

UN Secretary-General's Climate Summit: Real and Tangible Climate Action Needed

September 2014

The climate crisis is increasingly being felt globally. The Arctic is melting, the acidification of the oceans is increasing, forests are beginning to die, and crop and food production is already negatively impacted in some regions as the planet warms.

This is the backdrop to the Climate Summit initiated by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon on September 23, 2014, in New York. The Heads of State/Heads of Government from all UN member states are invited to join the summit and to bring bold announcements and actions to limit catastrophic climate warming. This is a crucial moment ahead of the UN Climate Conference in Lima at the end of this year and in Paris next year, where world leaders have agreed to deliver a new global climate treaty that will bring down emissions radically; creating the conditions needed to begin a complete transition of the current energy system towards an efficient, clean and renewable system.

“Bold actions” and not just words

Ban's request to the political leaders is simple: announce the “**bold actions**” their countries plan to take. These bold actions could come from eight action areas: renewable energy; energy efficiency; forests; transportation; climate finance; adaptation; disaster risk reduction and resilience; agriculture; short-lived climate pollutants; and cities. The summit itself is not part of the official UN Climate negotiations, so no negotiations will take place. What should make this gathering of world leaders different is the focus on tangible and ambitious climate actions – not just another meeting where politicians talk and don't act.

Aside from the leaders, the Summit also aims to involve finance, business, civil society and local leaders from public and private sectors to establish an **Action Sessions Platform** for new initiatives where these actors will work together with governments to forge solutions. The Summit's outcome will be a summary of all the announcements made by the leaders of government, business, and civil society by the Secretary-General at the conclusion of the Summit.

Ambitious actions are vital to limit global warming far below 2 degree Celsius

Since the Copenhagen meeting in 2009, when political leaders last met to tackle the climate crisis, a lot has changed. Today the world has the tailwind of a booming renewable energy sector at its back. Renewable energy already meets 20% of the world's electricity demand. Political and business leaders must make decisions that will speed up the transformation towards an **energy supply based completely on renewable sources in 2050**, and they must take them *now*. There must be an end to subsidies and political backing for dirty energy and full support for green technologies, in the form of energy efficiency and decentralised renewables. These energy sources are guaranteed not to harm the climate or create health risks and provide the key to secure energy access for everyone in the planet.

Greenpeace demands for the New York Climate Summit 2014

To ensure the world moves toward staying far below 2 degrees Celsius, to secure the integrity of our homes, save lives and avoid the catastrophic impacts of climate change, the Secretary-General's Climate Summit must deliver the following:

- *Ambitious plans of concrete action announced during the Summit.* “Bold actions” must equate to an outline of concrete steps from all countries that will move their respective economies away from fossil fuel intensive use towards a 100% renewable energy pathway
 - ✓ Countries must support the long term global goal: a just transition to 100% renewable energy by mid-century while phasing out fossil fuels, especially coal; and ending our reliance on nuclear power
 - ✓ Countries with the capacity must collectively pledge \$15 billion USD by 2015 in total to the Green Climate Fund and propose pathways how to fulfill their commitment to increase this amount to \$100 billion by 2020
 - ✓ Each country must commit to submit their proposed climate target by March 2015 at the latest
 - ✓ Forest countries must set clear targets for deforestation reduction - zero deforestation by 2020 at the latest
 - ✓ Establish a timetable for phasing out fossil fuels and nuclear production subsidies at all levels
- In addition there are specific demands/expectations from some country leaders:

United States – President Barack Obama has taken steps to **stop financing coal plants abroad** and has been aggressive in pushing Germany, France, Japan, South Korea and other OECD countries to stop their respective Export Credit Agencies (ECA) from funding coal. Together with the recent announcements of the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) on limiting power plant emissions, Obama has taken small steps in the right direction. However, the US needs to do more domestically. The Greenpeace Energy Revolution scenario¹ shows that emissions reductions from US power plants could be four times greater than the EPA proposal. President Obama's administration must strengthen this policy before it is finalized next year.

