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10 December 2009

Hon. John Key
Prime Minister
Parliament Buildings
Wellington 6160

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing on behalf of the Climate Defence Network – a group of 17 New Zealand-based organisations working on climate change and listed overleaf – to express deep concern over New Zealand’s approach to the international climate talks and to urge you to press for change.

The best available science indicates that total global emissions need to be cut at least 80% below 1990 levels by 2050 to give us a reasonable chance of keeping warming below 2°C. Industrialised countries, which have contributed more to the problem, will need to make even larger cuts – in the region of 95%.^{i,ii}

New Zealand’s fair share has been calculated as a 40.6% reduction of 1990 emissions levels by 2020ⁱⁱⁱ (based on the Responsibility and Capability Index adopted by Oxfam International) – that is effectively halving our current emissions over the next decade.^{iv}

As importantly, New Zealand must pledge our fair share to both resource developing countries along low emissions pathways, and support the adaptation costs of developing countries which are initially bearing the brunt of climate instability.^{iv,v,vi}

The New Zealand delegation has stated during the international climate negotiations that New Zealand expects to meet up to 70% of its target by purchasing overseas credits and wants no limit placed on such ‘offsetting’ activities. The New Zealand delegation has also stated that New Zealand is prepared to withdraw our minimum 10% emissions reduction target entirely if the rules are not changed to our country’s satisfaction. This means New Zealand is offering a conditional target of 3%-6% domestic reductions on 1990 levels by 2020 – and that is only if the international rules change to suit us.

We are concerned that the New Zealand position seems to assume that New Zealand can get away with doing much less than other industrialised countries and can get

away with meeting its responsibility by purchasing credits overseas. The deep emissions cuts required in the long term mean that there is no such ‘get out clause’ for New Zealand and avoiding emissions reductions over the next decade simply makes it much harder, and in all likelihood more costly, to achieve the 2050 target.

The following graph from the recently released ‘The Copenhagen Diagnosis’ (which synthesises the most policy-relevant climate science published since the close-off of material for the last IPCC report in 2007 – at www.copenhagen diagnosis.org) makes this point succinctly:

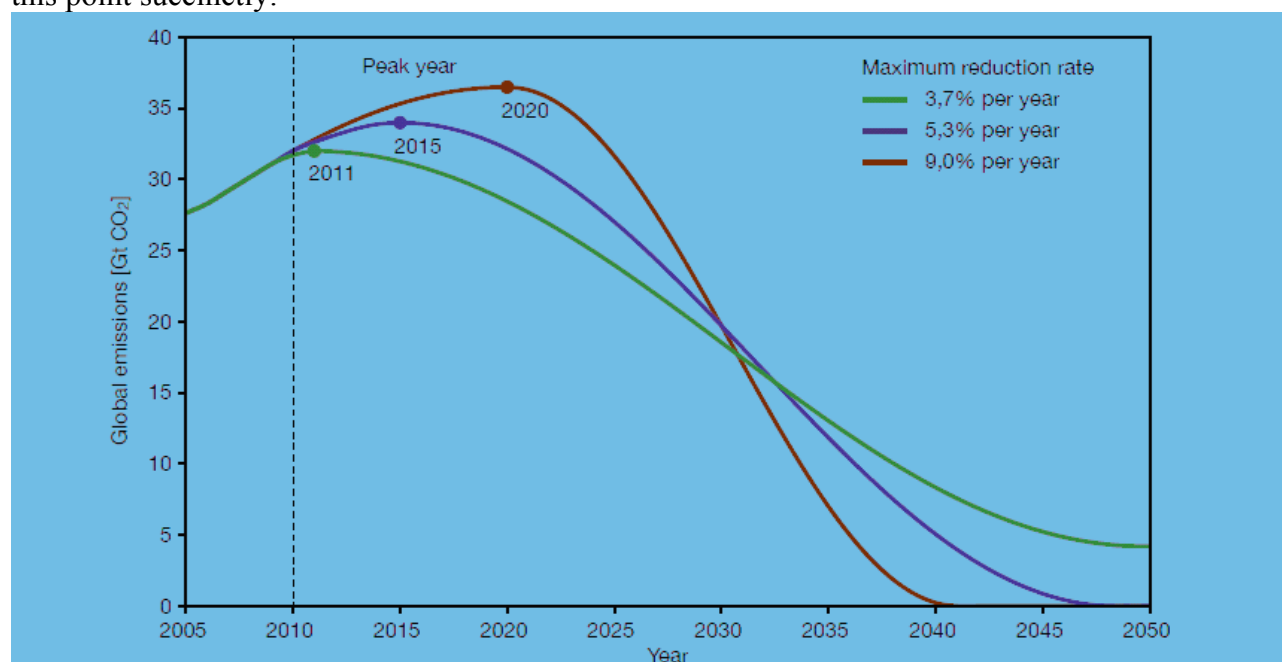


Figure 3.2-1

Examples of global emission pathways for the period 2010–2050 with global CO₂ emissions capped at 750 Gt during this period. At this level, there is a 67% probability of achieving compliance with the 2°C guard rail (Chapter 5). The figure shows variants of a global emissions trend with different peak years: 2011 (green), 2015 (blue) and 2020 (red). In order to achieve compliance with these curves, annual reduction rates of 3.7% (green), 5.3% (blue) or 9.0% (red) would be required in the early 2030s (relative to 2008).

