

COP 18 must deliver ambition, equity and binding commitments

The world is facing a serious planetary emergency due to the destabilization of the Earth's climate caused by the accumulation of greenhouse gases emitted principally by rich industrialised countries over the last century-and-a-half. Five million people are predicted to die each year from now until 2020 due to droughts, floods, rising sea levels, desertification, disease, extreme weather events and disasters induced by climate change.

In this light people of the world are demanding from the world's leaders gathered at the 18th session of the Conference of Parties (COP 18) an ambitious, equitable and binding framework to address this planetary emergency.

Ambition and equity are the overarching principles that the world must see at COP18. Ambition in cutting emissions must be strengthened by equity in doing so, and funding to ensure the poorest can survive impacts of climate change they did not create. These must all be framed by a binding and legally enforceable framework.

We need an ambitious deal

There must be a unified and concerted effort to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions in line with the latest scientific assessments of climate change.

Targets currently proposed by governments puts the world on a path to 4°C of global average temperature rise which would threaten every aspect of life on the planet as we know it. Mass extinctions of plants and animal species would be certain. Humanity itself may not survive.

Indeed, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns that the world should avoid exceeding a 2°C temperature rise if it is to avoid the grave risk of irreversible, catastrophic climate change. Indeed, the safer bound is 1.5°C if the most vulnerable countries - which in the South are already suffering the grave consequences of climate change - are to avoid further disaster and destruction from sea-level rise, desertification, droughts, and extreme weather events.

According to the German Advisory Council on Global Change, between 2010 and 2050, a maximum of 1,000–1,500 Gigatonnes (GT) can be emitted in order to meet the 2°C target with 75 per cent and 50 per cent probability, respectively. Moreover, global

annual emissions should peak no later than 2017 at around 32.6 GT under the “high-risk” scenario, and by 2013 under the “low-risk” scenario.

So no amount of negotiations will change the fact that the atmospheric space to absorb greenhouse gases (GHGs) is nearly depleted, and that emissions need to be drastically arrested. This means annual emissions should drop to between 4.3 to 9.3GT by 2050. On a per capita basis, the average allowable annual per capita CO2 emissions must fall within the range of 0.46 to 1.16 MT by 2050, from the current global average of 4.8 MT as of 2008.

The only logical and urgent international response is to have deep and drastic emissions reductions. Table 1 below illustrates how much emissions reductions are required from the world’s biggest historical emitters of CO2 if the world is to reduce global annual emissions to 50-80% of 1990 levels while sharing the atmospheric space equally among the world’s populations by 2050.

Table 1. Emissions reductions obligations of biggest historical CO2 emitters					
Country	per capita MT CO2 emissions in 1990	per ca CO2 emissions reductions needed for convergence by 2050 ¹			
		"low risk" pathway ²		"high-risk" pathway ³	
		In MT per person	as % of 1990	In MT per person	as % of 1990
World	4.21	3.75	89.0%	3.05	72.5%
Annex I Countries					
United States	19.55	19.08	97.6%	18.39	94.1%
Russian Federation (1992 baseline)	14.94	14.47	96.9%	13.78	92.2%
Germany (1991 baseline)	12.01	11.55	96.1%	10.85	90.4%
United Kingdom	9.96	9.50	95.3%	8.80	88.4%
Japan	8.86	8.40	94.8%	7.70	86.9%
France	6.85	6.38	93.2%	5.69	83.1%
Ukraine (1991 baseline)	12.30	11.84	96.2%	11.15	90.6%
Canada	16.20	15.73	97.1%	15.04	92.8%
Poland	9.62	9.16	95.2%	8.47	88.0%
Italy	7.48	7.02	93.8%	6.32	84.5%
Australia	16.84	16.37	97.2%	15.68	93.1%
Non-Annex I countries					
China	2.17	1.70	78.6%	1.01	46.6%
India	0.79	0.33	41.4%	(0.37)	(46.5%)
South Africa	9.47	9.01	95.1%	8.32	87.8%
Mexico	3.86	3.40	88.0%	2.70	70.0%
Brazil	1.40	0.93	66.8%	0.24	17.0%
¹ These are pathways to reduce and converge per capita CO2 emissions to within the range of 0.46 to 1.16 MT by 2050, assuming global population rises to 9.3 billion by 2050.					
² "High-risk pathway" will reduce global annual CO2 emissions by 50% compared to 1990 levels					
³ "Low-risk pathway" will reduce global annual CO2 emissions by 80% compared to 1990 levels					
Source: Data from World Bank Data Catalog. Available online at http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.ATM.CO2E.PC?page=4 [accessed Dec. 1, 2012]					

