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Parliamentary Briefing

COP21 – WWF-UK REACTION TO THE PARIS AGREEMENT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

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SUMMARY

The Paris Agreement finalised on Saturday 12 December lays a foundation for long-term efforts to fight climate change, and the support of almost 200 countries for the Agreement means it is a landmark moment for both people and planet. More effort, however, will be needed to secure a path that will limit warming to 1.5°C. The new Agreement foresees continual strengthening of emissions reductions so as to be consistent with science and equity. Governments – including the UK Government – will now need to return home and deliver actions at all levels to close the emissions gap, resource the energy transition and protect the global environment and the most vulnerable.

KEY POINTS FROM THE AGREEMENT

The Paris Conference of the Parties (COP) did more than produce an agreement; it has galvanised the global community towards large-scale, collaborative action to deal with the problem of climate change. The Paris talks created a moment that produced announcements and commitments from governments, cities and businesses, signalling that the world is ready for a clean energy transition.

Of course the Agreement is not perfect. Here is how it looks in some of the key areas WWF was campaigning on:

- **Creating a plan to close the ambition gap, including finance and other support to accelerate action now, and beyond 2020.** The Agreement includes some of the elements of an ambition mechanism, including five-year cycles, periodic global stock-takes for emission reduction actions, and ‘global moments’ that create the opportunity for governments to enhance their actions. But the ambition and urgency of climate action are still not strong enough, and it will be up to governments to raise the pace, and also to non-state actors, including cities, the private sector and citizens, to continue to work ambitiously and co-operatively together, and to maintain pressure on governments to do more.



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The Prince of Wales KG, KT, GCB, OM
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- **Delivering support to vulnerable countries to limit climate impacts and address unavoidable damage.** The inclusion of a Global Goal on Adaptation, and separate, explicit recognition for Loss and Damage – for those impacts that are beyond adaptation – are important achievements in the Agreement. These components of the Agreement go a long way in raising the profile and importance of addressing the protection of those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The Agreement does not, however, go far enough in securing the support necessary to protect the poor and vulnerable.
- **Establishment of a clear, long-term 2050 goal which implies a move away from fossil fuels and to renewable energy and sustainable land use.** By including a long-term temperature goal of well below 2°C of warming, and reference to a 1.5°C goal, the Agreement sends a strong signal that governments are committed to being in line with the science. In addition, the recognition of the emissions gap and a quantified 2030 global goal should serve as a basis for the revision of national pledges ahead of 2020.
- The Agreement sets 2018 as a critical global moment for countries to come back to the table and take stock of their efforts in relation to the global goal; this should result in stronger and enhanced actions on emission reductions, finance and adaptation.
- The Paris Agreement made good progress by recognising, in a unique article, that all countries must act to halt deforestation and degradation and improve land management. The Agreement also included a process to agree the rules to account for the land sector. However, adequate and predictable financial support for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation could have been stronger.

WHAT NEXT FOR THE UK?

The UK Government played a significant role in Paris on key issues including pre-2020 ambition and the long-term goal; the Secretary of State joined the “high ambition coalition” which was instrumental to delivering the reference to 1.5 degrees in the Paris agreement. The Prime Minister also spoke powerfully at the opening of the conference on the need to reach a strong agreement, words which followed closely on the UK’s announcement that it will become the first major economy to phase out coal from its energy sector and that it would be doubling its international climate finance commitment to 2020.

But Paris was just the starting-gun for the race towards a low carbon future, and the Government cannot be complacent and assume that the UK will remain in the forefront of climate action. Strong political will, and the right mix of policies, will be required to keep us there. There is some concern that our existing policies are not ambitious enough to deliver our international commitments in light of the Paris outcome.

We now need to implement our world-leading Climate Change Act by taking bold steps to build a sustainable economy. This means boosting support for renewable energy and protecting our natural environment from the risks of climate change. Many of the Government’s pre-Paris policy announcements – including cuts in support for renewable heat and electricity, shelving funding for carbon capture and storage and scrapping standards and policies to deliver more efficient buildings – now look to be out of step with

the global direction of travel. Paris made clear that governments and businesses are mobilising investment and skills in low carbon technologies – it is important that Britain does not miss the opportunities that will come from this transition.

The Government should get the UK back onto the front foot by investing in renewables, ending support for oil and gas, and cutting both bills and emissions through an ambitious domestic energy efficiency programme. Critically, it should set out how it will ensure it meets the 4th Carbon Budget, and move quickly to deliver the 5th Carbon Budget.

In addition, in order to continue to play a role in delivering on the international commitments in Paris, the Government should ensure that the Foreign and Commonwealth office maintains its network of international climate attachés and that the International Climate Fund remains a significant and independent development funding stream.

The Paris deal sends a clear signal to investors that the world wants to support the transition to a low carbon future; it is essential that the UK Government is at the forefront of that transition.

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