

Stop Climate Chaos

April 2007

Stop Climate Chaos is a coalition of civil society organizations campaigning to ensure Ireland plays its part in preventing runaway climate change.

Together, we call on the Government to

- Push for an international agreement to keep the rise in global temperatures to 2 degrees C or less. This means global greenhouse gas emissions must reach their peak and begin to decline irreversibly within 10 years.
- Ensure Ireland does its fair share to prevent climate chaos by immediately bringing in a climate change law which provides for an annual Carbon Budget and 3% year-on-year reductions in Irish greenhouse gas emissions.
- Support developing countries to adapt to the unavoidable effects of climate change.

Stop Climate Chaos will seek to mobilize the Irish public to take personal and political action in support of these common objectives. Within this shared framework our members will promote their own approaches to aspects of the challenge ahead.

Vision

A world where human impact on the global climate has been contained to a level that enables social, environmental and economic justice for all.

Mission

To build a broad coalition that creates irresistible public pressure for political action to stop human-induced climate change having catastrophic consequences.

Policy Platform

Climate change is happening. Human activity is causing it. But humanity also has the power to stop it running out of control. If we act now we can make the decisions and take the steps needed to prevent climate change having catastrophic consequences. But time is running out. We are approaching a number of tipping points we must do everything in our power to avoid. Without urgent action, therefore, climate change will devastate life on earth. Hundreds of millions of people will be put at severe risk of drought, floods, starvation, and disease. Tens of millions will become climate refugees. The world's poorest and most vulnerable communities are being hit first and will be hit hardest, having done least to cause this climate crisis. The same coastal communities that were devastated by the Tsunami are at risk from the storm surges and rising sea-levels that climate change will bring. The communities in sub-Saharan Africa so often hit by famine are at further risk from changing weather patterns.

And if we fail to act climate change will hit home too. It will bring more unpredictable and erratic weather patterns, more frequent and severe storms and flooding in winter and water shortages in summer.

Politicians have so far failed to take sufficient action to avoid such chaos. And Ireland is one of the worst offenders. Among rich countries our climate pollution is among the very highest per person and Ireland's emissions are still rising. Yet the choices made in the next five years will determine the extent of the devastation faced by future generations. We can save millions of lives and a multitude of species by keeping the average global temperature increase under 2°C. To achieve this, global greenhouse gas emissions must peak and be falling irreversibly by 2015.

Rich countries, with their responsibility for historic emissions, must show leadership by reducing their emissions. We must work to ensure that developing countries have the finance they need to adapt and cope with the climate change that we have already caused. They also need access to sufficient low/zero carbon technology to enable them develop economically and end poverty without the same pollution the rich world produced. And because all countries share the obligation to ensure that damaging global warming is permanently avoided, each must commit to policies to guarantee that global greenhouse gas emissions decline beyond 2015.

As the Stern report makes clear the costs of coping with climate change far out way the costs of preventing it. Combined with the coming decline in oil production we face an even greater threat to our own economic and social progress, unless we make the transition to a post-carbon economy. The sooner we make the shift, the more opportunities will open up for the Irish economy.

Action to address climate change must ensure that we protect Irish and global biodiversity which is essential to sustainable development.

The next few years are crucial. Ireland must begin to do its fair share by enacting a law providing for an annual Carbon Budget and at least 3% year-on-year reductions in our greenhouse gas emissions. Internationally, Ireland must push for a speedy agreement of mechanisms adequate to prevent dangerous climate change. What sense would there be Ireland raising our aid spending to 1.5 billion euro a year by 2012 if at the same time our rising climate pollution undermines the prospects for global poverty reduction.

We call on the Government to:

1. Push for an international agreement to keep the rise in global temperatures to 2 degrees C or less

The overwhelming scientific consensus is that global warming must be capped at 2 deg. C or preferably substantially less. Otherwise hundreds of millions across the globe will lose their lives and livelihoods, up to a third of land-based species may become extinct, immense political instability will occur as people migrate to avoid droughts and floods and compete for scarce resources, and great economic damage will be caused by increasingly extreme weather. There is also the grave danger of insecurity and conflict from the continued expansion of fossil fuel use.

