

Warnings of climate science - again - written in Doha sand

Climate Action Tracker Update, 8 December 2012

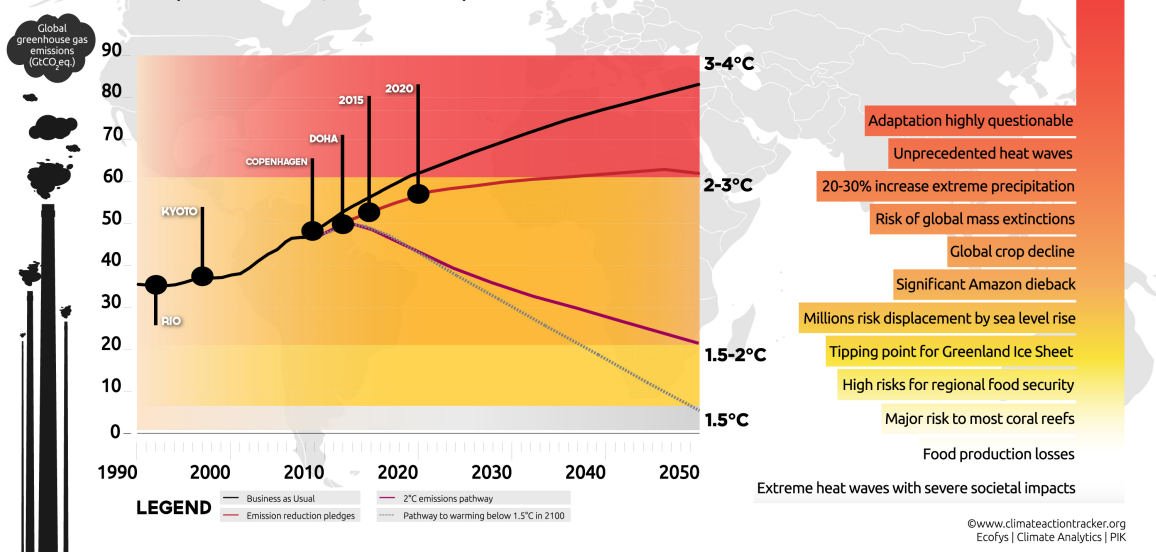
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Summary

- While the official UNFCCC negotiations made some limited progress, encouraging developments on the margins give hope that faster progress is possible.
- On the official side, minor steps were made towards more emission reductions, including the agreement of a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, continuation of climate finance and initiation of a discussion on raising the ambition level before 2020.
- On the margins of the negotiations, numerous actions provide encouraging signals, including new pledges by countries, significant policy activity to meet the pledges and increased support for additional complementary initiatives to raise the ambition level.
- All in all, the world is still set to warm well above 3°C with current action.

STAYING BELOW 2°C: THE CHOICES WE FACE

With current pledges on the table to cut emissions, we are heading to a 3.3°C warming future. No further action before 2020 will limit society's choices. As temperatures rise, so do the impacts.



Second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol provides continuity - but at a high price

The conference agreed on a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol from 2013 to 2020 with quantified emission reduction commitments for Australia, Belarus, the EU and its member states, Kazakhstan, Monaco, Norway, Switzerland and Ukraine.

This second commitment period is a very important step for continuity, particularly for the accounting system that has established over the years - and the clean development mechanism.

However, the second commitment period will have a very limited impact on emissions by 2020:

- The participation of countries with emission reduction commitments is small.
- The reduction commitments are less ambitious than needed, but a process is foreseen that the countries increase their ambition by 2014.
- Allowances not used in the first commitment period can be carried over to the next commitment period where they replace actual emission reduction efforts. Countries will be able to use carried-over units to comply with their targets in the second commitment period and will be allowed to trade up to 2% of these. A number of countries - Australia, the EU, Japan, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Norway and Switzerland - have signed a declaration that they will not purchase these units.

Continued climate financing – small steps to build trust

Climate financing is a necessary condition to implement the conditional pledges. While it is agreed that 100bn US\$ per year should be mobilised by 2020, the path towards it is unclear.

New pledges were made by members of the EU, but other countries have not come forward with concrete numbers.

The Doha decisions reinforce the need for a long-term plan for climate finance. It remains uncertain whether it will be sufficient in scale.

Ad-hoc Durban Platform on a slow start to raise ambition

The Ad-hoc Durban Platform discussed raising the ambition level of action before 2020, a prerequisite to still meet the 2°C limit. It has taken its first steps to be able to tackle the issue next year with new submissions, a series of workshops and a technical paper to be discussed in September 2013.

However, after one year of negotiations the ADP has not yet taken operational decisions to increase the ambition. The risk is high that the more it waits, the less options are still open to really close the gap.

Updates on pledges

Pledges of all major economies remained unchanged. Many had expected the host, Qatar, or some of its neighbours to come forward with a pledge, but this did not happen. Only a few countries made new pledges for emission reductions by 2020 or modified their pledge:

Monaco - announced its unconditional target of reducing emissions by 30% below 1990 levels by 2020, which is ambitious.

