

UNA-UK ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2006 SAYS

STOP CLIMATE CHAOS

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At Annual Conference 2006 UNA-UK members voiced a strong concern about climate change and the failure of many member states – including the UK – to take the necessary steps to address this pressing challenge. With a view to conveying to governments the imperative to act now to curb the greenhouse gas emissions, UNA-UK was urged to join the Stop Climate Chaos coalition (see below).

On the basis of this mandate, UNA-UK applied for membership of Stop Climate Chaos. We are delighted to report that our application was accepted, and we have already started working

together with the coalition's secretariat. In the coming months, UNA-UK will be campaigning on climate change and calling on the UK government to provide leadership in curbing greenhouse gas emissions worldwide and in formulating a new set of targets to replace those which expire in 2012. Funding permitting, we plan three or four events in different parts of the country to raise awareness of climate change and its current and future impact on citizens in the UK and around the world, and to galvanise the political will required if climate change is to be tackled effectively. UNA-UK will also review its own practices, to determine how it can become 'greener', including through offsetting its carbon emissions.

“A path to prosperity that ravages the environment and leaves a majority of humankind behind in squalor will soon prove to be a dead-end road for everyone”

Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General

In anticipation of this heightened engagement, we have included in these pages of *New World* various facts and figures about climate change, what you as an individual can do to help, and information about the role of the UN in meeting the challenge of climate change.



Photo © Stop Climate Chaos/Morgan

Stop Climate Chaos is a civil society movement seeking to mobilise public pressure in support of immediate and comprehensive political action to curb greenhouse gas emissions and so to prevent the 'chaos' that climate change, if unchecked, is likely to cause.

The Stop Climate Chaos Vision:

A world in which human-induced climate change is capped at a level that will allow all of humanity to prosper, by means that promote global, social, environmental and economic justice.

The Stop Climate Chaos Mission:

To build a massive coalition, that will create an irresistible public mandate for political action to stop human-induced climate change.

The Stop Climate Chaos Manifesto:

Without urgent action, climate change will devastate life on earth. Hundreds of millions of people, particularly the world's poorest and most vulnerable, will be put at severe risk of drought, floods, starvation, and disease. By the middle of the century up to one third of land-based species could face extinction.

Politicians have so far failed to take sufficient action to avoid this. Yet the choices made in the next five to 10 years will determine the extent of the devastation faced by future generations. We can save millions of lives and a multitude of species by keeping the average global temperature increase under 2°C. To achieve this, global greenhouse gas emissions must peak and be falling irreversibly by 2015.

High emitting countries, with their responsibility for historic emissions, must reduce their emissions to make certain that this goal is achieved. But because all countries share the obligation to ensure that damaging global warming is permanently avoided each must commit to policies to guarantee that global greenhouse gas emissions decline beyond 2015.

Before this decade is out, world leaders must have lived up to their duty to prevent catastrophic climate change, via open transparent and accountable mechanisms, processes that promote global, social and economic justice and through the use of environmentally sustainable technologies. We will act to ensure that they do.

The Stop Climate Chaos vision, mission and manifesto can be found at www.stopclimatechaos.org.uk

UNA-UK gratefully acknowledges the advice given by Kate Hampton in the preparation of this article.



What can you do to stop climate chaos?

Climate change drives home the reality that national borders cannot defend us against the international challenges of today; these are quintessentially global threats, described by Under-Secretary-General Shashi Tharoor in his address to UNA-UK's Annual Conference in April 2006 as "problems without passports". We will all pay the price for greenhouse gas emissions, regardless of their origin. However, that said, the corollary is also true: we will all reap the dividends of reduced emissions, irrespective of where, or by whom, this reduction was undertaken.

Some climate change is now inevitable, and global warming and the associated effects are a reality. The likely outcome of climate change is now a question of degree; and the extent to which our lives and our environment will change will depend very much on both the actions of individuals and their political decisions.

