



Stop Climate Chaos Scotland

Briefing on the UN climate change negotiations in Doha,
December 2012

This year's UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties (COP) took place in Doha, Qatar from 26 November – 8 December.

The UNFCCC is an annual meeting where countries from around the world gather to consider how best to limit global warming and tackle climate change. Progress at the meetings has been slow; the meeting in Doha was the eighteenth Conference of Parties.

The outcome of the talks was very disappointing; they failed to deliver the necessary cuts to carbon emissions and have not put nearly enough money on the table to help the poorest countries adapt to climate change.

Introduction

Both before and during the talks, various credible reports were published with essentially the same conclusion; without serious and rapid action to cut carbon emissions, the world is on course to face catastrophic consequences of runaway climate change.

In November, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) stated that global emissions are already considerably higher than the level needed to meet the agreed-upon 2°C climate target in 2020. Moreover, emissions are still growing¹. The World Bank examined the disastrous consequences of a 4°C world²; stating that failure to act on climate change could result in extreme heat-waves, water scarcity, rising sea levels and a fall in global food stocks.

Closer to home, the European Environment Agency (EEA) has highlighted the costs of the extreme weather events across Europe. It suggests climate change will make these events more frequent and more intense, leading to rising damage costs³. By contrast, the cost of tackling climate change is relatively modest: the UK committee on Climate Change has stated that "Scottish emissions reduction targets can be met at manageable economic cost (e.g. of the order less than 1% of GDP)"⁴.

Doha Outcome

Kyoto Protocol

An eight-year second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol (KP) – the only international climate agreement there is – was agreed. This new commitment period will include the EU, Australia, Norway, Switzerland and the Ukraine. However, Russia, Japan, Canada and New Zealand will not be taking on new targets. Big emitters such as the USA and China have never been part of the KP.

Loopholes also remain including the carry-over of 'hot air' surplus emissions credits. Countries under the KP received credits equivalent to the amount they were permitted to emit. Credits can be traded so that countries that have emitted over their target can purchase credits from those that

¹ UNEP, The Emissions Gap 2012, November 2012.

http://www.unep.org/publications/ebooks/emissionsgap2012/portals/50143/Emissions2012_Exec%20Summary_EN.pdf

² World Bank, Turn Down the Heat, November 2012, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/2012/11/18/new-report-examines-risks-of-degree-hotter-world-by-end-of-century>

³ EEA, November 2012, <http://www.eea.europa.eu/pressroom/newsreleases/climate-change-evident-across-europe>

⁴ UKCCC, Scotland's path to a low carbon economy, <http://bit.ly/rn8jZA>

have surpluses. Doha has allowed unused credits – estimated to be as high as 13 billion tonnes⁵ - to be carried over from the first commitment period into the second commitment period. This is almost three times the annual emissions of the EU.

Countries within the KP have been called on to review their emissions reduction targets by 2014. Whilst this is not a legal obligation, it reinforces the need for countries to increase their emission reduction targets prior to 2020.

Climate Finance

Those who have done least to cause global warming are currently being hit first and hardest by a changing climate. Developed countries have an obligation to support those countries in reducing emissions and adapting to climate change. Finance was a critical issue for building trust in Doha but developing countries failed to deliver climate finance on the scale needed.

The UK, Germany, France, Denmark, Sweden and the EU Commission provided pledges of money totaling approximately \$6 billion for the period up to 2015. However, there was no clear pathway for how the \$100 billion per year by 2020 - previously promised to developing countries in 2009 - would be met.

Loss and Damage

Doha agreed to establish an 'international mechanism' on loss and damage at next year's climate talks. This is a decision that finally acknowledges that those most vulnerable to climate change have to receive help to recover from the loss and damages they suffer from ever worsening impacts.

This mechanism is required because we have not done enough to reduce our emissions. The world is currently on track for a four degree temperature rise and people all over the world are already being affected by devastating climate change impacts at just 0.8 degrees temperature change.

Future talks

At last year's UNFCCC talks in Durban, countries agreed to further negotiations on a new climate treaty to be agreed in 2015 and to come into action in 2020, with emission reduction commitments from all major emitters.

At Doha, countries agreed to hold workshops next year to prepare the new agreement. Governments will submit proposals on ways to raise ambition to the UN Climate Change Secretariat by March 2013. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon announced in Doha that he would convene world leaders in 2014 to mobilize the political will needed to ensure the 2015 deadline is met.

Scotland's role on the international scene

SCCS welcomes the participation of the Scottish Climate Minister as part of the UK delegation in Doha. Scotland's climate change legislation is a positive example to other countries also committed to cutting emissions and tackle climate change. It is therefore essential that the commitments set out in the Scottish Climate Act are delivered. However, with one annual target already missed, and emissions from our housing and transport sectors higher now than they were in 1990, Scotland's climate leadership is in doubt.

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. The international standing of Scotland's

⁵ Greenpeace International, November 2012, <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/Global/international/briefings/climate/Doha2012/HotAir.pdf>

Climate Act depends on the Government delivering on its targets; and this requires a strong climate action plan – the Report on Proposals and Policies - in the New Year.

What needs to happen now?

The path forward is clear: science tells us that we have to act quickly to cut emissions and stop runaway climate change. We have the knowledge and technology to reduce emissions, protect vulnerable communities and grow sustainable, resilient, economies. What is lacking is leadership and political will.

MSPs must support Governments – including the Scottish Government - to work hard to put concrete proposals on the table for the next talks in Poland so that real progress can be made towards to secure a fair, ambitious and binding deal in 2015.

MSPs must also call on the Scottish Government to show leadership and reaffirm commitment to never again missing a target under the Climate Change Act. It is essential that the commitments to reduce emissions as set out in Act are actually delivered, to enable a move to a low carbon economy. 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.

The Scottish Government should seek to increase its Climate Justice Fund to match the International Development Fund over the course of this parliament. As the Climate Minister is likely to testify, having met several organisations from developing countries, the resources required for climate justice are vast.

For more information contact:

Stop Climate Chaos Scotland
c/o Joanne O'Neill, Policy Officer, SCIAF
Tel: 0141 354 5555 Email: joneill@sciaf.org.uk
Ground Floor, 2 Lochside View, Edinburgh Park, Edinburgh, EH12 9DH
www.stopclimatechaos.org/scotland

Stop Climate Chaos Scotland is a charity, registered in Scotland, no SC039643