Source: WBGU

(Source: German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU) 2009^{vi}; replicated on page 53 of The Copenhagen Diagnosis 2009ⁱⁱ)

New Zealand’s current stance also sends a counterproductive signal to our negotiating partners in both the industrialised and developing world. Positioning ourselves with the other ‘frontier’ countries at the back of the pack is extremely unwise environmentally and economically.

Climate policy in New Zealand is now coming under some scrutiny and it is no surprise that it has been recently criticised in the British media. Rather than simply dismissing criticism, the government needs to sit up and take notice. The Guardian web site can get as many as 30 million hits a month, so an article by a respected science journalist like Fred Pearce should be taken seriously. The Guardian newspaper informed us ten days ago that the Fred Pearce article on the Guardian Unlimited web site had received 25,000 hits and rising. These people are highly likely to form part of the target market for New Zealand tourism and agricultural products.

At the Copenhagen climate summit, the government has a great opportunity to start closing the gap between New Zealand’s ‘100% pure’ branding and its negotiating

position in the talks. This would require dropping our plea for special treatment and proposing a real 2020 target of at least 40% reductions of 1990 levels, fairly contributing to developing countries capacity for low emissions development and climate adaptation , and supporting other industrialised countries making the emissions cuts needed to help prevent runaway climate change.

Yours sincerely

Diana Shand
on behalf of the Climate Defence Network

The Climate Defence Network (CDN) is a coalition of the following conservation, outdoors and recreational organisations, social, medical, engineering, resource management, environmental, and development groups throughout New Zealand:

- [CAN \(Cycling Advocates' Network\)](#)
- [Christian World Service](#)
- [ClimAction](#)
- [ECO \(Environmental and Conservation Organisations of New Zealand\)](#)
- [EDS \(Environmental Defence Society\)](#)
- [Engineers for Social Responsibility](#)
- [Federated Mountain Clubs](#)
- [Forest and Bird Society](#)
- Gecko
- [Greenpeace New Zealand](#)
- [Nelson Environment Centre](#)
- [OraTaiao: NZ Climate & Health](#)
- [Oxfam](#)
- [Pacific Institute for Resource Management \(PIRM\)](#) plus [Pacific Ecologist](#)
- [Public Health Association](#)
- [Save Happy Valley Coalition](#)
- [Sustainable Energy Forum](#)
- [WWF - New Zealand](#)

More information about CDN can be found on our website:

www.climatedefence.org.nz

References

ⁱ Richardson K, Steffen W, Schellnhuber HJ, et al. Climate Change: global risks, challenges & decisions. Synthesis report from conference at Copenhagen 10-12 March 2009. University of Copenhagen, 2009.
<http://climatecongress.ku.dk/pdf/synthesisreport/>

ⁱⁱ The Copenhagen Diagnosis, 2009: Updating the world on the Latest Climate Science. I. Allison, N. L. Bindoff, R.A. Bindoff, R.A. Bindshadler, P.M. Cox, N. de Noblet, M.H. England, J.E. Francis, N. Gruber, A.M. Haywood,

D.J. Karoly, G. Kaser, C. Le Quéré, T.M. Lenton, M.E. Mann, B.I. McNeil, A.J. Pitman, S. Rahmstorf, E. Rignot, H.J. Schellnhuber, S.H. Schneider, S.C. Sherwood, R.C.J. Somerville, K. Steffen, E.J. Steig, M. Visbeck, A.J. Weaver. The University of New South Wales Climate Change Research Centre (CCRC), Sydney, Australia, 60pp. <http://www.copenhagendiagnosis.org/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Oxfam International. Hang Together or Separately? How global co-operation is key to a fair and adequate climate deal at Copenhagen. Briefing Paper 128, 2009. <http://www.oxfam.org/en/policy/fair-climate-deal-copenhagen>

^{iv} Metcalfe S, Woodward A, Macmillan A, et al. Why New Zealand must rapidly halve its greenhouse gas emissions. N Z Med J. 2009;122(1304):72–95. <http://www.nzma.org.nz/journal/122-1304/3827/>, available at <http://nzchg.webs.com/files/Metcalfe%20et%20al%20NZMJ%202009.pdf>

^v Baer P, Athanasiou T, Kartha S, Kemp-Benedict E. The right to development in a climate constrained world: the Greenhouse Development Rights framework (2nd edition). Heinrich Böll Foundation, Christian Aid, EcoEquity, Stockholm Environment Institute, 2008. <http://gdrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/thegdrsframework.pdf>

^{vi} German Advisory Council on Climate Change (WBGU). Solving the climate dilemma: the budget approach. Berlin: WBGU, 2009. http://www.wbgu.de/wbgu_sn2009_en.pdf