UNA-UK encourages its members to visit the Stop Climate Chaos website and follow these three online actions:

1. Tell Prime Minister Tony Blair to Stop Climate Chaos by sending him a message urging him to:
 - Work to ensure global greenhouse gas emissions are falling by 2015
 - Ensure that UK greenhouse gas emissions fall by 3 per cent year on year from now on and set a UK carbon budget to make this happen
 - Help poor countries cope with disasters caused by climate change and get access to clean energy to help eliminate poverty
2. Underscore your commitment to stopping climate chaos by saving carbon yourself.
3. Personalise your message to Tony Blair by creating your own version of the Stop Climate Chaos logo.

Facts and Forecasts

- The 1990s was the warmest decade, and 1998 the warmest year on global record. (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change)
- The earth is warming faster than at any time in the past 10,000 years. (IPCC)
- The burning of coal, oil and gas has increased the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere by 30 per cent over natural levels. (IPCC)
- Estimates suggest that, by 2100, the world could be on average 6 to 10°C warmer. (IPCC and Oxford University)
- The summer of 2003 was Europe's hottest in 500 years. This heatwave caused 28,000 premature deaths across the continent. (WWF)
- Europe's capitals have warmed, some by 2°C in the last 30 years. London's average maximum summer temperature increased the most. This warming trend will increase the likelihood of more frequent and intense heatwaves, droughts and rainstorms. (WWF-UK)
- 150,000 people already die every year from climate change. (World Health Organisation)
- The area of the world stricken by drought doubled between 1970 and the early 2000s. (Greenpeace)
- The economic costs of global warming are doubling every decade. (UN)
- The impact of climate change on some wildlife will already be catastrophic, even with little further change. Up to a third of land-based species could face extinction by the middle of the century. (RSPB)
- 100 million more people will be flooded by the end of the century. (Friends of the Earth)
- Poverty and lagging development exacerbate vulnerability to extreme weather: people in low-income countries are four times more likely to die in natural disasters than people in high income countries. (Oxfam)
- Globally, disaster losses increased from \$71 billion in the 1960s to \$608 billion in 1990s. (Oxfam)
- Water availability could decline: over 3 billion people in the Middle East and the Indian sub-continent could be facing acute shortages of water. (Oxfam)
- Global warming will entirely submerge many low-lying island nations: one of the Carteret atolls of Papua New Guinea has already been cut in half by the ocean, and Tuvalu in the South Pacific has concluded a deal with New Zealand to evacuate its entire population of 10,000. (People & Planet)
- By 2050 30 million more people may be hungry because of climate change. (Hadley Centre, UK)
- There has been a 40 per cent drop in the amount of arctic ice since the 1970s. Were this effect to spread, and the northern ice fields melt, a rise in sea levels of up to seven meters would occur. This would overwhelm not only low-lying countries like Bangladesh, but also major western cities such as London, Rome and New York. (People & Planet)
- The financial costs of flooding could rise in both the UK and the rest of Europe, increasing the annual flood bill by up to £82 billion across Europe. (Association of British Insurers)
- The whole western Siberian sub-arctic region has started to thaw for the first time since its formation 11,000 years ago. The area, which is the size of France and Germany combined, could release billions of tonnes of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. This would be irreversible and would drive up temperatures even more. (BBC)
- In the next 15 years, displacement, disruption to agriculture and food supplies, and damage and destruction to infrastructure would be likely to lead to economic and political instability, both within countries and across international borders, and even to wars as environmental refugees seek new homes and countries clash over scarce water and food supplies. The industrial countries also could find themselves under immense pressure from huge numbers of environmental refugees from the developing world. (Christian Aid)
- Polar bears could become extinct by the end of this century. They are very unlikely to survive as a species if there is an almost complete loss of summer sea ice cover, as is projected by some climate models to occur before the end of this century. (WWF-UK)
- By the end of the century, rising sea levels and crop failures could create 150 million refugees. Even in the UK, 5 million people are at risk from increased flood and storm damage. (Operation Noah)
- In one region of Mozambique, it was common to experience two distinguishable seasons – one hot and one cool. Recently temperatures have risen from 30°C up to 49°C in the hot season and are less cold in the cool season, changing the timing of the rains. The majority of communities are afraid to plant, thinking that it is not the right time. Food security in the region is thus under threat. (Tearfund)

Source: www.stopclimatechaos.org.uk



“The key is actually discarding the idea that has dominated economic policy-making, which is: in order for a country to get rich, stay rich and get richer, you have to put more greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. That isn't true and it hasn't been true for years”

Bill Clinton, former US President



Photo © Greenpeace

What is the UK government doing to tackle dangerous climate change?