China – as a result of efforts to reduce air pollution, 12 of China's 34 provinces, accounting for 44% of China's coal consumption, have pledged to control their coal consumption. Six Chinese provinces have included absolute coal consumption reduction targets in their air pollution action plans. While these are significant steps and have increased the world's chances of staying far below the 2 degree Celsius threshold, China should come to the Summit with a strong commitment to further **steer its energy mix away from coal**. The leaders should also elaborate on the contours of China's post-2020 climate package and set an ambitious peak emissions target much earlier than 2030.

European Union – Whilst Europe has a long track record of action on climate change, including previously significant policies on renewable energy, the 2030 targets and policies currently being proposed by the European Commission and to be decided by Member States in October (40% emission cuts, a 27 to 30% share of renewables and energy savings of 30%) are not sufficient to drive transformational change in the EU's energy sector, or to meet EU's fair share of keeping global temperature increase far below two degrees Celsius.

Instead the EU needs to reach **by 2030 a binding triple target** of at least 55% domestic emission cuts (compared to 1990), a 45% renewable energy share and 40% energy savings (compared to 2005). All three targets are essential, as renewable energy and energy savings are the central pillars to achieve the CO2 reduction goal that represents the EU's fair contribution to keep global temperature rise below two degree Celsius.

Whilst the EU is currently finalising its 2030 targets, it is also essential that it commits itself to a more immediate goal for 2025 combined with a strong ratchet up mechanism. This will be in line with **5 year 'commitment periods'** that must form the basis of any future climate regime agreed in Paris.

¹ <http://www.greenpeace.org/usa/Global/usa/planet3/PDFs/Solutions/Energy-Revolution-2014.pdf>

Germany – Chancellor Angela Merkel is one of the few major economy leaders who has announced to skip the Summit. She must reverse this decision and signify her intention to attend. She must commit to stop using taxpayer money or international development aid to **finance coal-fired power plants globally**. She must also work against new lignite coal mining concessions in Germany and overturn the pro-coal approach that her government has taken.

France – France will be the President of the Paris Climate Conference next year. It is crucial that President Francois Hollande is seen as a credible leader during the Climate Summit. This means that France must commit to strong domestic climate action, support ambitious renewable energy and energy efficiency targets at the EU level, commit to capitalize the GCF and commit to stop using taxpayer money or international development aid to **finance coal-fired power plants globally**.

UK – Prime Minister David Cameron must redeem his previous promise to lead the ‘greenest government ever’ by coming to the summit and announcing bold action. He should confirm the UK’s support for a higher EU greenhouse gas target for 2030, back a binding EU energy savings goal, and stop blocking ambitious and nationally binding renewable energy targets. He should announce UK capitalization of the Green Climate Fund at the level of at least \$1 billion. Cameron should furthermore announce a domestic phase out of coal power within a decade, to match his support for an end to coal funding through development finance. And he should give his personal backing to a climate goal, as part of the Sustainable Development Goals to be agreed in 2015.

India – India’s new Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, has signalled his intention to have ambitious renewable energy and energy efficiency targets, including using solar energy as a means to deliver energy access to every household in the country by 2019. In order for this to become a reality, the Indian government must set a policy roadmap along with a **financial framework for micro-grid based decentralized renewable energy systems** that empower people to have control over a sustainable, energy generating source. Presently, India is still largely locked into a coal-based energy paradigm which threatens to destroy large tracts of the central Indian habitat, displacing thousands of people. **Coal plants** are set to exacerbate water shortages in water stressed regions of the country. In New York, Prime Minister Modi must announce his plan to transform India’s energy future in a way that doesn’t harm its people and habitat while providing energy security for this climate vulnerable nation.

Brazil – We urge President Dilma Rouseff to attend the Climate Summit and commit to submit Brazil’s proposed climate target for the new climate agreement by March 2015 the latest. The Brazilian government must understand its responsibility to confront the challenge of climate change. In addition to the goal for 2050, Brazil should include an intermediate goal of reducing emissions, or limit emissions of greenhouse gases for the year 2025, and bring down deforestation to zero by 2020.

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