Based on this, the highest historical emitters would have to completely overhaul the basis of their economies and lifestyles if they are to converge at this per capita emissions target by 2050. This pertains principally to Annex I countries, but some of the non-Annex I countries would also have to cut back their emissions significantly, while most of the Least-Developed Countries (LDCs) would still have room for growth in their per capita emissions in step with their economic development.

This is required by science if we are to stabilize the earth's climate, and justice, if we are to also share the planet's atmospheric space equally.

Parties should agree to legally binding commitments to reduce emissions as part of a second commitment period to the Kyoto Protocol, which is the main foundation for coordinated attempts to cut emissions so as to avoid a disastrous $>2^{\circ}\text{C}$ rise. Voluntary pledges, which the US and other rich industrialized countries are insisting on, are easily ignored as they lack legal obligations. If these are the outcome of COP18, it will be difficult to pass off the Doha meeting as anything other than a failure.

Countries which are not part of the 2nd commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol must also commit to comparable targets for reducing emissions based on an agreed upon system of monitoring and reporting on emissions and finance to ensure that the agreement delivers what is promised and needed.

The Kyoto Protocol should also be amended for the second commitment period to ensure that 'loopholes' are plugged, i.e., to remove the possibility of resorting to carbon offsetting arrangements by which rich industrialized countries can buy their way out of their historical responsibility to cut emissions while continuing to pursue the same unsustainable pattern of production and consumption that is at the root of this crisis.

We need an equitable deal

While climate change is a global problem, the causes are more attributable to some, and the consequences are not borne equally by all. That is why the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capacities (CBDR) is a cornerstone of the UNFCCC and must continue to be upheld.

National obligations to cut emissions and pay for the costs of transition towards sustainable development should take into account both historical responsibility as measured by cumulative per capita emissions, as well as the capacity to pay as measured by per capita incomes (above a certain threshold that allows for the fulfillment of basic needs and human rights).

The rich industrialized countries that are historically responsible for dumping the lion's share of these gases into the atmosphere must make the most drastic cuts.

But there is also a need to respect the Right to Development of people in poorer countries. This means acknowledging that developing countries would have to prioritize meeting the basic needs of populations as well as dealing with the immediate effects of climate change in the immediate future. At the same time, this must not

become a license for developing countries to pursue the same inequitable, unjust and unsustainable pattern of development followed by rich countries.

Therefore developing countries should also commit to undertake measures to transition towards sustainable development and reduce GHG emissions over time. This effort must be supported by transfers of finance, technology and technical capacity from wealthy industrialized countries in recognition of their historical debt to poorer countries for utilizing more than their fair share of the atmosphere.

Estimates of the annual cost for adaptation in developing countries range from \$100 to \$450 billion a year, while mitigation costs range from \$500 billion to \$1.1 trillion per year. So far developed countries have only pledged to raise \$100 billion for the Green Climate Fund (GCF) by 2020 which would be devoted to both adaptation and mitigation support in developing countries.

Based on the polluter pays principle and CBDR, the advanced industrialized countries must contribute to mitigation and adaptation costs in developing countries in proportion to their share of cumulative historical carbon emissions. Table 2 below shows how much the top historical emitters must contribute to the target \$100 billion for GCF by 2020.

