Oslo, Norway 9 May 2012.

The Elders, an independent group of global leaders lead by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, called for "bold action" when world leaders assemble in Brazil in June for the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development.

Joined by the so-called “Youngers”, the Elders took their campaign for “the well being of the generations to come” to Oslo in Norway on 9 May.

Three of the Elders, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Mary Robinson, the former President of Ireland, and Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Prime Minister of Norway, discussed the challenges facing world leaders at Rio, in an open meeting joined by “Youngers” Esther Agbarakwe (27) of Nigeria and Marvin Nala (23) from China.
The Elders have held online discussions on the future of the planet with young leaders from around the world for the last few months which will culminate in a public debate between “Elders” and “Youngers” at the Rio+20 Conference.

Mary Robinson deplored the “lack of urgency” which she said could partly be blamed on the fact that the spotlight had been on “cuddly polar bears on drifting ice” rather then on people.

“We have to put the emphasis on people and recognize that the problem is here and now. People are suffering and finding it more and more difficult to put food on the table in an unpredictable world where there are no seasons anymore,” Ms. Robinson said.

All three Elders called for young leaders to put pressure on politicians who normally thought only two to three years ahead. It was Ms Robinson’s view that, “We need the enthusiasm, excitement and positive energy of youth to put pressure on leaders to take decisions”.

When asked by the moderator, Norwegian TV journalist, Siri Lill Mannes to give one sentence of advice to young leaders, Ms. Brundtland answered, “Be yourself and then think long-term.”

Desmond Tutu answered, “Care”.

And Mary Robinson said, “Be yourself and then think long-term, care and involve others”. 

Useful links:
Chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, The Elders is an independent group of global leaders who work together for peace and human rights. They were brought together in 2007 by Nelson Mandela, who is not an active member of the group but remains an Honorary Elder.