



**Keynote speech for Dr. Helder Da Costa**

***“Redefining Global Security: Climate action, peace, and critical role of g7+ Nations”***

***Climate Integrity Summit 2025***

***Wednesday, 12 February 2025***

***Parliament House, Canberra, Australia***

Dr. Richard Denniss, Executive Director, The Australia Institute

Honorable Members of Parliament

Excellencies, Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

On behalf of the g7+, its members, and leadership, I extend my deepest gratitude to the Australia Institute for the opportunity to share our perspectives on global challenges that disproportionately affect the most vulnerable nations, including those within the g7+ group.

To provide context, the Group of Seven Plus, or g7+, is an intergovernmental organization of 20 countries spanning different regions, united by a shared vision of achieving lasting peace and stability.

This vision is not aspirational but rooted in the lived experiences of nations that have transitioned from multiple crises toward stability and development.

To realize this vision, we advocate for effective national and international policies centered on long-term stability, resilience, and self-reliance. These include principles such as national ownership, inclusive politics, and accountability—

fundamental to building sustainable peace and development.

These principles were formally embedded in the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, a framework agreed upon in 2011 with international partners, including Australia and other OECD donors and civil society organizations. This framework was shaped by the real experiences of our member countries, providing a foundation for more effective collaboration in overcoming fragility.

When the g7+ was established in 2010, global discourse largely focused on **fragility, extreme poverty, and conflict**. The world's major powers were engaged in the so-called Global War on Terrorism. Climate change, while increasingly recognized, was not as central to international discussions as it is today. The Paris Agreement had not yet been signed, and the full impact of escalating geopolitical tensions was yet to unfold.

However, many g7+ countries in the Global South continued to struggle with the legacies of colonialism and Cold War-era interventions, including civil wars, extremism, and economic instability.

However, while global headlines painted a picture of relative stability in the world due to any direct confrontation between global powers, many g7+ and other Global South countries continued to struggle with the legacies of colonialism and Cold War interventions. Civil wars, extremism, and economic hardships remained endemic.

Few, if any, of these nations had achieved even a single benchmark under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In 2010, Haiti was devastated by a catastrophic earthquake. South Sudanese were still fighting for their right to self-determination. Afghanistan was grappling with severe insurgencies, claiming hundreds of innocent lives daily. Timor-Leste, my own country, was still recovering from civil unrest. These, as few examples represent the wider realities

that stood in stark contrast to the notion of a peaceful world.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Today, the world is navigating an **era of “polycrises”**—a term that encapsulates the interconnected nature of climate change, geopolitical tensions, economic instability, and rapid technological advancements, including artificial intelligence. While global challenges transcend borders, their impact is disproportionately severe in fragile states, which lack the resilience to absorb shocks.

**Crucially, these vulnerabilities are not inherent characteristics of our nations but rather the result of explicit and implicit actions of powerful global actors.** Colonization, foreign interventions under the guise of the Cold War, resource exploitation, and geopolitical maneuvering have left deep scars on fragile states.

Take climate change as an example. Developed countries—despite making up a small fraction of the world's population—have historically been the largest contributors to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions since the Industrial Revolution. **Their pursuit of unchecked industrialization has driven the world to the brink of environmental entropy.** What is even more alarming is that, despite clear scientific evidence, many of these nations continue to deflect responsibility for their disproportionate role in this crisis.

The consequences of climate change caused by such explicit actions of industrialized nations are disproportionately severe for fragile and conflict-affected states. Rising sea levels, prolonged droughts, and extreme weather events are compounding existing vulnerabilities, leading to displacement, food insecurity, and heightened risks of conflict.

Climate-related disasters have displaced millions, exacerbating hunger and

poverty in fragile contexts. Due to weak institutions, lack of needed resilience, people in these places are disproportionately affected. Increasingly frequent and severe climate hazards threaten to worsen poverty, hunger and displacement, and can lead to protracted crises which will make it even harder to cope with crises.

