

BROKEN PROMISES ON CLIMATE TARGETS

Bonn, June 2014

At the Bonn meeting of the UN Climate Convention, Ministers are to meet to discuss increasing their commitments under the Kyoto Protocol in order to bring proposals into line with what science and equity require by 2020. However, it appears that no country will comply with this commitment, representing another broken promise on pollution-cut levels and undermining trust at a critical moment on the path to a new agreement in 2015.

The current state of international climate policy

The latest reports by the UN climate science panel, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), spell out that **we face a planetary emergency**.

These reports show that **we are currently on track for 4°C to as much as 7.8°C of warming** by the end of the century, which would make the world uninhabitable for organized human societies.

To get off this path, which **severely threatens food sovereignty and security** in the next 15 years, we must transform our societies and drastically reduce climate pollution.

Modelling based on the IPCC studies suggests that **developed countries need to reduce their emissions by 50% domestically on 1990 levels by 2020, to make a fair contribution** to the effort required to perform a globally just transition.¹ This would be **in addition to the transfer of finance and technology to the global South as payment of their climate debt** and to allow for a global transformation.

Yet, proposals from developed countries are to reduce emissions by as little as 12%, before accounting loopholes and tricks are included. That's the difference between the entire annual emissions of Europe and Russia and combined.

Timeline of Broken Promises

The **failure of rich industrialised countries' governments to propose 2020 climate targets based on science and equity is the culmination of a long history of avoiding responsibility** and international obligations on climate change.

Collectively, and assisted in particular by the so-called "leadership" from the United States, the developed countries have:

- Failed to fulfil the objective of returning to their 1990 emission levels by the year 2000, as called for by the Convention;
- Refused to participate in a legally binding system of emission cuts in the case of the United States with the Kyoto Protocol;
- Failed to reach agreement on a legally-binding second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol in 2009, as they committed to do under the 2007 Bali mandate;
- Failed to meet their binding targets under the Kyoto Protocol and then renounced their obligations in the case of Canada;
- Withdrew from the Kyoto Protocol's legally binding targets post-2012 in the case of Russia, Japan and New Zealand;

- Weakened their initially proposed 2020 targets either:

- directly by Japan (who is now promising to increase emissions instead of decreasing them);
- by using accounting tricks like the United States and New Zealand, or;
- by refusing to acknowledge that the 'conditions' for higher targets have been met such as in Europe and Australia.

In addition to this history, **as a part of a globally agreed outcome at the Doha climate conference in 2012, it was agreed that the developed countries would announce their plans to increase their targets in 2014, under the Kyoto Protocol.**

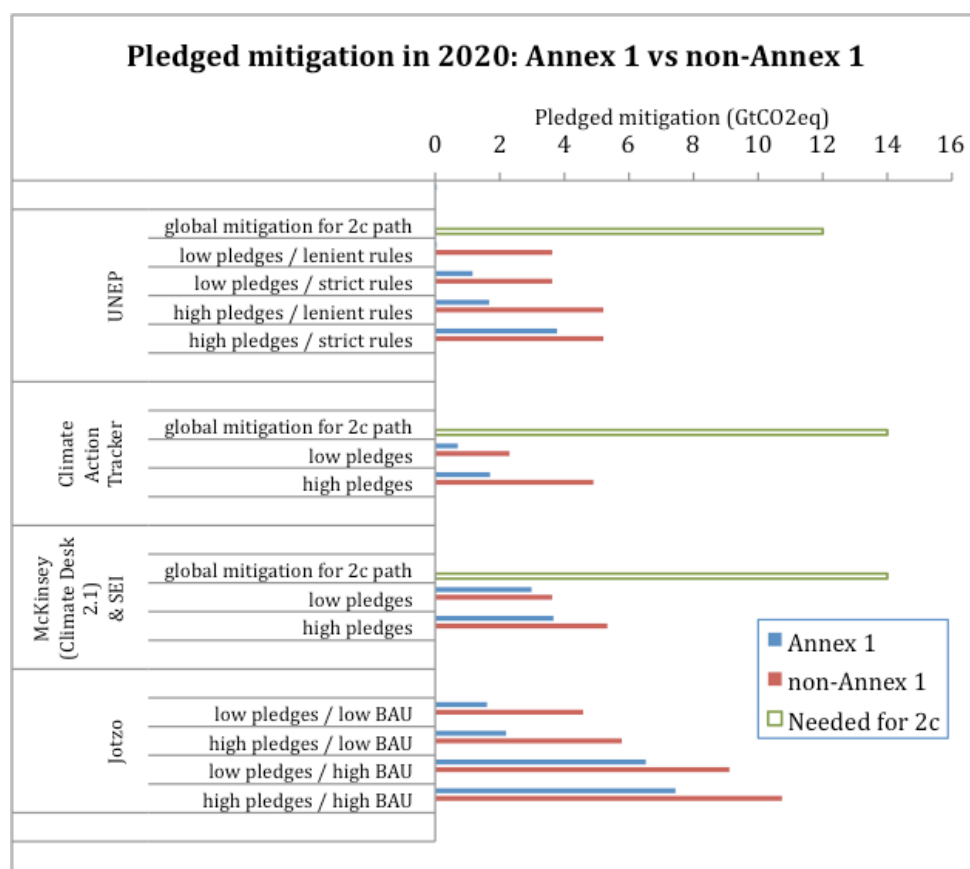
To do so they were to submit their intentions in writing by the 30th of April. **To date no submission reflects an 'intention to increase the ambition of its commitment' as the Doha decision requires.**

1. See: <http://www.gdrights.org/>

The impact of broken promises

The failure of developed countries to meet their legal and moral obligations to take on deeper emission reduction targets has severe consequences.

1. The approach of countries like the United States, Japan, Canada, Russia, and Australia is **locking us into a future of devastating global warming** – risking food scarcity, wider-spread hunger and a world of even more poverty.
2. The failure of leadership by developed countries means that **the developing countries, with much less historical responsibility and far fewer resources are today promising more climate action by 2020 than the rich** – an obvious injustice.
3. This **history of betrayal also undermines the future of the UN climate talks**. Without strong 2020 climate targets from rich countries, many developing countries will have little reason to trust them in a future agreement. More worryingly it sends a message to developing country governments that climate action is not to be taken seriously.



SOURCE: <http://www.sei-international.org/mediamanager/documents/Publications/Climate/sei-workingpaperus-1107.pdf>

The way forward

To avoid a repetition of the failures of the past Ministers in Bonn need to forge a new way forward. This includes:

- Prioritising the **raising of developed countries' pre-2020 targets to be in line with science and equity (at least 50% in aggregate) as an outcome of the talks in Lima**. This will require political leadership and an effort to tackle excessive consumption as well as technological and economic changes.
- **Setting a global emissions budget in line with a chance of keeping warming to 1.5°C** as the first element of the Durban Platform negotiations. This is needed as 2°C is now widely recognised as committing the world to the a path which may breach several 'tipping points' locking in irreversible and devastating changes such as glacial melt, forest dieback and ocean acidification.
- Agreeing to **share the very limited remaining emissions budget on the basis of historical responsibility and capacity** going forward – to ensure that all countries and people participate in an agreement and can achieve the transformation the world needs. This is needed as, to be effective, any global effort must broadly be seen as fair.