



Stop Climate Chaos Scotland

Briefing for Parliamentary Debate on Climate Emergency

27th March 2019

Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS) is a diverse coalition of international development and environment organisations, trade and student unions, faith and community groups. We believe that the Scottish Parliament and Government should take bold action to tackle climate change, delivering our part of the Paris Agreement and supporting climate justice around the world. This briefing outlines our collective concerns about the impacts of climate change internationally.

Climate Justice

Climate change is fundamentally an issue of justice. And the greatest injustice is that those who have done the least to cause climate change bear the brunt of its devastating effects. Countries already suffering the inequalities of a global economic system rigged against them are now finding the lives and livelihoods of their citizens impacted by climate change.

Tropical Cyclone Idai, one of the worst tropical storms to have ever affected the southern hemisphere, has caused catastrophic and long-lasting damage across south-eastern Africa. With deaths around the world (but predominantly in the global South) directly caused by climate breakdown estimated at around 500,000 per year, and predicted to increase to 600,000 by 2030¹, **this is nothing less than a climate emergency.**

As a country that got rich through a model of development which relied on the burning of fossil fuels, we have a responsibility to cut our emissions in a way that will not only reduce the impacts of climate change here in Scotland, but also around the world. We must pay our fair share of the costs of helping the global South adapt to unavoidable climate impacts.

The importance of 1.5°C

In 2015, the Paris Climate Agreement brought together 197 nations to commit to keep temperature rises below 1.5°C. Last year, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published a special report, demonstrating that, at current rates, **we will reach 1.5°C in twelve years.** All governments must act faster to limit global warming to 1.5°C in order to protect people and planet.

An increase of 1.5°C in average global temperatures will mean different things for different countries of the world. For developing countries, and for millions of people living in poverty, missing that 1.5°C target is literally a matter of life or death. Warming over 1.5°C means **millions more people exposed to droughts, heatwaves and floods** and ocean warming that threatens marine life and the people who depend on it. This amounts to nothing short of a climate catastrophe, and will lead to unprecedented levels of climate migration. Tens of millions of people

¹ <https://daraint.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/EXECUTIVE-AND-TECHNICAL-SUMMARY.pdf>

are already being forced to move every year by shrinking coastlines, catastrophic storms and flooding or wildfires destroying their homes².

The IPCC's report last year highlighted that allowing warming to reach 2°C rather than 1.5°C would have even more devastating impacts. Impacts include:

- 60 million more urban residents exposed to severe drought by 2100;
- An additional 2 billion people worldwide exposed to extreme heat waves at least once every 20 years;
- The Arctic will be ice-free at least once every 10 years, rather than once every 100 years, with far-reaching consequences for arctic wildlife and people; and
- Virtually all coral reefs are lost by 2100, due to bleaching, whereas 1.5°C means we keep up to 30% of today's coral reefs. A quarter of all marine species, and around a billion people, depend on coral reefs.

Everywhere on earth ice is changing. Glaciers and ice caps are crucial for drinking water and irrigation in large areas of China, India, and other parts of the Asian continent, as well as South America. But around the world, they are retreating at unprecedented rates³.

Listening to people most affected by climate impacts

SCCS is particularly keen that the voices of those most affected by climate change are heard during the ongoing parliamentary process for the Climate Change Bill. For too long, people suffering the impacts of climate change have been silenced and ignored. We believe their voices must be heard in the political decision-making which affects their lives.

Our *100 Voices* project⁴ collected images and testimonies from every inhabited continent, calling for Scotland to end our climate pollution. Here are some of the *100 Voices* calling for more climate action from Scotland:

Cambodia

In many of the communities we work in, people are already experiencing the devastating impacts of climate change. Mork Nay (right), a fisherman from Cambodia told SCIAF, "climate change is getting worse and I don't know what to do to cope with it. I'm not sure about the future."

In 2014, the area he lives in was flooded and rice stocks destroyed, devastating his family who were already struggling. The flood water stayed for a month and was 1.5 metres deep. Many people have already left his community as a result.



Bolivia

Cecilia Cordova from Christian Aid Bolivia told us: "Here in Bolivia the effects of climate change are already making themselves clear. From La Paz you can see the glaciers that bring us water in the dry season melting and our lakes drying up."

² [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/621893/EPRS_BRI\(2018\)621893_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/621893/EPRS_BRI(2018)621893_EN.pdf)

³ <https://nsidc.org/cryosphere/glaciers/questions/climate.html>

⁴ <https://www.stopclimatechaos.scot/campaign/act-for-our-future/100-voices/>

“Last year, after our worst drought in 25 years, the government was forced to declare a state of emergency – closing schools and rationing water. Usually poor people such as subsistence farmers are hit hardest. Bolivian people are doing their best to tackle climate change and its effects, but we know that we cannot do this alone.”

Malawi

John Makina, Country Director of Oxfam Malawi, explained: "I see first-hand how climate change is destroying the lives of ordinary African farmers, particularly female-headed households. Farming has become dangerously unpredictable. Delayed rains, prolonged dry spells, floods and pests now characterize most of the growing seasons in Malawi and many other countries in Africa.

“Experts attribute these effects to climate change. In Malawi, almost 80 percent of the country's population depends on agriculture for their livelihoods and with half of Malawians living in poverty, the majority of small-scale farmers don't have enough resources to adapt to climate change.

Intergenerational justice

Recent reports, including the special report from the IPCC in October last year, make clear that without urgent action now, we will see even more significant impacts on our planet in the future. Climate change is an intergenerational justice issue – with future generations living with the consequences of the actions, or inaction, of those who came before them.

This month saw young people take to the streets in a global youth strike, with organisers estimating over 1.4 million young people took action in 2,233 locations across 128 countries. In Scotland alone, an estimated 2,000 young people gathered in Glasgow while 4,000 protested outside the Scottish Parliament – with more children gathered in 18 areas across the length and breadth of Scotland.

There is clear demand from young people for politicians to take action. Politicians must hear this call, accepting climate change as an intergenerational justice issue in the Climate Change Bill, and taking action to ensure future generations don't live with the devastating impacts of warming exceeding 1.5°C.

Moving away from dependence on fossil fuels

To address climate change, Scotland must transition away from fossil fuels – embedding the principles of a Just Transition in our plans to ensure those working in the fossil fuel and related industries have the skills and opportunities to work in low carbon jobs. To help achieve this, a Just Transition Commission should be set in legislation.

Most of the world's remaining fossil fuel resources cannot be extracted and burnt if we are to avoid ever worsening climate change. Scotland must demonstrate a coherent commitment to tackle climate change in our new Climate Change legislation but also in our policy-making relating to the oil and gas industry, fracking and other high carbon activities.

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