

File name: Chapter_1_-_A_Vision_for_my_Future_-_Emma_Stephenson[1].mp3

Moderator questions in Bold, Respondents in Regular text.

KEY: Unable to decipher = (inaudible + timecode), **Phonetic spelling** (ph) + timecode), **Missed word** = (mw + timecode), **Talking over each other** = (talking over each other + timecode).

Emma Stephenson: Good morning, everyone, and a huge welcome to Belfast. I am so excited to be opening this summit today, and I'm looking forward to hearing from all the other speakers throughout the day as well, but first, my name is Emma Stephenson, and I'm going into my final year of electrical and electronic engineering at Queen's University in Belfast. I was born here in 2000, so just two years after the Good Friday Agreement, and I've lived here in Northern Ireland ever since. My parents came from two very different backgrounds, so right from the start, they were keen to send me and my siblings to an integrated school. There we had the opportunity to meet and make friends with children from all different faiths and backgrounds. I am so grateful for that experience, as it helped me develop an understanding and acceptance of others from a young age. Now, in everyday life, I'm realising that these things, like acceptance, empathy and trust are core to all relationships, including those within industry and business. Of course, things still aren't perfect here in Northern Ireland, but my generation have been so lucky to grow up in an environment where there is relative peace, where there are so many opportunities out there for creativity, innovation and success, and in the last year, I, myself, have been able to take advantage of some of these opportunities. I'm one of the five female cofounders of a company called Feminattech. As a group of young women who study together and work predominantly in male workplaces, we were driven by the desire to use technology to support the female role models around us as they enter menopause.

At this stage in their lives, many women experience a range of symptoms, including hot flushes, issues with their memory and disrupted sleep. This may lead to them feeling they can't do their job to the best of their abilities, and one in ten will end up leaving their jobs because of this. These women deserve so much better, so we identified a gap in the market for a menopause app that pairs with wearable technology to track symptoms and gain a better understanding of what's going on, and also provide tailored advice. We hope to empower women to speak to your doctor when necessary, bridge the gender data gap within healthcare, and ensure women in the workplace have a support network and can remain at work. Over time, we also help businesses save millions of pounds that they would normally lose due to menopause, from sick leave or the recruitment of new employees. We were blown away by the support out there for start-ups or anyone who wants to get involved in innovation or business, and we are continually amazed as every person we've met along the way has been so generous with their time and advice, and keen to support us in some way, or connect us to someone else who can, and I think that's what's so special about Northern Ireland. It's that collaborative nature and people's willingness to go the extra mile to help someone, and I hope you all feel that welcoming atmosphere while you're here. There is such a community here of investors, businesses and organisations to support start-ups and young people, and we have learned that they really do just want us to succeed.

It's an environment where something that was a dream for us last year is now entirely possible. Our journey as young women in engineering, and now in business, hasn't been without its trials, but we are evidence that perspectives are changing and that we are more than capable of taking on any role, but that's not to say that I wouldn't still call my dad if I got a flat tyre, or if the dashboard starting flashing. When I started at Queen's University, I was awarded a female-only scholarship, so I immediately felt supported as a woman in STEM. It was a partnership between the university and Sensata Technologies, where the company paid for part of my fees, and I got to develop practical skills while on a paid placement throughout my studies, so it was a pretty good deal, but seriously, the fact that most courses here encourage a placement year is amazing. It's been so important for me to get exposure to industry, and the learning opportunities were invaluable. I'm sure coming to Northern Ireland we must seem very small, but that is one of the brilliant things about life here. Growing up in Northern Ireland, we take for granted the fact that we have access to beautiful restaurants, bars, gorgeous scenery, top universities and airports. We can go from being in a very busy city centre to the Mourne Mountains or the Giant's Causeway with a very short drive. As both a young person and a co-founder of a start-up, I'm so excited that Northern Ireland is being recognised for all that we have to offer, from being a leader in technology and innovation to our booming film industry.

Through our fundraising journey, we've also come up against so many other young people with incredible ideas, which can be very intimidating when they're the competition, but ultimately, it's amazing to see that there are so many young people ready to make real positive change. There is still a lot of work to be done, but we are inspired by the progress happening and the support from those around us, and of course, the funding does help, too. We are also excited to help, or to develop our ideas further, build a future here, and continue to grow as business in Northern Ireland grows too. We are still seeking more funding and support with software development, so if anyone would like to speak to us about our app later on, please do feel free to come and speak to me or my colleague, Caitlyn, throughout the day, and find us on social media or our Feminattech website. I'd like to say a massive thank you to the summit organisers for inviting me here today, and I hope everyone has a great day. Thank you so much.

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