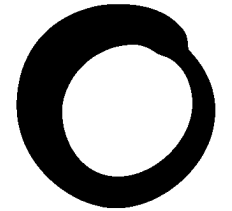


Briefing Note



**Friends of
the Earth**

Demand Climate Change – Key Milestones for COP 15 Copenhagen Climate Talks

A Briefing for UK Parliamentarians

What is this briefing?

This short paper sets out the key issues for consideration by UK Parliamentarians in the run up to the fifteenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 15 of the UNFCCC) in Copenhagen, Denmark, 7-18 December 2009.

Background to the UNFCCC and overview of current talks

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is an international environmental treaty produced at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro 1992 and which sets an overall framework for intergovernmental efforts to tackle the challenges posed by climate change. It has now been ratified by 192 countries. In 1997 it was supplemented by an addition to the Treaty – the Kyoto Protocol – which established legally binding measures for the reduction of greenhouse gases for developed countries.

The UNFCCC is based on the principle of equity, and common but differentiated responsibilities. Under Principle 7 of the Rio Declaration, and in the UNFCCC, developed countries recognised their greater responsibility for damage done to the environment and for actions needed to address this.

Article 2 of the UNFCCC contains the ultimate objective of the Convention and any related legal instruments such as the Kyoto Protocol: to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. Such a level should be achieved within a time frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened, and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner.

UNFCCC parties meet annually to progress plans and action on climate change at the international level, and the next conference of the parties – COP 15 – is critical as it is due to finalise new international agreements aimed at engaging the United States and developing countries into commitments and actions on climate, as well as finalise a new round of commitments from industrialised countries who ratified the Kyoto Protocol. At the talks in Copenhagen in December, the UNFCCC signatory countries are tasked with:

1. Agreeing new emissions reduction targets for Annex 1 (industrialised) countries for the next commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol starting in 2013.
2. Fulfilling the commitments made as part of the Action Plan agreed in Bali in 2007 to address:
 - New technology and financing flows to support climate actions in developing countries;
 - Ensuring the United States takes comparable commitments to other developed countries;
 - Methods for supporting and financing adaptation needs in developing countries; and
 - Methods for supporting and financing efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation.

Overview of what is fair and effective international action on climate

Friends of the Earth's objective through the UN climate talks is to secure a safe and fair future for all. This objective and our strategies are informed first and foremost by our perspective as an environmental justice campaigning organisation and rooted in our membership of Friends of the Earth International – the world's largest grassroots environmental network with 77 national member organisations, with a large number of member organisations in the global South.

While rich developed countries represent only 1/5 of the world's population, historically they have emitted three quarters of global CO2 emissions. This means that they have already consumed more than three times their fair share of atmospheric space, representing a disproportionate contribution to climate change. In contrast, the poorest 10% of the world's population have contributed less than 1% of these emissions. Even in relation to the big developing countries, it is important to note that per capita emissions in the UK are roughly 5 times that of China and more than 10 times that of India.

Friends of the Earth believes that an international agreement can only work practically and politically if it is fair, giving due legal and moral regard to the priorities of developing countries pursuing sustainable development and poverty reduction ambitions, as well as adequately compensating those suffering climate impacts who have done least to causing climate change. A just and truly equitable approach is essential in tackling climate change globally. Developed countries must play a leading role in bringing down their own emissions first and fastest, and getting the support mechanisms right to enable fair and effective support for mitigation in developing countries also.

Many proposals and policies currently under consideration however, at national and international levels, are dangerous distractions to these goals, and could actually deepen the climate crisis whilst simultaneously deepening global inequality and injustice. Such proposals include loopholes such as offsetting; granting governance of climate funding to undemocratic and unsuitable institutions such as the World Bank; and pressure to put forests in the carbon market to satisfy offsetting objectives rather than respecting the rights of forest communities and promoting real biodiversity objectives.

We believe it is essential to challenge such proposals and to promote real pro-people and pro-environment solutions. We also recognise that the failure to effectively tackle climate change will result in massive human rights violations impacting on the world's most impoverished people first and foremost, but ultimately everyone.

The legal and moral responsibility for urgent meaningful action rests firmly on the shoulders of the rich, industrialised countries whose over-consumption of fossil fuels and promotion of particular development paradigms has caused the climate crisis we all face. With these considerations and responsibilities in mind, Friends of the Earth is focussed on three key sets of issues:

- 1. Reductions in CO2 Emissions in Rich Countries:** We're Demanding Climate Change from rich countries who, through investing in carbon offsetting, are essentially avoiding real action on climate change. Rich countries must recognise their legal responsibility to take the lead on tackling climate change. This means cutting emissions by at least 40% by 2020 excluding offsetting.
- 2. Appropriate Finance for Mitigation & Adaptation in Developing Countries:** Rich countries have been pumping out emissions with impunity for hundreds of years – now we must pay our fair share of mitigation and adaptation costs in developing countries. Sufficient funding – governed by and accountable to the UNFCCC – is the only workable solution to ensuring adequate global action on climate.
- 3. Keep Forests Out of Carbon Markets:** Proposals to allow rich countries to buy chunks of forest whilst continuing to pump out emissions won't solve climate change – but will trigger a land grab leaving millions of people worse off.