Only a set of binding targets, within a global framework, will deliver the necessary reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions. If the 2 deg. C ceiling is not to be breached then global emissions must peak by 2015 and then irreversibly decline. This will require the industrialised countries, who still contribute disproportionately to global emissions and who historically have been responsible for the bulk of the emissions now changing the climate, to adopt and meet exacting emissions reduction targets. The rest of the world must also be brought within a framework of binding targets, but the latter must occur via a process that allows them to meet their developmental needs.

The coalition recognizes that a number of frameworks for the equitable distribution of emissions between countries have been proposed, some of which are endorsed by members of the coalition.

Stop Climate Chaos believes that whatever the framework instituted it should reflect certain basic principles of social, environmental and economic justice. Everyone has the right to live free from poverty. Everyone has a right to a fair share, and no more than a fair share, of the Earth's resources.

2. Bring in a climate change law which provides for an annual Carbon Budget and 3% year-on-year reductions in Irish greenhouse gas emissions.

To ensure that Ireland does its fair share and moves decisively towards a low-carbon economy, the Government should set an annual Carbon Budget, analogous to the annual financial budget.

All sectors of Irish society would have to contribute to keeping within this budget, and allocations would therefore probably be made sector by sector. The carbon budget would be given similar political importance to the conventional Budget with all government departments having a role to play in keeping emissions within the limits set.

Based on the scientific evidence, and the lead responsibility that should be taken by rich countries, we believe that the Carbon Budget should be set in line with a total average annual reduction in Irish greenhouse gas emissions of at least 3%. It should be noted however that the level of annual reduction rises with each year of delay, and that it must in any case be kept under review to reflect the latest scientific analysis of the sensitivity of the climate to greenhouse gas concentrations.

3. Support developing countries to adapt to the unavoidable effects of climate change.

Developing countries have contributed least to the problem, and in the near/mid term total developing country emissions will still be less than those by industrialised countries both in absolute and per capita terms. Yet developing countries will be the ones worst hit by climate change and are already feeling some impacts. The impact of the global warming that has already occurred, and the future warming to which the

world is already committed is, and will increasingly be, devastating for poor people, undermining the progress intended under the Millennium Development Goals and longer term development objectives.

Industrialised countries on the other hand have an historical responsibility for causing climate change and as a matter of fairness and justice should bear the leading responsibility for tackling the problem, both by reducing their emissions and by assisting developing countries to adapt to the changes that are already occurring. Although difficult to estimate accurately, the cost of adaptation will be substantial in developing countries, certainly greater than the range of US\$10 to 40 billion p.a. estimated by the World Bank. Rich countries have primary responsibility to cover these costs, in addition to achieving the 0.7% commitment to overseas aid.

Adaptation is intrinsically linked to mitigation, and it is essential that both be addressed as a matter of urgency. It must be born in mind that it will not be possible for poorer people and countries to adapt if climate change breaches danger levels, so adaptation measures in the Global South must not be seen as an alternative to mitigation measures in the Global North.

Stop Climate Chaos believes that adaptation measures should adhere to three overarching principles:

1. *Adaptation strategies should be integrated within existing national and international development and poverty reduction activities:* It is essential that adaptation should not be viewed as a separate 'sector', but be addressed within ongoing development and poverty reduction processes. A critical requirement for development programmes and projects is that they decrease human vulnerability to climate change.
2. *Empower poor communities:* As with development measures in general, adaptation strategies must strengthen communities from the bottom-up, building on their own coping strategies to live with climate change and empowering them to participate in the development of climate change policies.
3. *Strengthen disaster risk reduction:* When dealing with the uncertainties of climate change, reducing vulnerability to existing climate impacts through disaster risk reduction is an effective and cost-efficient method of building adaptive capacity for the future.

Members of Stop Climate Chaos are: ActionAid, Afri, An Taisce, Cap and Share, Christian Aid, Comhlámh, Concern, Cultivate, Eco-Congregation, Eco-Unesco, Feasta, Friends of the Earth, Gorta, Kimmage Development Studies Centre, Methodist Church in Ireland - Council of Social Responsibility, National Youth Council Ireland, Oxfam Ireland, People Against Climate Change, Students Against Climate Change, Trócaire, Voice.