Table 2. Climate financing obligations based on historical responsibility

Country	% share of cumulative CO2 emissions (1850-2002)	GCF Obligation * in billion USD/yr
United States	29.3	38.55
EU-25	26.5	34.87
Russia	8.1	10.66
Germany	7.3	9.61
United Kingdom	6.3	8.29
Japan	4.1	5.39
France	2.9	3.82
Ukraine	2.2	2.89
Canada	2.1	2.76
Poland	2.1	2.76
Italy	1.6	2.11
Australia	1.1	1.45
Spain	0.9	1.18
Turkey	0.4	0.53
Developed countries	76	100.00

* Based on total pledge of 100 billion per year by 2020

Source: Emissions data from World Resources Institute, CAIT

These contributions should not be treated as official development assistance (ODA) -- which is up to the discretion of donors -- but as legal obligations in recognition of the historical responsibility of the advanced industrialized countries for using up more than their fair share of the atmospheric space. Indeed, it should be additional to ODA, particularly the internationally agreed goal of 0.7% of GDP or, in the immediate period, the Monterrey commitments made by donor countries. The GCF should also dedicate a

bigger share of funds for adaptation, which is urgently needed by people in developing countries.

However, at the moment climate financing is much like wider ODA, which suffers from an absence of predictability, little focus on helping the most vulnerable, and scant regard for a means of ensuring the meaningful participation of the people most affected by the impacts of climate change in the identifying, defining, implementing and evaluating projects and activities. Beyond this there has been little identification of public sources of finance to bring pledges into reality, while the corresponding move to pushing private finance raises the fear of profit-maximization becoming the guiding principle for much of climate financing and obscures the fund's founding principle of climate justice – that those countries which have polluted the most must take the responsibility for their actions.

COP 18 must also establish the means for transferring appropriate technologies to the South without the barriers imposed by the intellectual property rights of corporations. Developed countries must ensure free sharing of safe, appropriate and ecologically and socially sound technologies in order to facilitate the transition towards equitable, democratic, and sustainable development for all.

We must ensure accountability

Parties should make commitments that are legally enforceable with transparent monitoring and reporting systems, and a means of ensuring accountability with multistakeholder governance.

COP18 must lay the ground for a global climate fund that is democratic, independent of other international financial institutions, and upholds the principles of equity, accessibility, transparency and democratic ownership.

The UN must also widen space for meaningful civil society participation in the negotiations

We need genuine sustainable development

Addressing the climate crisis requires more than reducing emissions and providing finance. Indeed, for the poor people of the South, the climate crisis is inseparable from problems of poverty, hunger, loss of livelihoods, lack of access to essential services, and lack of social protections, among other issues. The climate crisis is rooted in prevailing unsustainable modes of production and consumption.

Northern profligacy is the principal driver of this problem. Drastic reductions for advanced industrialized countries will mean an end to overdevelopment and overindustrialization. This move towards sustainable modes does not necessarily mean deprivation for Northern countries or even a reduction in the wellbeing of the people. It is a change based on equity, with a focus on the quality of life, but living responsibly

within the planetary boundaries that sustain life for all, both now and in the future. Likewise, development for the rest of the world does not mean economic growth on the back of a polluting industrialization, but improving lives across a range of indicators to live well, and to live sustainably and responsibly. Without this concerted effort led by the North, catastrophic climate change is inevitable, along with the inevitable displacement and loss of lives and livelihoods that will accompany it.

For life in this planet as we know it to survive, the climate crisis must be radically addressed by all. Therefore the real challenge is ushering in a new model of sustainable development, shifting away from an obsession with an exclusionary, top-down growth model geared towards excess consumption for private profit, towards new modes of production, consumption and distribution, and a rights-based framework centered on the principles of equity, justice, democratic ownership and respect for nature.#