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For immediate release:

FORMER UN CLIMATE CHIEF MENTORS WOMEN LEADERS TO MOBILISE BOLD ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

- **Global leader and former head of the UNFCCC, Christiana Figueres, broke the mould on climate negotiations as architect of the 2015 Paris Agreement**
- **She translates her approach into a roadmap for influence by mentoring emerging women climate change negotiators ahead of COP25 in Madrid**
- **“If there was an urgent need for gritty determination, we need it more this year than ever before,” said Figueres, in private mentoring discussions**
- **Figueres undertakes the mentoring in collaboration with Homeward Bound, a global network of women leaders from a STEMM background**

Christiana Figueres, the former United Nations climate chief, has thrown her influence behind a global group of emerging women leaders in a bid to bring a new style of leadership on climate change, ahead of the upcoming climate negotiations (COP25) in Madrid.

Figueres, known for her distinctive brand of collaborative leadership and diplomacy, brokered the landmark Paris Agreement in 2015, defying the odds to unite nearly 200 countries on accelerating efforts to reduce carbon emissions and keep global warming below two degrees.

In 2018 Figueres joined the faculty of [Homeward Bound](#), a global leadership initiative for women with a background in STEMM fields (science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine), whose focus is on bringing 1,000 women from around the world into leadership for the benefit of the planet within a decade. Up to 100 women participate annually in a transformational program covering leadership, strategy and visibility over 12 months. The program culminates in a three-week voyage to Antarctica, with the [largest ever female expedition to Antarctica currently underway](#) with the program's fourth cohort. Figueres travelled to Antarctica in 2019 as a speaker and facilitator for the women on board. Now she's accelerating her commitment by mentoring 20 members of the Homeward Bound network who will be leading, participating in or observing the negotiations at COP25 and beyond.

In mentoring the Homeward Bound leaders, Ms Figueres called for bold action at COP25, saying: “The grief and anger and energy that's out on the streets needs to be turned into optimism and action. If there was an urgent need for gritty determination, we need it more this year than ever before.”



“I see Homeward Bound as playing an important role in changing the tone of the global conversation on both leadership and climate change,” Ms Figueres said. “I have devoted most of my professional life to these challenges, so I always look forward to learning from, and sharing experiences with these talented and determined women.”

In sharing her successful approach and wider leadership experience as a roadmap for this diverse group of climate leaders, Ms Figueres showed how women in leadership, at their best, bring integrity, collaboration and a global and compassionate view:

“When you negotiate, enter knowing what you want out of it, but more important is to know the other’s position. To say, “Can I borrow your shoes for a minute?” and stand in their shoes and understand their perspective. If you stand on your shoreline and look at someone else’s shore you will always have the river between you. If you swim across the river and you can stand on the other shoreline, you can see the river is flowing in the same direction.”

Research shows [women outperform men in 17 of 19 core leadership capabilities](#). Although women form nearly half of the workforce, they comprise fewer than one in five CEOs, a figure that is repeated across geographies and sectors — including, crucially, government. In STEMM fields the structural barriers are even more entrenched: fewer than one in 10 senior leaders are female. A research review by Homeward Bound (see fact sheet attached) illustrates the significant impediments to leadership faced by women in STEMM, and the power of mentoring and sponsorship by senior women.

Ms Figueres shared insights from her strategy as the architect of the Paris Agreement; technical information about the UNFCCC governance system and guidance on influencing and innovative leadership approaches, including collaborative diplomacy. She shared her unique perspectives and advice on the role of women as leaders in climate change policy and diplomacy. She also gave advice about how to overcome potential disturbances caused by the late moving of the COP25 from Santiago, Chile, to Madrid, Spain, following mass protests in the Chilean capital:

“Disseminate a sense of understanding, a sense of possibility. Make gratitude, compassion and flexibility contagious.”

Monica Araya, Homeward Bound alumna and part of the emerging leader mentees commented: “The social unrest in Latin America, and in Chile in particular, shows that people are hungry for change and a new kind of leadership. New leaders are emerging in civil society, science, government and business and it is exciting to notice a new wave of women bridging this gap in every continent. I am thrilled to see new women challenging convention and bringing new ideas and coalitions to the table to accelerate change.”



Natalie Unterstell, Homeward Bound alumna and part of the mentees group, commented: “We hope our global collaboration at COP25 can strengthen the connection between us and help us to use our collective capacity to infuse the process with optimism.”

Fabian Dattner, founder and CEO of Homeward Bound, said: “This is what collaborative leadership looks like. Christiana’s new brand of optimistic diplomacy personifies what Homeward Bound and the next generation of women leaders stand for. It can and should become the new normal.

Homeward Bound alumnae who will attend COP25 and be mentored by Ms Figueres hail from more than 10 countries and include:

- Chief of Climate Change Division at the Inter-American Development Bank, **Amal-Lee Amin**
- Head of the Climate Resilience Centre in Chile and lead author on the forthcoming IPCC report, **Maisa Rojas**
- Costa Rican oceanographer and science diplomat, **Melania Guerra**
- Brazilian anti-deforestation policy advocate and climate negotiations expert, **Natalie Unterstell**
- American lead author on the 2019 IPCC report, **Heidi Steltzer**
- Head of the Chinese Institute of Climate Change and Sustainable Development, **Bin Bin Wang**
- Costa Rican clean technology advocate, climate negotiations delegate, and member of the advisory group “Friends of the COP25”, **Monica Araya**

Despite ratifying the Paris Agreement, most nations are behind on their commitments to reduce emissions and transition to a zero-carbon economy, bringing greater urgency to the Madrid negotiations. As carbon pollution, temperatures, and climate destruction continue to rise, and public backlash mounts, the UN estimates that the world would need to increase its efforts between three- and five-fold to contain climate change to avoid escalating climate damage already taking place around the world.

For editors:

Founded in 2015, Homeward Bound is a global leadership program for women in STEMM. With 350 women from nearly 50 countries in its network, it was named on Vogue’s list of Gamechangers in 2018 and counts Christiana Figueres, primatologist Jane Goodall, women’s advocate Musimbi Kanyoro and marine explorer Sylvia Earle in its list of supporters.

Homeward Bound is now nearly halfway towards achieving its vision of creating a global collaboration of 1000 women leaders with STEMM backgrounds. For further information, visit www.homewardboundprojects.com.au

Attachments:



- List of Homeward Bound alumnae being mentored by Christiana Figueres for COP25
- [Homeward Bound Gender Factsheet](#)
- Graphic sketch of mentoring advice from Christiana Figueres, by Daisy Hessenberger, Homeward Bound alumna, part of the mentee group, and Nature Based Solutions Research Associate for the International Union for Conservation of Nature in Switzerland

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