This paper identifies key milestones for the Copenhagen climate talks in relation to the above issues – steps which we consider essential if the world is to have a chance of avoiding dangerous runaway climate change.

1. Reductions in CO2 Emissions in Rich Countries

The need to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions is desperately urgent. Scientists tell us we are hovering at the edge of dangerous climate change tipping points. Despite the UNFCCC having been signed over a decade ago, global emissions of GHGs have continued to increase, and have even accelerated since 2000¹. It is now widely accepted that an average temperature rise of more than 2 degrees compared to pre-industrial times would have dangerous and potentially catastrophic impacts, including putting billions of people at a far greater risk of hunger, water scarcity, and homelessness and mass dislocation because of flooding of low-lying areas. The very existence of some low-lying nation states is also threatened because of sea level rise.

All of the UNFCCC signatories (which includes the United States of America), have committed to the overall objective as stated in Article 2, of preventing such dangerous climate change. The latest science from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) suggests that to have at least a fifty per cent chance of avoiding a 2 degree rise, we need to see a 25-40 per cent reduction in emissions from developed (Annex 1) countries by 2020 and a 15-30 per cent reduction below 'business as usual' baseline emissions levels for developing (non-Annex 1) countries by 2020.ⁱⁱ

The Kyoto Protocol – the international agreement linked to the UNFCCC agreed in Kyoto, Japan in 1997 – set binding targets for 37 industrialised countries and the European community for the period 2008-2012. These amount to an average of five per cent against 1990 levels for that first commitment period. UNFCCC parties are currently in the process of negotiating the Annex 1 emissions reductions targets for the second commitment period of the Protocol (2013-2020).

Key Milestone for Copenhagen Climate Talks: To have even a 50 per cent chance of avoiding dangerous climate change, it is essential that Annex 1 countries commit to reducing their greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40 per cent by 2020 at home, with no offsetting.

Why no Offsetting?

- Offsetting counts action to reduce emissions in developing countries as part of the cuts promised by developed countries. The EU plans to offset half of its planned emissions reductions to 2020.
- However, as set out above, climate scientists have highlighted that we need cuts in both developed and developing countries' emissions in order to increase our chances of avoiding dangerous climate change.
- Offsetting also has lots of other disadvantages. By pushing emissions reductions overseas, it is delaying much needed economic transformation in developed countries. In the UK, offsetting is cheating the British people out of much-needed public investment in new renewable energy infrastructure and technology, as well as the green collar jobs that would be created from this public investment and the increased energy security that would result from decreased reliance on fossil fuels.
- Furthermore, there is no guarantee that offsetting ensures positive sustainable development in, or appropriate financial transfers to developing countries. Carbon offsetting funds can even go towards building more coal or gas fired power stations in developing countries, as long as they're more efficient than the ones they're replacing. But this is locking these countries into burning coal for another 40 years.

2. Appropriate Finance for Emissions Reductions & Adaptation in Developing Countries

The United Nations Development Report 2007/2008 estimates that \$86 billion a year by 2015 – 0.2% of developed country GDP or around a tenth of their current military spending – is needed to help developing countries adapt to climate change.ⁱⁱⁱ Additionally, tens of billions of dollars in finance and technology transfer is needed yearly to support developing countries in reducing their emissions and making a just transition towards low-carbon economies. At the same time, 2.4 billion people lack fuel and 1.6 billion are without electricity.^{iv} 40% of the world's poorest, around 2.6 billion people, are on the brink of climate change events that will jeopardise their prospects for human development.

Due to their historical responsibility for global CO₂ emissions, the responsibility lies with industrialised countries to provide the bulk of the financing needed. Public money should have a vital and central role to play in encouraging and supporting a global shift to low carbon technologies. However, developed countries, including the UK, are pushing for funds to support mitigation and adaptation by developing countries to come from the global carbon market and be managed by the World Bank.

Friends of the Earth, alongside diverse environmental and human rights groups and Indigenous Peoples' groups from around the world^v believe that the World Bank is the wrong institution to control any financing for climate change. As the recent financial meltdown has highlighted, it is essential that global financial institutions are fully democratic and accountable. With the World Bank's terrible track

record in terms of the social and environmental impacts of its lending policies; its conflict of interest as the largest multilateral lender for fossil fuel projects in the world (the World Bank Group's fossil fuel financing totalled \$2.275 billion in 2008^{vi}); and its inherently undemocratic institutional structure (with a one dollar-one vote decision-making process that marginalizes Southern countries), it is not an appropriate institution for administering the distribution of climate funds.

Critical issues are already apparent with its proposals for Climate Investment Funds (CIFs), including:

- CIFs undermine the UNFCCC process by setting up an unequal aid framework of donor and recipient rather than treating climate financing as the binding obligation of Annex 1 countries as it is regarded under the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol;
- CIFs compete for funding with already established UN adaptation and technology funds;
- CIFs promote dirty industries like coal as clean energy; and
- CIFs force developing countries to pay for the industrialised world's pollution by providing loans for them to adapt to the climate crisis, increasing their overall debt burden – a process which runs counter to efforts to reduce poverty and vulnerability to climate change.