Under the Kyoto Protocol, the UK committed itself, by 2012, to have reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 12.5 per cent of 1990 levels. On track to reaching this target and even surpassing it, the UK government has been lauded for its leadership during its presidency of the G8 in highlighting the need to deal urgently and comprehensively with climate change.

But is this enough? The facts suggest not:

In addition to its Kyoto obligations to curb greenhouse gas emissions, the UK government has also made pledges to cut the UK's production of carbon dioxide (CO₂), the main contributor to climate change. However, despite the government's commitment, enshrined in three general election manifestos, to a 20 per cent reduction by 2010 and a 60 per cent cut by 2050, the UK's emissions of CO₂ continue to rise.

The government recently conducted a review of its climate change policies and produced a new 'UK Climate Change Programme', setting out priorities for action to tackle climate change, both in the UK and internationally. Published in March 2006, the programme was pronounced by Friends of the Earth (FoE) to be "totally inadequate". Below are a few of FoE's criticisms:

- The programme will not allow the UK to achieve the government target for 2010 – i.e. a 20 per cent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions.
- It does not guarantee significant carbon dioxide reductions from industry. The government has noted that, under the next phase of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme, industry will have to cut its carbon dioxide emissions in 2010 by between three and eight million tonnes, an estimate based on projected levels. However, because industrial carbon dioxide emissions are projected to rise, a reduction of just three million

tonnes would actually mean that industrial emissions are higher in 2010 than they are today.

- Despite the fact that road transport accounts for 25 per cent of carbon dioxide emissions, the government's strategy commits neither to reducing traffic nor to ensuring that more efficient vehicles are used.
- Though aviation constitutes the UK's fastest growing source of CO₂ emissions, the review does not address the government's aviation strategy, which heavily subsidises cheap flights and, through the construction of new runways and airport terminals, will lead to a significant expansion in the aviation industry's capacity.

FoE's campaign 'The Big Ask' is calling for legislation to be enacted in the UK which would create a legally binding target for reducing carbon dioxide emissions. The proposed law would oblige UK CO₂ emissions to be cut by three per cent per year, with progress to be monitored by an annual carbon budget.

The Big Ask is encouraging citizens to write to their MPs asking them to sign Early Day Motion 178, a parliamentary petition calling for "a bill to be brought forward in this parliament so that annual cuts in carbon dioxide emissions of three per cent can be delivered in a framework that includes regular reporting and new scrutiny and corrective processes".

More than half of all 646 MPs have signed this EDM. UNA-UK members should visit edmi.parliament.uk/edmi to find out whether their MPs have signed EDM 178.

For more information about The Big Ask visit www.thebigask.com or www.foe.co.uk

Did you know?

- Lighting an average office overnight wastes enough energy to heat water for 1,000 cups of tea.
- A PC monitor on standby uses 51kWh per year of electricity (equivalent to 500 boiling kettles).
- Two photocopiers and three printers switched off saves around five tonnes of CO₂ per year.

Source: BBC

“It is not sufficient to have debt cancellation, aid raised to 0.7% of GDP and fair trade if you also have global warming and environmental degradation. We have to mobilise to make sure climate change is on the same frontburner in people's minds as the other issues”

Mary Robinson,
former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights



The International Climate Regime

Now, and beyond 2012

Another failure of world leaders

A conspicuous gap in the 2005 UN World Summit outcome document is the failure of member states to agree on meaningful ways of strengthening the international response to climate change. The outcome document recognises the scale and scope of the challenge and "emphasises the need to meet all the commitments and obligations...undertaken in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change [UNFCCC] and other relevant international agreements, including, for many [member states], the Kyoto Protocol". Member states reaffirmed their commitment to the ultimate objective of the UNFCCC – namely "to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that prevents dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system". Importantly, it is recognised that climate change has its origins in human activity.