The resulting pressures would place an unsustainable burden on an already overstretched global humanitarian system. According to the IMF, under a high-emissions scenario, conflict-related deaths as a share of the population in fragile countries could rise by nearly 10% by 2060 if current trends continue. **Pacific nations, including some g7+ members, are among the most affected. Some island nations face existential threats due to rising sea levels, and many others struggle with the increasing frequency of climate-induced disasters.**

In my own country, the tropical Cyclone Seroja passed close to the coast of Timor-Leste on 4 April 2021 and the slow-moving storm brought heavy rain that caused floods and landslides, leaving a dozen of people killed and approximately 10,000 people were affected.

**Countries in Africa such as Somalia and South Sudan are highly exposed to severe climate events, including droughts, floods; tow opposite extremes. These events have precipitated school shutdowns months in 2024 in South Sudan**

The inequality in climate change is not just about who contributes the most to the problem—it extends to the way the world responds to it. Climate action, intended to mitigate and reverse the impact of climate change, is itself marked by injustice. Wealthy and stable countries have the resources to shield themselves from the worst consequences of natural disasters.

**Meanwhile, vulnerable nations, particularly those in the g7+, lack the means**

**to cope with climate-induced catastrophes. In fragile states, the impact of these crises lingers far longer than in resilient economies. The aftermath of a flood in Spain, for instance, is vastly different from that in South Sudan.**

More developed nations have the ability to adapt to a changing climate. They can afford to transition to renewable energy sources, **whereas many of the least developed countries still struggle to secure access to even the most basic, traditional energy sources.** While today's developed nations were building infrastructure that made them resilient to crises, fragile states were still grappling with the lasting consequences of colonization and Cold War-era conflicts.

In other words, **we were deprived of the opportunity to catch the train of Renaissance, industrialization, modernization, and economic development—and we missed that journey.** Now, as the world moves toward climate adaptation, artificial intelligence, and resilience-building, we risk being left behind once again.

If this trajectory continues, **Yuval Noah Harari's prediction**—that a large portion of humanity will become irrelevant—will materialize first in us: the 1.5 billion people of fragile and conflict-affected states.

This is not mere rhetoric; it is a harsh reality we are already confronting. Addressing it requires collective global action. **Our call is not just about human solidarity; it is about shared prosperity, stability, and the future of all nations.**

As a collective, the g7+ plays a crucial role in advocating for climate justice by amplifying the voices of fragile and conflict-affected states in global climate negotiations. The g7+ attempt to ensure that the global climate policies are tailored to address the unique challenges faced by fragile states—such as weak governance, limited infrastructure, and recurring conflicts—which often prevent

them from effectively responding to and recovering from climate shocks. Moreover, the group actively pushes for increased and easy and flexible access to climate finance that is both predictable and accessible, emphasizing the need for simplified funding mechanisms that consider the realities of fragile contexts.

By fostering solidarity among its members and engaging with international partners, the g7+ strives to bridge the gap between climate action and peacebuilding, ensuring that climate resilience efforts contribute to long-term stability and sustainable development.

As part of our collective advocacy, we recently issued a joint letter calling for increased access to climate finance, streamlining the bureaucracy, and localizing the execution of climate finances. The letter that was sent to UN Secretary General, World Bank President, IMF and presidencies of COPs was featured in more than 90 medial outlets.

Against this backdrop, I would like to leave you with four key points as our collective aspiration:

**First:** While international affairs have long been driven by *Realpolitik*, leading to geopolitical and geoeconomic competition, contemporary global challenges—especially climate change—demand a paradigm shift. **Human solidarity must replace narrow national interests in shaping global discourse and action.** The “we first” approach adopted by developed nations will only exacerbate these crises.

In our quest for globalization, the world remains deeply interdependent, making the principle of "no one is safe until everyone is safe" more relevant than ever.