Key Milestones for Copenhagen Talks:

- **UNFCCC parties must negotiate a new financial mechanism under the authority of the UNFCCC to ensure adequate financial flows to developing countries to support their transition to a low-carbon future.**
- **Finance should be allocated by expert assessment panels on a needs-based principle – similar to proposals in the submission of G77 and China.**
- **Annex 1 countries must commit a minimum of \$200 billion annually in finance for developing country actions, additional to and independent from the domestic commitments of Annex 1.**

3. Keep Forests Out of Carbon Markets

To prevent dangerous climate change and land degradation, conserve biodiversity and safeguard the sustainable use of forests by local communities and Indigenous Peoples, any international climate agreement must be designed to stop deforestation and degradation, not simply reduce or defer emissions.

Friends of the Earth is therefore greatly concerned about the proposals in the UNFCCC, supported by the UK Government, for a scheme that would allow industrialised countries to offset their emissions by purchasing forest carbon credits from developing countries. The proposal on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation in Developing countries (REDD) is an offsetting mechanism and, as with other forms of offsetting, it will mean that countries with emissions reduction responsibilities avoid necessary economic transformation.

In addition, proposals on REDD define plantations as forests, and as a result REDD funding could be used to replace forests with large monoculture plantations. Not only do plantations store on average only 20 per cent of the carbon of intact forests, replacing forests with plantations can have devastating social and economic impacts on those that live in forests and rely on them for food, shelter and medicine. According to the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) 1.6 billion people globally rely on forests, including 60 million indigenous people who are entirely dependent upon forests for their livelihoods, food, medicines and building materials.^{vii}

The inclusion of forests in carbon markets will also undermine public governance, weakening governments' ability to protect and manage natural resources. Furthermore, if the financial value of forests increases, Indigenous Peoples and local communities will increasingly face the prospect of social dislocation and violent eviction, especially those with no formal land title. Including forests in carbon markets is therefore likely to trigger a land grab, leaving these communities struggling to survive.

Tackling the drivers and underlying causes of deforestation is essential if we are to avoid dangerous climate change whilst safeguarding the rights of forest-dwellers and Indigenous Peoples. These drivers include the expansion of plantation agriculture, including for biofuels, soy and genetically modified trees to fuel excessive meat and paper consumption in industrialised and other major

importing countries.

Deforestation can be prevented through the funding of community-based forestry projects that support the land rights of forest communities. Friends of the Earth believes that any agreement on forests must be fully and explicitly in line with the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) Expanded Program of Work on Forest Biodiversity and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and integrated with international and national implementation policies under these instruments

Key Milestone for Copenhagen Talks: Any agreement on forests at the UNFCCC must keep forests out of carbon markets and be developed through a joint process with other relevant forest conventions and human rights instruments and ensure full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

Recommendations

Governments should:

- 1. Agree that developed countries must reduce their own emissions by at least 40 per cent by 2020, and reject all forms of offsetting, including proposals for new and expanded offsetting schemes.**
- 2. Negotiate a new financial mechanism under the authority of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to ensure adequate financial flows to developing countries to support their transition to low carbon development and fulfil their adaptation needs.**
- 3. Reject plans to introduce REDD offsets, and instead negotiate effective and fair mechanisms to protect the Earth's forests that do not involve offsetting.**

The UK Government should actively pursue these goals and show genuine leadership in facilitating rapid agreement at the international level.

Further Reading

- Friends of the Earth (2009): A Dangerous Distraction – Why offsetting is failing the climate and people: The Evidence
http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefing_notes/dangerous_distraction.pdf

Further Information

For further information please contact:

- Tom Picken: 020 7566 1695, 07810 558247, tom.picken@foe.co.uk
- Asad Rehman: 020 7566 1688, 07720 147280, asad.rehman@foe.co.uk
- Sarah-Jayne Clifton: 020 7566 4080, 07980 599002, sarah.clifton@foe.co.uk

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- i Anderson, K. and A. Bows, 2008: "Reframing the climate change challenge in light of post-2000 emission trends" <http://www.tyndall.ac.uk/publications/>
 - ii http://unfccc.int/files/kyoto_protocol/application/pdf/emission_reductions_for_stabilizing.pdf
 - iii United Nations Human Development Report 2007/ 2008: "Fighting climate change: human solidarity in a changing world", pp15, 18, 53, 79 http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_20072008_EN_Complete.pdf
 - iv UN-Energy. July 2005: "The Energy Challenge for Achieving the Millennium Development Goals." <http://esa.un.org/un-energy/pdf/UN-ENRG%20paper.pdf>
 - v See the declaration opposing the World Bank's proposal for Climate Investment Funds supported by Friends of the Earth International and 121 other groups at the Bonn UNFCCC talks in June 2008: http://www.foe.org/pdf/CIF_sign-on.pdf
 - vi Bank Information Center, IFI Extractive and Energy Project Spreadsheet, updated July 2008, <http://www.bicusa.org/en/Article.3395.aspx>.
 - vii <http://www.fao.org/forestry/28811/en/>