

## Climate Change (update)

**Recommendations:** We urge the U.S. Executive branch to take a strong leadership role at the June 2009 G8 Summit and call for immediate action to address the urgent climate change crisis and recommit to achieving goals set at past Summits. We request these points to be included in the G8 communiqué:

1. Deliver a mandate to conclude international climate change negotiations in 2009 under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Copenhagen, Denmark and commit to at least an 80% reduction of global greenhouse gas emissions below 1990 levels by 2050, with industrialized nations reducing their emissions 25-40% below 1990 levels by 2020.
2. Commit to providing substantial, new and additional resources through the UNFCCC to support vulnerable developing countries adapt to the impact of climate change.
3. The current economic crisis is an opportunity to invest in a global clean energy economy by using stimulus policies for both economic recovery and advancing technology programs that reduce emissions.

Billions of people are feeling the effects of climate change. Increased drought, famine, resource conflict, migration, poverty, the spread of infectious diseases, rising sea level and food costs have touched every citizen of the planet. Many of these impacts will be felt most acutely in developing countries whose capacities to adapt are the most limited. The scientific community is in broad agreement that human-caused climate change is real, currently happening and dangerously near irreversible tipping points.

### **Climate Change and the G8:**

The 2009 summit provides G8 countries an ideal forum for addressing issues of climate change. In 2005 in Gleneagles, Scotland, under the chairmanship of then-UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, the G8 nations began devoting a significant portion of their annual meeting agenda to climate change. Participants committed to “act with resolve and urgency” to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and they committed to “work with developing countries on building capacity to help them improve their

resilience and integrate adaptation goals into sustainable development strategies.” At the St. Petersburg G8 summit in 2006, participants agreed to develop an effective approach to the three interrelated challenges of energy security, economic growth, and environmental protection. In 2007, the G8 met in Heiligendamm, Germany, and agreed to “consider” decisions made by the EU, Canada, and Japan to cut global GHGs by 50% by 2050. The 2008 G8 Hokkaido Summit made climate change a top priority, which resulted in an agreement by Heads of State to cut world emissions in half by mid-century and re-affirmed the UNFCCC as the central forum for negotiations on climate change. At the 2009 G8 Summit, expressions of support for efforts to address climate change must be reaffirmed, strengthened and furthered.

### **Anticipated Impacts:**

It is incumbent on the G8 countries to show bold leadership on climate change, particularly to mitigate and address the impacts on the poorest countries. According to the IPCC, vulnerable communities in developing countries will be the least able to cope with the severe impacts of climate change. If carbon dioxide concentrations rise to levels between 450-600 ppm as a January 2009 report by IPCC scientist Susan Solomon indicates, the anticipated impacts of climate change on global poverty will likely include the following:

- Half the Earth’s human population will be effected by a looming water resources crisis as a result of reductions in snow pack and glacial mass in the Himalayas, Western North America, and other mountain ranges. This crisis will effect consumption, agriculture and energy generation. More than a billion people will face stress as a result of short-term flooding and long-term water shortages in the region due to rapid glacial melt;
- Diseases such as diarrhea and cholera are expected to increase due to flooding and increased water temperature in South Asia. In Latin America, changes in precipitation patterns and the disappearance of glaciers are projected to significantly increase;
- Dry-season rainfall reductions in several regions comparable to those of the ‘dust bowl’ era, inexorable sea level rise; and
- The loss of Arctic summer sea ice, steep jumps in methane emissions in the Arctic, increases in the number and extent of forest fires in the Northern Hemisphere and rise in the number of “feedbacks” that reinforce climate change;

According to the UK 2006 Review on the Economics of Climate Change by Sir Nicholas Stern, “[t]he poorest developing countries will be hit earliest and hardest by climate change, even though they have contributed little to causing the problem...The international community has an obligation to support them in adapting to climate change. Without such support, there is a serious risk that development progress will be undermined.”

## Recommendations

- 1. The G8 countries must deliver a mandate to conclude international climate change negotiations in 2009 under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Copenhagen, Denmark and commit to at least an 80% reduction of global greenhouse gas emissions below 1990 levels by 2050, with industrialized nations reducing their emissions 25-40% below 1990 levels by 2020.** Following the Bali Action Plan that was agreed upon by UNFCCC parties in 2007, G8 nations must make a commitment to the UNFCCC timeline of achieving a global climate deal in 2009 that delivers effectiveness, efficiency and equity. This commitment includes setting binding emissions targets that both respect the principal of “common but differentiated responsibilities” and adhere to the IPCC scientific scenarios that limit global average surface temperatures increases to a 2°C/3.6°F rise. Achieving this requires the G8 nations to commit to at least an 80% reduction of global greenhouse gas emissions below 1990 levels by 2050, with industrialized nations reducing their emissions 25-40% below 1990 levels by 2020. G8 leaders must make clear that the global climate change crisis calls for measurable, reportable, and verifiable (MRV) actions on the part of all countries; recognizing the necessity of industrialized nations to make the deepest cuts while providing incentives for MRV actions by developing countries in a new global agreement. Critical to this partnership is support from the G8 for the inclusion of a mechanism to reduce emissions from deforestation in a post-2012 deal, which will ensure the protection of the livelihoods and rights of indigenous peoples and biodiversity.
- 2. The G8 countries must commit to provide substantial, new and additional resources through the UNFCCC to support vulnerable developing countries adapt to the impact of climate change.** Recognizing the particular historic responsibility of the G8 for a disproportionate amount of greenhouse gas emissions which cause global warming, the G8 must commit substantial new and additional resources to support vulnerable countries adapt to the impacts of climate change. The G8 Heads of State should use their meeting to agree to ask all of their finance ministers to report on options for raising adequate, sustainable, and predictable financing for climate change adaptation (in addition to technology cooperation and reduction of emissions from deforestation.) New resources could be derived from a variety of sources, including aviation and maritime adaptation levy, the auctioning of assigned amount units, or a currency transaction tax. The funding source must extend beyond traditional Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitments; must be measurable, reportable, and verifiable; and must be given in the form of grants. The G8 countries should also support assessment efforts currently underway, including under the Nairobi Plan of Action, to identify the adaptation needs of developing countries and the costs and strategy for addressing the

needs. These efforts must be integrated with broader efforts to alleviate poverty and achieve sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals.

- 3. The G8 countries must recognize that the current economic crisis is an opportunity to invest in a global clean energy economy by using stimulus policies for both economic recovery and advancing technology programs that reduce emissions.** Policies must boost immediate demand in a part of the economy that can grow sustainably, invest in clean energy infrastructure, and create jobs in labor intensive sectors such as energy efficiency. G8 countries must support the development of innovative technologies, promote advances in energy efficiency, and finance and support conservation as well as the deployment and dissemination of existing know-how and equipment to developing countries. To this end, G8 ministers should engage their finance ministers as part of a commitment to address the financing needs which are a critical element of the UNFCCC negotiations and will be used for adaptation to climate change, reducing emissions from deforestation, other developing country mitigation efforts, and technology cooperation and transfer.

*This paper is not endorsed by the InterAction Board or its Members*

## Contributors

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