

G8 and Climate Change – what's the story?

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Climate change is the greatest threat humanity faces, and has mainly been caused by G8 countries: Over 80 percent of the emissions in the atmosphere today have been produced by the G8. These countries still emit more than 40 percent of global CO₂ emissions, despite being home to only 13 percent of the global population. It is the responsibility of G8 leaders to make clear **binding** commitments to fight climate change. If they are to deliver at the Toyako, Japan summit from 7-9 July, they must at a minimum agree to ALL of the following:

- Keep global average temperature increases as far below a 2 degree Celsius rise as possible (compared to pre-industrial levels).
- Reduction of global emission levels by 2015 and cuts by **more than 50** percent by 2050 (compared to 1990 levels).
- **Industrialised countries** must take the lead and commit to 30 percent cuts by 2020 and 80-90 percent by 2050 compared to 1990 levels. Japan must unilaterally commit to a 25-40 percent cut by 2020 to be a credible summit host. 2020 targets are more important than 2050 targets indicating whether governments are willing to act now – or not.
- The G8 must recognise that **protecting intact forests is crucial for preserving biodiversity and combating climate change**. With around one-fifth of all greenhouse gas emissions coming from tropical forest clearance, governments must support creating an effective funding mechanism under the Kyoto Protocol that provides the necessary scale and financing to move towards zero deforestation within the next decade.

These essentials are the bare minimum that the G8 must commit to. However, **if the seven G8 countries that have signed the Kyoto Protocol agree these essentials, that too is real progress**. The world cannot and should not wait for George W. Bush. The following key issues will also be relevant to judging the G8 outcome:

There must be:

- No support for coal as there is no such thing as “clean coal” (www.greenpeace.org/ccs). Government leaders and the World Bank are set to announce new **Climate Investment Funds** at Toyako. These Funds fail to define the “clean technologies” they are meant to support. Therefore, they are part of the problem, not the solution, and likely will end up subsidising the world’s worst energy choice: coal. Subsidising coal in the name of climate protection is madness and these Funds are opposed by Greenpeace and other civil society groups (www.endoilaid.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/06/cif-sign-on-statement.doc).

- No support for dangerous and expensive nuclear power, which undermines solutions to climate change (www.greenpeace.org/raw/content/international/press/reports/nuclear-power-undermining-ac.pdf). Greenpeace has shown that global energy demand can be met without nuclear energy or carbon capture and storage coal: www.energyblueprint.info.
- The G8 must not fall for populist rhetoric and call for an end to high oil prices. The real costs of oil and coal – such as climate change, respiratory diseases and armed conflicts – are still to be factored into the global price of fossil fuels. Investing massively in improving energy efficiency is the only sensible response to high oil prices; the potential for efficiency improvements is huge (www.energyblueprint.info). Greenpeace supports policies that ensure the poor do not suffer from high oil prices. Subsidies to the fossil fuel industries are unacceptable.
- An effective framework for funding reductions in deforestation and forest degradation in the tropics. Greenpeace wants the UN rather than the World Bank to take the lead on such incentives, which must support the Kyoto Protocol and not undermine other climate mitigation strategies (www.greenpeace.org/forestsforclimate)
- A commitment to financially support developing countries to adjust and adapt to the no longer avoidable climate change impacts.
- An agreement that biomass should be used primarily for combined heat and power production and only if it adheres to strict and binding sustainability standards. There must be no forest-land converted to biofuel production, for example.

Background

The G8 summits were founded in 1975 as a response to the economic impact of rising oil prices! Climate change is a relatively recent addition to the G8 agenda. In 2000, the G8 proposed an ambitious programme for the expansion of renewable energies but it was never followed up. In 2005, climate change was one of the priorities of the G8 meeting in Gleneagles, Scotland. But the result was vague and meaningless, as Tony Blair did not want to offend his friend George W. Bush. Nevertheless, leaders documented the US's isolation by stating: "Those of us who have ratified the Kyoto Protocol welcome its entry into force and will work to make it a success". The US is the only industrialised country not to have ratified the Kyoto Protocol. Though he says otherwise, Bush is still actively working to undermine Kyoto. For this purpose, he started the Major Economies Meetings (originally Major Emitters Meetings) in September 2006 (www.greenpeace.org/international/press/reports/bush-mem). On 9 July, as part of the G8 summit, a Major Economies Leaders meeting will take place in Toyako. The MEM leaders will issue a statement. Judging from the latest drafts, this will offer nothing new in the fight against climate change. For a full briefing on the MEM meeting go to: www.greenpeace.org/international/press/reports/G8-MEM

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