

## UN CLIMATE TALKS - POZNAN December 1-13, 2008

### *NZ – a wolf in sheep’s clothing*

#### Background

The scientific imperative to act on climate change is growing by the day. Temperature increases, global emissions and loss of ice at the Arctic and Antarctic have now overshoot scientists’ worst case scenarios. The Arctic icecap has entered what’s been called a 'death spiral'. For the first time in human history, you can take a ship right around the North Pole. There may be no summer ice left at all at the North Pole within five years.

The British foreign secretary's special representative for climate said the challenge of fighting climate change must be treated more seriously than the threat from the Cold War, and that industrialised countries should essentially put their economies on a war footing. As US President-Elect Barack Obama says, “delay is no longer an option; denial is no longer an acceptable response”.

The UN Climate conference in Poznan, Poland, starting in a week’s time, marks the halfway mark in negotiations for a global agreement on the second phase of the Kyoto Protocol. The negotiations were launched in Bali in 2007 and must conclude in Copenhagen at the end of 2009.

In Copenhagen, governments must set the world on a course to avoid the catastrophic risks posed by climate change. The Copenhagen agreement must have the highest probability of keeping global mean temperature increase as far below 2°C as possible. This means greenhouse emissions must peak by 2015 and decline rapidly after that.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, exceeding the 2°C threshold could result in:

- 1 to 3.2 billion people suffering increased water stress
- loss of the incredible biodiversity of the coral reefs
- 3-15 million people at risk of coastal flooding each year
- increasing malnutrition, diarrheal, cardio-respiratory and infectious diseases
- increasing morbidity and mortality from heatwaves, floods and droughts
- long term commitment to several metres of sea-level rise due to ice sheet loss..
- Up to 80% of the Amazon rainforests and its biodiversity lost

**We’re currently on a pathway that implies temperatures could increase by up to 7 °C by the end of the century.**

Governments have yet to show that they fully grasp how severe the climate crisis is or how urgent the need for decisive, effective action has become. The Poznan climate talks must make significant progress towards a deeper, broader stronger Kyoto agreement.

## **New Zealand's role at Poznan**

New Zealand will send a delegation of about 20 representatives to Poznan. It will be led by Minister in Charge of Climate Negotiations - Tim Groser.

New Zealand heads to this meeting with its reputation in tatters, due both to the new National government's capitulation to the ACT Party over climate policy and science, and due to its poor performance at these climate talks in the past.

Contrary to political rhetoric, New Zealand has never been a leader on climate change. Rather, we're well established as one of the climate bad guys on the international stage, and have always sided with what's known as an "umbrella group" of countries during climate negotiations. This group comprises the US, Canada, Russia, Australia and Japan (although the US' position is expected to change with the new administration).

This group consistently stalls and stymies any real progress. We saw some very poor behaviour from the New Zealand delegation at a meeting Vienna last year, where the delegation labeled proposed emission targets "too demanding" and fought to water down the agreement. Then in Bali, New Zealand dragged its heels and again refused to agree to the recommended target range.

It will be up to Mr Groser to make up for New Zealand's past mistakes and establish some much-needed credibility on the world stage.

As explained below, a meaningful global agreement rests on two things. 1) Developed countries signing up to strong emission reduction targets. 2) Developing countries committing to contribute in some way to overall emission reductions.

If countries like New Zealand don't agree to do their bit, why should developing countries come onboard?

United States President-Elect Barack Obama has issued a "you're either with us or against us" type message about fighting climate change. New Zealand must heed it. We cannot risk New Zealand becoming an international climate change pariah.

## **What needs to come out of Poznan**

### **1) Deeper cuts for developed countries.**

Industrialised country commitment to climate protection will be judged by the level of ambition they show when setting future targets. This will either build or destroy confidence in the process and affect the outcome. The most recent climate science shows that we have little time to waste. Economic analyses show that the cost of inaction is far greater than the cost of action. There is no reason or excuse for delay. **In Poznan:**

- ***Developed countries must commit to binding emissions reductions at the upper end of the 25-40% by 2020 (on 1990 levels) range identified by the IPCC***

- ***Developed countries must set an overall emissions reduction target for the period 2013 – 2017 that is consistent with achieving the above reductions by 2020***

## **2) Start negotiating.**

Even after two decades of climate negotiations and increasingly stark warnings about accelerating crisis, governments are still tip-toeing around each other. Progress has frequently stalled on procedural technicalities and the talks are still marred by mistrust and lack of cooperation. It is a year since Bali and real negotiations have yet to begin. It is time to stop merely talking and start negotiating. **In Poznan:**

- ***Governments must produce a draft agreement that will serve as the basis for real negotiations in 2009.***
- ***Governments must produce a work plan for 2009 that moves the talks into full negotiating mode***

**3) End tropical deforestation.** One of the few areas where progress has been made this year is on the issue of Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD). Deforestation contributes up to 20% of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere and REDD can contribute significantly to the mitigation of dangerous climate change. It must, however, ensure the rights of local and indigenous communities; contribute to the conservation of biodiversity; discourage the conversion of natural forests to plantations and set positive incentives for developing countries to protect their natural forests. **In Poznan:**

- ***Governments must commit to provide funding for REDD that excludes forest market offsets.***

**4) The transfer of technology.** Climate protection requires the world to shift to a low carbon economy. This will take a massive increase in research and development, deployment and transfer of clean technologies. Strong public policies, public funding and leadership is needed to drive the necessary shift in private sector investment. **In Poznan:**

- ***Governments must launch the work needed for a technology mechanism to be in place from 2013 and must commit to provide adequate funding***

**5) Financing climate protection.** Financing on a large scale is needed for successful climate protection. Developing countries need financial support for adaptation, massive clean technology uptake and REDD. Auctioning some of the 'emissions allowances' currently handed out for free to developed countries could generate tens of billions of dollars a year. **In Poznan**

- ***Developed countries must outline concrete future plans for how much they will contribute and how the money will be raised.***

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**Greenpeace Climate Campaigner Jim Footner will be in Poznan from December 8  
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