



Earth Day and Green Mission Alliance

Welcome remarks by Ambassador Pascale Baeriswyl

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Excellencies, colleagues, friends,

After this beautiful and instructive ecological walk on the Highline, let me say how proud I am for us to walk the talk for sustainability together by forming our 633 Third Ave Green Mission Alliance: ten missions, representing all corners of the world. We celebrate several small successes today: the adoption of our charter, the many concrete steps already implemented individually and the successful first outreach to the management of our building. We will certainly also continue the dialogue with our famous neighbor, the governor.

But first, some history: What started Earth Day? The way astronomer Neil deGrasse Tyson tells it, it all started in December 1968, when humankind leaves Earth for the first time. Apollo 8 orbits the moon and while Earth rises above the lunar landscape, a famous photo is captured, called Earthrise*. A picture of the Earth without color-coded countries. It was and is Earth, as only nature would have you view it and it led to founding Earth Day two years later: not an international day, rather a day without borders, where we come together and acknowledge Earth in its entirety.

“Think globally, act locally” has been a slogan ever since. From us individuals, to our teams, the building and the city: everyone can contribute to a better environment. Besides our own building, another, more famous one, the Empire State, will show the colors of Earth this week. And the city also addresses its youngest: the Brooklyn Children’s Museum asks children to explore Earth’s ecosystems and animals through crafts, science demos or live music. As their slogan goes: *Earth rocks!* But let there be no misunderstanding: the climate youth has taken to the streets again, expressing its anger for good reason: we live in climate urgency.

So, zooming back out and looking at our planet as a whole, 50 years after the astronauts took their first photo, we see that Earth as whole is more vulnerable than ever. It is in pain. We urgently have to try to solve reach the Sustainable Development Goals. This is a main purpose of our work at the United Nations. So, when we gather in Glasgow for COP 26 in November, we have to prove that we are serious about implementing our commitments.

Colleagues, in order to symbolize our individual, local and global actions, we have adopted a Gray Birch tree in the name of our Alliance. This slender and resilient tree has for centuries been a symbol of new beginnings, new dawn, renewal, restoration and regeneration. It makes even more sense after the tough year we all have been through, and with all the global challenges ahead!

Let's take the common commitment of our missions to the next level. Let us really walk that talk!



* *Earthrise*, taken on December 24, 1968,
by Apollo 8 astronaut William Anders.