



Climate Briefing

UK'S ROLE AT THE DURBAN CLIMATE TALKS

While the jury is still out on Prime Minister David Cameron's aim to claim the title of being the "greenest government ever", the coalition government has maintained a high level of engagement on climate change and a continued willingness to invest diplomatic resources into promoting climate action. The UK needs to continue its diplomatic outreach, but also put its actions where its mouth is through concerted actions at home and enhance the ambitions of the Climate Change Act in all relevant sectors of the economy and through the positions it pursues internationally.

The UK should support ratification of a Kyoto Protocol second commitment period, and work to secure a mandate for a comprehensive legally binding instrument in protocol form by 2015

The Kyoto Protocol provides a clear framework for developed country action and there is no time to renegotiate its architecture. Indeed, by committing to a second commitment period, the UK through the EU, can champion the architecture for the next round of negotiations, helping to maintain essential elements that include its potential long-term viability as a framework, its top down approach including an aggregate goal, legally-binding targets, and its common accounting, reporting, verification and compliance systems. It is clear though, the developed countries acting alone is not enough and while developing countries have, in many cases, begun ambitious domestic clean development programs, concerted action at the international level will help build confidence that

all are doing their fair share. A mandate for a comprehensive legally-binding agreement is needed in Durban, that will define the result of the negotiations, the end date, the political and substantive scope, the process and the guiding principles. The UK, with its diplomatic resources for climate change is well-placed to work with other countries to achieve a strong result on these issues in Durban.

The UK should promote elaboration of the Cancun agreement that developed countries 'should' and developing countries 'should be encouraged' to produce Low Carbon Development Strategies (LCDSs)

To avoid the inherent weaknesses of a pledge and review system, promoted by some, it is important that the UK play a key role in building architecture under the Convention track that builds as much commonality, comparability and ambition in as possible. The UK has been a good champion of common accounting, based on the KP methodologies, but could do more to promote elements such as LCDSs as an essential piece of the architecture under 1bi and 1bii. The UK needs to ensure that there is agreement that all developed countries will produce and implement a plan for their near-complete decarbonization by 2050, including indicative decadal targets and legally-binding 5-year goals consistent with the overall trajectory. Developing countries' LCDSs need to look at the mitigation potential of key sectors and policies that will facilitate realizing this potential, and incorporating climate resilience, as well as mitigation, into the strategy. The UK is an especially credible advocate of such strategies, as it has already passed a Climate Change Act, and can point to clear benefits, including promoting greater discussion and action on climate change across government departments.

The UK should promote agreement on innovative sources of finance

The UK should support a robust process and work plan for decisions on implementation of traditional and new innovative sources of public finance. One particularly promising source is raising finance from the aviation and shipping sectors. The UK should promote a decision so that UNFCCC gives clear guidance to the IMO and ICAO, including a rebate mechanism that leads to no net economic incidence on developing countries. A second source of finance should be Financial Transaction Taxes (FTT). Decisions on these issues should be underpinned by useful findings and analysis from the UNSG's Advisory Group on Climate Finance (AGF) and the Bill Gates

and World Bank reports inputting to the G20. This analysis and UK support is needed in order to secure adequate, and predictable levels of public finance for supporting developing countries under the UNFCCC agreement, and to make sure the Green Climate Fund is not an empty institution.

The UK should work to increase its global, EU and domestic ambition in line with recent science, so that it works for a global emissions reduction of at least 80% on 1990 levels by 2050 and for global emission to peak by 2015.

The UK currently falls into line behind the EU's current goals of limiting global average temperature increases to 2°C above pre-industrial levels, reducing global emissions by 50% by 2050 compared to 1990 levels with a global peak before 2020, and an EU target of -20% from 1990 levels by 2020. The UK has for itself a legally-binding -80% target for 2050.

A real problem with the EU positions is that the Union established the 2°C limit as its goal in 1996 during preparations for the Kyoto Protocol negotiations, and was based on the IPCC's Second Assessment Report. There have been two IPCC reports since, which point to higher risks of greater impacts at lower temperatures than understood in the 1990s. Even if the 2°C limit is a given, the IPCC Fourth Assessment report found that global emissions need to drop by 50-85% by 2050 on 2000 levels and peak sometime between 2000 and 2015: the UK is currently supporting the barest possible ambition globally that is in any way consistent with its long-standing 2°C goal and instead needs to support a global peak by 2015 and a global 2050 goal of at least -80% on 1990 levels. In fairness, the UK has been one of the strongest advocates of the EU moving to the higher -30% target for 2020 but this is still at the low end of the IPCC AR4 range of -25-40% by 2020 from 1990 levels, which in itself was for a temperature range of 2.0-2.4°C. The UK needs to support a move by the EU to a -40% goal for 2020, with at least 75% of that achieved domestically.

Overall, the UK needs to increase its ambition in line with the best scientific information available, and certainly above post-1996 science, to show solidarity through its support of targets (and of associated action) that address the reality that the most vulnerable nations to climate impacts face. Some of these include Commonwealth countries whose very existence is under threat from sea level rise