Developed countries bear a disproportionate responsibility for many of the global crises we face today, particularly climate change. Given their historical contribution to environmental degradation, they must lead the way in reversing

the damage.

The G20 nations, which collectively account for 75% of global greenhouse gas emissions, hold the power to set ambitious, 1.5°C-aligned climate targets for 2030 and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. If these targets are met, global warming could be limited to 1.7°C, offering a critical opportunity to preserve the 1.5°C goal.

However, achieving this must be done with genuine climate integrity. This requires a commitment to transparent, robust action—not through double standards or short-term solutions that undermine trust and slow progress. Only through authentic and sustained efforts can we hope to address the climate crisis and ensure a sustainable future for all.

**Second:** There is a significant gap in climate adaptation, with least developed countries—particularly those affected by conflict and fragility—falling far behind in the global race to build climate resilience. These nations face a dual challenge: not only do they lack the financial resources and infrastructure needed to adapt, but they are also disproportionately impacted by climate-induced disasters that they had little role in causing.

**Currently available adaptation finance remains woefully inadequate compared to the actual needs of these vulnerable nations.** Recognizing this, the G7+ has made a collective plea for adaptation finance to be doubled by 2026, though even this increase would cover only 60% of what is required. The gap highlights the urgent need for equitable access to climate finance and a fundamental shift in global funding priorities.

**Additionally, global efforts to push forward climate adaptation without due consideration for fragile countries—many of which rely heavily on revenues from natural resources such as gas and oil—can be a double-edged sword.**

The rapid transition away from fossil fuels, while necessary for global sustainability, is already pushing several resource-dependent economies deeper into economic fragility. Without alternative revenue streams, economic diversification strategies, and tailored support, these countries risk being left behind, further exacerbating instability and poverty.

Therefore, our countries need support in our efforts to diversify economies and build climate resilience.

The need to transform to climate-resilient development – in which climate change mitigation and adaptation are integrated with sustainable development – is particularly urgent in these fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCAS)

**Third:** The current geopolitical and geoeconomic fragmentation among global powers has severely impacted poorer nations, particularly those that have long relied on the solidarity of the international community. Many conflict-affected and fragile states are once again being used as battlegrounds for competing political and economic interests, caught in the crossfire of a renewed struggle for global influence. Instead of genuine support for their development and stability, these nations are increasingly subjected to transactional engagements, where assistance is driven by strategic calculations rather than long-term partnerships.

This replicates the Cold War era, whose legacy continues to cast long shadows over many fragile states, leaving behind instability, economic stagnation, and deep-rooted divisions. **We must not allow history to repeat itself.**

We urge the international community to move away from short-term, transactional, interest-driven engagements and instead build genuine partnerships based on mutual respect, trust, and shared prosperity.

**Fourth and Final:** Australia, as a neighbor and a global actor, has an integral role to play in supporting the fragile nations, particularly those in the Pacific. As a developed nation with unique geographic proximity and shared interests in the Pacific, Australia's support can significantly contribute to building resilience in these countries. This includes financial commitments to climate adaptation, promoting sustainable economic development, and strengthening the capacity of Pacific nations to respond to crises—both natural and man-made.

Australia's long-standing relationship with the region, coupled with its leadership in international forums, positions it as a key partner in fostering peace, stability, and prosperity in the Pacific and beyond.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

**Peace, stability and shared prosperity in the world rest in peace and stability in conflict affected countries as much as it is contingent in the actions of the mighty powers.** The path forward demands us to take responsibility—not only for our own actions but for the collective well-being of humanity.

Recognizing this fact, the g7+ is committed to working with Australia and the global community to forge a future where no nation is left behind, especially those most vulnerable to the twin crises of climate change and geopolitical instability. Through solidarity, partnerships, and shared determination, we can ensure that every nation, regardless of its size or fragility, has the opportunity to thrive.

We must act now, not just for the benefit of the fragile states, but for the stability and security of the entire global community.

Thank you.