



# Part of the solution

This issue of *New World* may be an unusual one. It does not seek to contest, challenge or even scrutinise its central theme. In fact, it's one of the few subjects in global governance where there is a near-unified acknowledgment of the problem in front of us.

Decades of scientific research has led to the ever-growing consensus that man-made climate change is the greatest challenge we have ever faced. But actually solving it can feel as insurmountable now as at any point over the last few decades. Preventing a 2°C rise in global temperatures – the internationally agreed 'red line' for climate negotiations – and mitigating the adverse effects the world is already experiencing, will require myriad efforts on the part of all sections of society. Acting on this responsibility will require a sea change in attitudes. In recent months, momentum has been steadily building among proponents of climate action, with major shifts in both words and deeds (see graphic above). One of the most outspoken 'game changers' to

have emerged has come from a somewhat unusual quarter – the Vatican. In June, Pope Francis published a rare papal encyclical – a 184-page letter to Catholics all over the world – which lambasted past efforts to curb global warming. "Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain," he said. Reprising his argument in an address to world leaders at the UN in September, the Pope continued: "Without the recognition of certain incontestable natural ethical limits ... the ideal of 'saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war' and 'promoting social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom' risks becoming an unattainable illusion, or, even worse, idle chatter which serves as a cover for all kinds of abuse and corruption."

Pope Francis is not alone in calling for urgent change. Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of England and Chair of the G20's Financial Stability Board, recently warned the insurance industry that "the challenges currently posed by climate change pale in significance compared with what might come." He went on to suggest a climate disclosure task force, designed to set a voluntary international standard by which companies could publish their carbon emissions. (For more on the role of the financial sector, see next page). For some, however, it is long past time for half-measures. Kumi Naidoo, Executive Director of Greenpeace, recently criticised UN member states for the "mood of self-congratulation in New York". He called out governments

that for too long have said one thing and done another, citing President Obama as an example of a leader who, "in crass contradiction to his fine words, is still allowing Shell to drill for more oil in the Arctic" (the US has since suspended sales of drilling leases there). The role of civil society movements, particularly in challenging these inconsistencies, is more important than ever (see page 26). Just over a year ago, 300,000 activists in New York, plus as many more in cities around the world, marched for climate justice. It was undoubtedly a powerful display of global citizenship. But what did it achieve? The clamour for headline-grabbing stunts on the one hand, and scientific analyses wielded as bludgeons on the other, can only get us so far.

Ultimately, the most influential advocate for stimulating climate action is you. If governments, business leaders or our international institutions are to address this issue they must feel compelled by their own constituents. This approach can feel uncertain. As Isaac Newton once put it, "I can calculate the movements of heavenly bodies, but not the madness of men." But in years to come, our success or failure may be judged by the extent to which those in power were moved to act. From making the case for reducing your carbon footprint among friends and colleagues (see page 17 for ideas) to the gradual ratcheting of pressure on your political representatives, it is time for your voice to rise above the fray. ●