While it is under the auspices of the UNFCCC, not the General Assembly, where detailed plans for combating climate change are elaborated, the World Summit failed to give any meaningful direction to guide the development of the climate regime after 2012, when the Kyoto targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions expire. World leaders could have played a valuable role by demonstrating a level of ambition commensurate to the scale of the problem posed by climate change but they did not. No progress, furthermore, was made in bringing the United States around to the need for binding caps on greenhouse gases. Nor was there any agreement on how to rein in the emissions of industrialising countries such as China, India and Brazil which now account for an increasing share of global emissions but which are currently exempted from targets under the Kyoto Protocol.

The need for action now

Climate change is often spoken of as a 'long-term' problem; addressing it appropriately is therefore implied to be a moral obligation we owe to future generations. Whilst this is clearly a valid argument it is also a potentially dangerous one, in that it suggests that the repercussions of climate change are remote when they are in fact imminent and indeed ongoing. The Foreign Secretary's newly-appointed Special Representative on Climate Change, John

Ashton, gave a powerful, and topical, example at a recent conference on climate change at Chatham House, when he noted that Darfur's current drought, a key factor in the crisis there, may constitute the "new normal". That is, the drought may be the product of longer-term alterations in the climate, rather than an anomaly. Mr Ashton also pointed out that any gains made towards the UN Millennium Development Goals by 2015 will be nullified if climate change is not tackled now.

The UN framework for tackling climate change

The UN has played a central role both in providing an international institutional framework for addressing climate change and in galvanising political momentum behind finding and implementing solutions. The creation of the UNFCCC in 1992 was prompted by the first assessment report of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), an apolitical, global body of scientists tasked with reviewing research into climate change, its causes and its effects. The IPCC, a joint initiative of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organisation, was established in 1988. It does not conduct its own scientific inquiries.

The fundamental purpose of the UNFCCC is to prevent "dangerous" anthropogenic interference with the climate system. The Convention, negotiated within just two years and ready for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, was envisaged as work-in-progress – a loose structure which could be modified and tightened as necessary. Thus, only one year after the UNFCCC came into force member states began discussions to strengthen the existing treaty. The Kyoto Protocol – which, though linked to the UNFCCC, in fact stands on its own – was adopted unanimously in 1997 and entered into force with the ratification of Russia in February 2005.

The Kyoto Protocol's key feature is that it imposes upon its rich state signatories mandatory, time-bound targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It does not prescribe targets for developing countries, in recognition of the fact that emissions have originated disproportionately in industrialised countries. The targets on rich economies vary, rang-



Photo © Greenpeace/Hu Wei

ing from -8 per cent to +10 per cent of a country's 1990 emissions levels, "with a view to reducing...overall emissions of such gases by at least 5 per cent below existing 1990 levels in the commitment period 2008 to 2012" (see table 1).

Some countries are required under the Kyoto Protocol only to stabilise their emissions, while others – i.e. Norway, Iceland and, until it withdrew from the treaty, Australia – are permitted increases. To meet its 8 per cent target the EU has devised an internal agreement whereby varying rates are allocated to different countries: for instance, Luxembourg must cut its emissions by 28 per cent while those of Greece can increase by 25 per cent.

The Kyoto framework is also flexible in terms of how it promotes global emission cuts. Countries have the option of partially compensating for emissions through afforestation or reforestation, as forests act as 'sinks' by removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) countries may also earn 'credits' by sponsoring projects in developing countries which reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In addition to its ultimate aim of lowering greenhouse gas concentrations, the CDM is intended to promote sustainable development (which is defined nationally under the scheme, rather than internationally). For example, countries using the tool effectively can benefit from the infusion of technology to their factories and plants, as well as higher profits through improved efficiency.

The architects of the Kyoto Protocol recognised that compliance with targets would vary among its signatories. The Protocol accordingly allows for countries surpassing their reduction targets to 'sell' any excess on a 'carbon market' to other countries which have not achieved their emissions cuts. The carbon market is thus based on the (novel) premise



Table 1 Kyoto targets (per cent reduction below 1990 levels)

Country/countries	Target
EU, Switzerland and most of the central and east European states	8 per cent
Canada	6 per cent
United States (subsequently withdrew its support)	7 per cent
Hungary, Japan and Poland	6 per cent

that the earth's atmosphere can be assigned a monetary value, with the UN effectively overseeing the government-government exchange of an international carbon currency.

