

Al Gore speaks at London Business School

“We are witnessing a collision between our civilization and the earth,” warned Al Gore, the former US vice-president, speaking at the School this week as part of the Distinguished Speaker Series.



The former vice-president delivered a chilling but inspiring call for the audience to listen to the legion of scientists convinced we are approaching environmental meltdown, and to take action.

Mr Gore championed sustainability issues during his eight years as vice-president to Bill Clinton. The author of *Earth in the Balance*, he chaired the president's council for business and sustainable development and helped secure agreement on the Kyoto protocol, the convention on climate change.

Making his case for an economic approach to environmental concerns, Gore addressed the rapid and dangerous rate at which the atmosphere is thinning, glaciers are retreating (in 15 years there will be no glaciers on Mt. Kilimanjaro) and sea levels are rising. “The global environmental challenge is the challenge for the new century,” he said.

He pointed to evidence that showed how the world is heating up at dangerous levels. The 10 hottest years on record occurred in the last 13 years, with 1998 as the warmest year. The 2003 heat wave in Europe left 11,400 dead in France. Storms are increasing in their velocity and frequency. Florida suffered \$25 billion dollars worth of damage this year alone. He focused on the arctic, which absorbs 95 percent of the sun's energy. In the last 40 years, the ice has thinned by 40 percent, and if it continues at the same rate, will soon cease to exist.

Concluding the talk, he used his red laser pointer to highlight our tiny, faded blue earth on photos taken from space. “Everything that's ever happened in history has happened there,” Gore said. “It's our only home, so we have to make some very basic choices and keep our eyes on the prize.”

His speech, which earned him a standing ovation, closed with a plea to students to consider the environment in their drive for business success. Future leaders must tackle what is, in his eyes, the most “worthy generational challenge of all.”

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