



Stop Climate Chaos Scotland

Briefing for the Scottish Parliament debate on the UN Climate Summit
September 2014

Global context

Global greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise and are now 61% higher than they were in 1990 (the baseline year)¹. At the same time, global temperatures are increasing² and climate impacts are being felt across the world. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which brings together thousands of climate scientists from across the world, confirms these facts in great detail in its most recent suite of reports³.

On Tuesday 23rd September 2014, world leaders met at the UN Climate Summit in New York to discuss the road forward for tackling climate change. Renewed political ambition is required if global temperatures are to stabilise and be brought under control.

To coincide with this summit, hundreds of thousands of people across the world took part in 'People's Marches' to voice their concern about climate change. As part of this global day of action, over 2,000 people marched in Edinburgh on 21st September 2014, demonstrating considerable public concern in Scotland about climate change.

Outcome of UN Climate Summit & 'Road to Paris'

The summit was an important signal ahead of the UN climate negotiations in Lima, Peru this December and in Paris, France in December 2015. Heads of state from over 120 countries came to New York on 23rd September to reaffirm commitment to the climate agenda, though little was announced in terms of new national commitments on mitigation and on adaptation funding for developing countries via the Green Climate Fund.

A new global agreement on climate change, to replace the Kyoto Protocol, is expected to be agreed at the Paris climate talks next year. The foundations for this agreement will be discussed at the Lima conference this year before being finalised and agreed at the end of 2015 in Paris.

What is clear is that national effort to tackle climate change is imperative to raise ambition at the global level and, at the same time, to address the slow progress in achieving an ambitious, fair and binding agreement via the UN process. Examples like Scotland's Climate Change Act are an essential part of the global effort, with more and more countries committing to policies and legislation to reduce national emissions.

Scottish context

Scotland has committed to strong action on climate change and that commitment, across the Scottish political spectrum and all sectors of society, has been widely commended. Earlier this month, Stop Climate Chaos Scotland launched a new video, *Scotland's Climate Action Story*⁴, to inform policymakers in other countries about that ambition. The Scottish Government has also undertaken work to promote the Scottish climate example to other countries⁵.

¹ www.wmo.int/pages/mediacentre/news/index_en.html#globalcarbonbudget

² www.wmo.int/pages/mediacentre/news/RecordheatinAugustJune-August.html

³ <http://www.ipcc.ch>

⁴ www.stopclimatechaos.org/campaigns/scotlands-climate-action-story

⁵ <http://bit.ly/ZetCht>

Therefore it is imperative that Scotland's climate commitments are delivered, including meeting all annual emissions targets set under the Scottish Climate Change Act. With the Scottish climate example being highlighted to other countries, we cannot afford to fail.

In addition, there is increasing understanding of the value and opportunity for people in Scotland to benefit from carbon-reducing policies. Many of the required actions to reduce emissions from transport, housing and waste can also create social and economic benefits, for example, improving physical and mental health and providing quality job opportunities in the green economy.

Scotland has missed all annual emissions targets so far. While this may in part be attributed to improved carbon accounting, had more policy effort taken place in the five years since the Act was passed, the likelihood of this happening would have significantly reduced. It is also important to note that the emissions targets in the early years were very small reductions and future targets will be increasingly challenging to meet.

Stop Climate Chaos Scotland welcomed the additional policies announced by the Scottish Government in June 2014. These are good first step to addressing the most recent missed target, but considerably more policy effort will be needed to get us back on track to meet all future targets.

Global action at the national level

Scotland is one of many countries committed to significant action on climate change. The most recent Globe Climate Legislation study provides detail on the 'extent and breadth of the legislative activity on climate change, [and confirms that] it's happening across the globe: in Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe and in large and small economies from China to Micronesia'⁶.

In addition, there is an increasing low carbon focus from investors and businesses, aware of the opportunities presented by a shift towards a green economy. Global investments in renewable energy are rising rapidly. Half of Scotland's electricity consumption now comes from renewable sources. While all power capacity added in the USA in August 2014 was renewable, countries like Denmark and Germany are producing new 'clean electricity' records almost every month. And China is installing as much solar this year as the US has ever done⁷; in fact, it is the world's biggest renewables investor.

At the same time, the fossil fuel divestment movement is growing, with the Rockefeller Foundation announcing just before the UN Climate Summit that it will stop investing in the fossil fuel industry⁸.

Conclusion

This is a crucial time for climate action and Scotland could play a positive role in increasing global ambition. It is essential that the vital ambition set out in the Scottish Climate Change Act, and supported by every political party in the Scottish Parliament, is realised and that every future emissions target is achieved. Only by delivering what we have said we will do, can Scotland play its fair part in delivering climate justice, and reap the full benefit of swiftly becoming a low carbon society.

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Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS) is a coalition of organisations campaigning on climate change, including environment, faith and development organisations, trade and student unions and community groups.
Stop Climate Chaos Scotland is a charity, registered in Scotland

⁶ <http://globelegislators.org/studies/legislation/climate>

⁷ <http://costing.irena.org/technology-costs/power-generation.aspx>

⁸ <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/c201f2e8-4279-11e4-847d-00144feabdc0.html>