



Stop Climate Chaos Scotland

Briefing on the UN climate change negotiations in Durban
November 2011

Introduction

In June 2011, Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS) provided all MSPs with a general briefing on climate change¹. This current briefing follows on from that, focusing on the UN climate change negotiations in Durban, South Africa, which will take place from 29th November to 9th December 2011.

What we want to happen at Durban

Time is running out for an ambitious global deal on climate change to be agreed, as the only agreement we currently have – the Kyoto Protocol – is due to end next year. We urgently need a follow-on agreement if we are to keep emissions under control and avoid the catastrophic effects of runaway global warming.

The UK delegation should push the EU and others to lead in the international climate negotiations in Durban. As part of the UK delegation, the Scottish Government must:

- 1) Show strong leadership to agree legally binding international cuts in carbon emissions at a level adequate to stop catastrophic climate change, particularly through a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol.
- 2) Support developing countries to adapt to climate change and to develop in a low carbon way through championing the Green Climate Fund, leading international discussions on sourcing vital public money, and ensuring that the funds reach those in most need.
- 3) Demonstrate the commitment already shown in Scotland to our world-leading Scottish Climate Change Act and the social, economic and environmental benefits of developing our green economy.

Recent developments regarding climate science

There have been two deeply concerning developments in climate change science over the past few months. Firstly, a recent U.S. Department of Energy report highlighted that global greenhouse gas emissions have increased so significantly – even during a period of global recession - that they now exceed even the 'worst-case scenario' that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) had projected in their last main report in 2007.

Secondly, the International Energy Agency, has given its starkest warning yet about global energy consumption patterns. Its World Energy Outlook 2011 report concluded that "the door to 2°C is closing", referring to the agreement reached at the UN climate change talks in Cancun last year to keep global temperatures no more than 2°C higher than they were in 1990. Their report continues by saying that, assuming that recent government policy commitments are implemented 'in a cautious manner', 'the world is on a trajectory that results in a level of emissions consistent with a long-term average temperature increase of more than 3.5°C. Without these new policies, we are on an even more dangerous track, for a temperature increase of 6°C or more.'

¹SCCS Parliamentary Briefing 'Climate Change in the new Parliament' <http://www.stopclimatechaos.org/ccbrief-june2011-final.pdf>

While Scotland's emissions account for just 0.2% of global emissions, our per capita footprint remains among some of the highest in the world. The ambitions of the Scottish Climate Change Act – to reduce emissions by 42% by 2020 and 80% by 2050 (compared to 1990 levels) – are in line with what scientists believe is necessary to give us any realistic chance of preventing global temperatures from rising by over 2°C and avoiding catastrophic climate change impacts.

UN climate change talks

The only international climate agreement we have – the Kyoto Protocol, which was agreed as part of the UNFCCC process in 1997 – is due to end in 2012. The Protocol includes binding greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets for 37 industrialized countries and the European community. Current commitments under the Protocol amount to an average of five per cent against 1990 levels over the five-year period 2008-2012. The Protocol does not include emissions targets for developing countries in recognition of their insignificant role in causing climate change in the first place.

Countries must meet their targets primarily through national measures but there are options to also meet them through the following mechanisms: emissions trading; the Clean Development Mechanism; and Joint Implementation.

At the UNFCCC negotiations in Copenhagen in 2009, and again in Cancun in 2010, there have been major obstacles to agreeing a follow-on agreement to the Kyoto Protocol. The USA, which never agreed to the Kyoto Protocol, along with Canada, Russia and Japan do not want to extend the current Kyoto Protocol, insisting that an agreement that sets emissions targets for emerging countries like China and India must instead be agreed. China, along with 77 other developing countries, is seeking a secondary commitment period to the Kyoto Protocol. This illustrates the level of complexity and challenge to getting a fair, ambitious and binding international agreement to follow on from Kyoto, agreed in Durban.

There are also significant issues regarding climate adaptation funding for developing countries that are already being negatively affected by climate change impacts, such as increased and more severe flooding and droughts. At the Cancun talks last year, there was a pledge to provide \$100bn each year, although one of the main challenges around this fund in Durban will be to actually launch the fund and start channeling this much-needed funding to the developing nations for which it is intended.

However, the urgent need to agree a new international deal on climate change should help to focus negotiators' minds and allow all countries to back a fair, ambitious and binding agreement or at least agree an urgent pathway to reach that agreement. SCCS remains hopeful that such an agreement may be achieved in Durban.

How Scotland fits in

The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 was one of the first pieces of domestic climate change legislation to be passed in the world. All political parties in Scotland voted for the Act, when it was unanimously passed by the Parliament on 24th June 2009. It remains the most progressive climate change legislation in the world, including:

- A target to reduce emissions by at least 42% on 1990 levels by 2020 and 80% by 2050;
- Legally-binding annual targets which, from 2020, must be at least 3% per year;
- A maximum of only 20% of Scotland's emissions reductions each year can come from the purchase of international carbon credits;
- Mandatory reporting on consumption-based emissions from products made overseas for Scotland;

- Targets must be set taking a 'fair and safe' cumulative emissions budget into account;
- Inclusion of international aviation and shipping emissions; and
- A duty on all public bodies to contribute to climate change targets.

Peatlands have been identified as a priority for action under international agreements and will be part of the discussions at Durban. Scotland's peatlands cover around one fifth of its land area², and contain 3,000 million tonnes of carbon³, so any such international agreement would have a significant impact in Scotland. There is more information on this topic in the RSPB briefing.

The EU has a target to reduce its total emissions by 20% by 2020 and has also confirmed it would increase that target to 30% if other major emitting countries commit to 'do their fair share under a future global climate agreement' to start in 2013, after the Kyoto Protocol has expired. This agreement would therefore need to be agreed in Durban or shortly afterwards.

The Scottish climate change legislation can be highlighted as a positive example to other countries considering putting their own climate change laws in place. Stop Climate Chaos Scotland delegates will be in Durban to work with international networks and promote the example of the Scottish Climate Change Act, building on similar work we have done at European and global events over the past two years.

It is essential that the commitments set out in the Scottish Climate Change Act are delivered. Scotland must meet the emissions reduction targets that have been set if our Act is to remain a credible example of leading climate change legislation. In order to ensure the targets in the Act can be met, Stop Climate Chaos Scotland continues to call for, as a minimum, all measures for relevant years in the Report on Proposals and Policies (RPP) to be fully funded in the 2012-13 Budget and 2011 Spending Review.

For more information contact:

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² http://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20Realising%20the%20benefits%20of%20peatlands_tcm9-282611.pdf

³ http://www.iucn-uk-peatlandprogramme.org/sites/all/files/091201BriefingPeatlands_andClimateChange.pdf