a successful legal challenge that found the [government was wrong to allow the expansion of Heathrow airport](#) without taking into account its obligations under the Paris agreement. The ruling will have implications for other government plans likely to raise emissions, such as [road-building schemes](#).

[More than 1,300 legal actions](#) have been brought around the world to try to force governments to confront the climate crisis. More than 1,000 are in the US; the highest profile case there, the Juliana case, was [dismissed by judges earlier this year](#). There are similar cases ongoing in 28 countries including Ireland, Australia, Spain and New Zealand.

## 'Tipping point': Greta Thunberg hails Black Lives Matter protests

People are realising ‘we cannot keep looking away from these things’, says climate activist

**Jessica Murray**

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It was always the side for justice and it feels like we have passed some kind of social tipping point where people are starting to realise that we cannot keep eating away from these things. We cannot keep sweeping these things under the carpet - these injustices. People don't want to hear me talk about this and people won't be able to handle this so they will try to silence me and some people know no limits. They are trying to silence you for a reason and that reason is because you are too loud and if you are loud, that means you are having a difference and having an impact.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=3&v=dSs4nk6gwwE&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=dSs4nk6gwwE&feature=emb_logo)

[Greta Thunberg](#) has said the Black Lives Matter protests show society has reached a tipping point where injustice can no longer be ignored, but that she believes a “green recovery plan” from the coronavirus pandemic will not be enough to solve the climate crisis.

Reflecting on the protests that have swept the globe in recent weeks, the Swedish climate activist [told the BBC](#): “It feels like we have passed some kind of social tipping point where people are starting to realise that we cannot keep looking away from these things. We cannot keep sweeping these things under the carpet, these injustices.

“People are starting to find their voice, to sort of understand that they can actually have an impact.”

The coronavirus pandemic had given her hope by showing those in power are able to act when faced with an emergency, but the climate crisis needed to be treated with the same urgency, she said.

“It shows that in a crisis, you act, and you act with necessary force,” she said. “Suddenly people in power are saying they will do whatever it takes since you cannot put a price on human life.

“The main message that underlines everything we [as climate activists] do is, ‘Listen to the science, listen to the experts’, and all of a sudden you hear everyone everywhere is saying that. It feels like the corona crisis has changed the role of science in our society.”

The 17-year-old has been using her time in lockdown to study, despite taking a sabbatical year from school to travel and campaign on the climate crisis. She sailed across the Atlantic last year to attend UN climate summits, eventually ending up in Madrid to address talks originally to have been hosted in Chile.

“I thought I’m just home anyway, so I might as well just jump in the class ... in my free time, as a bonus. It doesn’t really count, but I love studying so much,” she said. “I’m really the last one to complain because I haven’t been that affected by this.”

She has also used her time to produce a radio programme, [Humanity has not yet failed](#), reflecting on some of her experiences and meetings over the last year and looking at some of the challenges the world faces in tackling the environmental crisis.

“The climate and ecological crisis cannot be solved within today’s political and economic systems,” she said. “That isn’t an opinion. That’s a fact.”