Ukraine - submitted a proposed target for the second commitment period, which is in line with their pledge to reduce emissions by 20% below 1990 by 2020. Current emissions are around 60%

below 1990 levels. The target represents a substantial increase of emissions above current levels and remains inadequate.

Kazakhstan - submitted their target in the first week of the Conference, proposing to reduce average annual emissions for the second commitment period (2013-2020) by 10% below the 1990 level. Over the course of the negotiations this target was corrected upwards and now is 5%. Kazakhstan's current emissions are around 27% below 1990 emissions levels. The target represents a substantial increase of emissions above current levels and remains inadequate.

Lebanon - now officially submitted the pledge to reach 12% renewable energy in the energy mix by 2020. This target was first mentioned at the Copenhagen summit in 2009. Its implementation will require a substantial effort.

Dominican Republic - made a pledge to reduce its emissions by 25% below the 2010 level in 2030. This is substantial, as it requires a reversal of the trend.

Some move faster than the official negotiations

Beside the official negotiations, many activities at the margins provide encouraging signals.

A small number of countries have made new pledges, including Monaco, Lebanon and Dominican Republic. For all of them this would be a significant deviation from past trends.

We see more and more countries are implementing national policies to meet their pledges. The pledges - though inadequate in total – have incentivised national action. There has been more action to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions than ever since the start of international climate negotiations. Focus is in particular on electricity generation from renewable energy and energy efficiency in buildings and transport.

In addition, increased activity is focussing on international initiatives that could raise the ambition level in support of - and complementary to - the emission reduction pledges under UNFCCC. Such initiatives include sectors outside of current pledges, such as international aviation, or other actors, such as cities or sub-national governments. Statements of many countries included reference to such initiatives. Two papers on the concept were discussed widely.¹

¹ Blok et al. 2012: Bridging the greenhouse gas gap, Nature Climate Change

Weischer et al. 2012: Climate Clubs: Can Small Groups of Countries make a Big Difference in Addressing Climate Change? Review of European Community & International Environmental Law, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/reel.12007/abstract>

Background on the Climate Action Tracker

The "Climate Action Tracker", www.climateactiontracker.org, is a science-based assessment by Ecofys, Climate Analytics and the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK) that provides regularly updated information on countries' reduction proposals.

The Climate Action Tracker² reflects the latest status of the progress being made at international climate negotiations. The team that performed the analyses followed peer-reviewed scientific methods (see publications in Nature and other journals)³ and significantly contributed to the UNEP Emissions Gap Report⁴.

The Climate Action Tracker enables the public to track the emission commitments and actions of countries. The website provides an up-to-date assessment of individual country pledges about greenhouse gas emission reductions. It also plots the consequences for the global climate of commitments and actions made ahead of and during the Copenhagen Climate Summit.

The Climate Action Tracker shows that much greater transparency is needed when it comes to targets and actions proposed by countries. In the case of developed countries, accounting for forests and land-use change significantly degrades the overall stringency of the targets. For developing countries, climate plans often lack calculations of the resulting impact on emissions.

Contacts

Dr. Niklas Höhne (n.hoehne@ecofys.com) - Director of Energy and Climate Policy at Ecofys and lead author at the IPCC developed, together with Dr. Michel den Elzen from MNP, the table in the IPCC report that is the basis for the reduction range of -25% to -40% below 1990 levels by 2020 that is currently being discussed for Annex I countries.

Dr. h.c. Bill Hare (bill.hare@climateanalytics.org) (PIK and Climate Analytics) was a lead author of the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report, is guest scientist at PIK and CEO at Climate Analytics.

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Ecofys – experts in energy

Established in 1984 with the vision of achieving "sustainable energy for everyone", Ecofys has become the leading expert in renewable energy, energy & carbon efficiency, energy systems & markets as well as energy & climate policies. The unique synergy between those areas of expertise is the key to its success. Ecofys creates smart, effective, practical and sustainable solutions for and with public and corporate clients all over the world. With offices in Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, the United Kingdom, China and the US, Ecofys employs over 250 experts dedicated to solving energy and climate challenges.

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Climate Analytics

CLIMATE ANALYTICS GmbH is a non-profit organization based in Potsdam, Germany. It has been established to synthesize climate science and policy research that is relevant for international climate policy negotiations. It aims to provide scientific, policy and analytical support for Small Island States (SIDS) and the least developed country group (LDCs) negotiators, as well as non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders in the 'post-2012' negotiations. Furthermore, it assists in building in-house capacity within SIDS and LDCs.

www.climateanalytics.org

² www.climateactiontracker.org

³ e.g. <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v464/n7292/full/4641126a.html> and <http://iopscience.iop.org/1748-9326/5/3/034013/fulltext>

⁴ www.unep.org/publications/ebooks/emissionsgapreport

Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK)

The PIK conducts research into global climate change and issues of sustainable development. Set up in 1992, the Institute is regarded as a pioneer in interdisciplinary research and as one of the world's leading establishments in this field. Scientists, economists and social scientists work together, investigating how the earth is changing as a system, studying the ecological, economic and social consequences of climate change, and assessing which strategies are appropriate for sustainable development.

www.pik-potsdam.de