Climate change, perhaps more than any other challenge, illustrates the need to engage non-state actors in the identification and implementation of solutions to global problems. Government-to-government emissions trading is an innovative route to bringing down global greenhouse gas concentrations but, given the contribution of business to emissions, carbon markets will make little overall difference in the absence of private sector input. Recognising this, the European Union created its own internal carbon market, the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (EU ETS), in which the participation of business is mandatory. The EU ETS thus effectively distributes responsibility for reducing carbon emissions beyond governments to the private sector, where the bulk of emissions originate.

This does not negate the need for active government intervention, not least to make investment in the carbon market financially attractive. A shift in government thinking is therefore essential; the transition to a low-carbon economy cannot occur without investment, and investment will not occur in the absence of coherent and sustained public policies.

What next?

The Kyoto Protocol specifies that negotiations should be undertaken, well in advance of 2012, to agree to future commitment periods and corresponding mandatory targets. Thus far governments, with some exceptions, have shied away from taking the necessary steps to meet current targets. Even under the relatively progressive EU scheme, national governments are not being assertive enough with respect to their own businesses. In order for actors such as the EU to maintain credibility in future climate negotiations, existing commitments need to be implemented.

At the September 2005 Summit world leaders

recognised the centrality of the UN to international efforts to curb global warming. Some have proposed that the UN's institutional machinery be strengthened so that it is better able to promote environmental protection and compliance with relevant treaties. Friends of the Earth, for instance, has recommended that UNEP be transformed into a UN specialised agency financed by assessed mandatory contributions.

In parallel, the UN should work to mobilise political will in support of a strong Kyoto Protocol 'II'. A key pillar of the post-2012 arrangement should be stronger contributions from both the principal developing country emitters and previously intransigent parties like Australia and the US. That said, progress on negotiating future commitment periods and targets should not be held hostage to the internal political processes of countries such as the US. Progress is being made on climate change at the state level in the US and it is only a matter of time before the federal government steps in. However, given the US track record on international treaties (not just in the field of environment), the international community should proceed with or without US ratification. Any future targets should be agreed at the multilateral level, given that nationally-set targets often precipitate a 'race to the bottom'.

The post-2012 framework should be based on the fundamental premise that it is the industrialised countries – with growing input from middle-income countries – which must fund the transition to low-carbon economic practices. While this transition will entail some initial sacrifice, economic growth and sound climate policies are not incompatible. For example, between 1990 and 2000, Denmark was able to stabilise its emissions by making its electricity generation more efficient and by switching from coal to renewable energy and natural gas. During this same period, Denmark's gross domestic product rose by 27 per cent.

The obstacles to tackling climate change are ultimately political. There is encouraging evidence that

“A child born in a wealthy country is likely to consume, waste, and pollute more in his lifetime than 50 children born in developing nations. Our energy-burning lifestyles are pushing our planet to the point of no return. It is dawning on us at last that the life of our world is as vulnerable as the children we raise”

George Carey,
former Archbishop of Canterbury

citizens' expectations of their respective governments' climate policies are growing but, given the apparent timidity of governments to take effective action, much more concerted action is required to prevent politicians from renegeing on their promises.

Stop Climate Chaos

Saturday, 4 November
Central London

On Saturday, 4 November, Stop Climate Chaos is calling for thousands of people to gather in central London to call for stronger government action on climate change.

Join supporters from environment, development, faith, women's and other organisations to send a powerful message to world leaders on the eve of the international talks on climate change in Nairobi. We want Prime Minister Blair to show leadership both at home and at the international talks.

Come and be part of an afternoon of entertainment, inspirational speakers and a message of solidarity to those around the world affected by climate change. This demonstration of broad support for tough action on climate change will be a fun, family-friendly day. All are welcome. The event will be the culmination of other supporter events, including the Campaign against Climate Change march.

If you want to know more about venue and timings, or can help with organising people to come from your organisation or area, please call 020 7324 4750 or check our website: www.stopclimatechaos.org.uk

Meanwhile, count yourself in on our online petition and personal pledge:

www.stopclimatechaos.org/action.asp