

Two degrees possible, but time is not on our side: Climate Action Tracker

Doha-30 November 2012 – Limiting global warming below 2degC – or even to below 1.5DegC remains technically and economically feasible, but only with political ambition backed by rapid action starting now, the Climate Action Tracker said today.

In releasing their latest update at the Doha Climate talks, the Climate Action Tracker (CAT), a joint project of Climate Analytics, Ecofys and the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research said the window for reversing emissions trends is narrowing, but hasn't closed. A 2degC pathway that is economically feasible would require 15% cuts in emissions by 2020 from present levels.

However, if nothing more is done except the current pledges, costs would be much higher to reach deeper reductions necessary later, and/or the damage from climate impacts would be far greater. Society also would lose the ability to choose whether it wants technologies like carbon capture and storage and nuclear energy, because those, along with bio-energy, would have to be deployed on a massive scale.

"Two degrees is feasible. It's possible, but we have to start now, not wait until 2020 to act," said Bill Hare, head of Climate Analytics. "If we wait, we won't have many choices left."

The Climate Action Tracker also looked at the question, raised in recent months, as to whether setting a 2degC temperature limit is useful to the climate negotiations.

While the agreed 2degC limit is supported by, and based on, scientific assessments, it also reflects political and societal judgments about the severity of potential impacts of climate change and the feasibility and effort required for preventing these from happening.

"There is significant evidence that the 2degC limit has already influenced the targets and policies of countries," said Climate Analytics policy analyst Marion Vieweg.

China's 'new' numbers

For the first time, China has presented greenhouse gas emissions projections that, if accurate, would deliver a reduction in emissions of 4.5 GtCO₂ in 2020 below a hypothetical scenario without any policies after 2005, to meet its pledge of a 45% reduction in emissions intensity.

"If China's numbers are correct, their 2020 reduction would be the largest single absolute reduction for any country in the history of action on climate change, equivalent to a year's worth of emissions from the EU – or 1000 500MW coal-fired power stations' emissions for a year. With policies and implemented pledge emissions would still rise to 14 GtCO_{2e} in 2020," said Ecofys Director of Energy and Climate Policy, Dr. Niklas Höhne.

However, given that these numbers were presented only two weeks ago, the Climate Action Tracker hasn't had sufficient time to examine them closely and will do so for the next update, so China's pledge rating remains "inadequate."

Are governments meeting their targets?

Ecofys has been examining the policies in place to meet pledges for the US, Russia, India, Brazil, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, Canada, South Korea, Australia and South Africa. The Climate Action Tracker assessed the results from this analysis in the context of the ambition level of the pledges made by these countries.

The aggregated emissions level from all countries' pledges is still likely to induce warming exceeding 2degC by a wide margin, unless pledges are improved and more policies implemented on a national level. While we see some improvement the fundamental problem remains: Few countries have policies in place to meet their pledges and even fewer have sufficiently ambitious pledges.

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Please go to <http://www.climateactiontracker.org> for the full update released today.

The Climate Action Tracker is an independent science-based assessment that tracks the emission commitments and actions of countries. It is a joint project of the following organisations:

Climate Analytics

Climate Analytics 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

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 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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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