

National Call to Action on Global Warming

The impacts of global warming on human and natural systems are now being observed nearly everywhere. In 2007, the Nobel Prize-winning U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicted serious risks and damages to livelihoods, human infrastructure, societies, species, and ecosystems unless future warming is reduced. So far this decade, emissions, warming, and impacts, such as ice melt and sea level rise, have all been at the upper end of IPCC projections.

To avoid the worst effects of global warming, there is broad scientific agreement that we must limit additional warming to no more than 2 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels.¹ According to the IPCC, we have a reasonable chance of meeting this objective if developed countries as a whole cut their emissions by 25-40 percent below 1990 levels by 2020 and by 80-95 percent below 1990 levels by 2050; within this time frame, major developing countries also must act.

More recent findings since the publication of the latest IPCC assessment suggest that even more urgent action may be needed. In 2008, for example, the U.S. National Snow and Ice Data Center announced that summer Arctic sea ice had reached the second-lowest level ever recorded, following the record-breaking 2007 summer. This observed rapid Arctic melting is already far outpacing IPCC worst-case scenario projections. Two years ago, the IPCC projected that Arctic sea ice could disappear almost entirely by the latter part of this century. Now, scientists from NASA and other agencies warn that Arctic summers could be nearly ice-free within the next five years.

To meet the challenge of global warming, we must transform the ways America and the rest of the world produce and use energy, achieving dramatic improvements in the efficiency with which we use energy in our homes, businesses, and vehicles and moving to clean, renewable energy, like wind and solar power.

This challenge also brings enormous opportunity. Vastly improving the efficiency of our economy and moving to renewable energy will reduce our dependence on oil, help revive our economy, and create millions of green-collar jobs in many fields. The shift to a clean energy economy will put millions of Americans, including those most in need, back to work in the face of our deepest economic crisis since the Great Depression. Further, it will help address climate justice issues resulting from global warming.

We must protect our most vulnerable communities – and particularly communities of color – from the physical, economic, and public health effects of global warming, while providing pathways to prosperity. Fighting global warming and transitioning to a clean energy economy demands new resources, including education and training, for those most impacted. A fundamental change in our energy mix is necessary to both save the planet and provide opportunity for all Americans.

But special interests, such as the oil and coal industries, have controlled America's energy policy for more than a century. It now will take all Americans working together to bring the enormous change that our country needs.

¹ This temperature increase is equivalent to 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit over pre-industrial levels or about 2 degrees Fahrenheit over the amount of warming that has already occurred.

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, have come together to ensure that U.S. action on global warming is commensurate with the scale of the challenge confronting us and that the path we choose benefits the public at large, not narrow special interests.

We know that the solutions exist today that can get us much of the way there. We can envision and achieve a world in which our homes and businesses are so efficient that they use zero net energy; that the energy we do use is from clean, home-grown sources like wind and solar power; and that we transport ourselves in American-made plug-in hybrids that get 100 miles to the gallon.

If we take this path toward a clean energy future, we know we can stop the worst effects of global warming while reviving our economy, rescuing America from its dependence on fossil fuels, reducing pollution and threats to our health, protecting the natural resources that we depend upon for survival, and creating millions of good jobs right here at home.

To that end, we call on President Obama and Congress to pass global warming legislation that meets the following objectives:

Take Prudent Action to Reduce the Risk of Catastrophic Global Warming.

- **Establish Science-Based Pollution Reduction Targets.** Cut total, economy-wide global warming emissions by at least 25 percent below 1990 levels by 2020 and by at least 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050.² To achieve these targets, the United States should reduce its total absolute emissions from fossil fuels by at least 8-14 percent below 1990 levels by 2020,³ with the additional reductions achieved through appropriate incentives and programs for domestic and international forest protection and for other sound U.S. climate-friendly agricultural and land-use practices.
- **Enable Periodic Science Review and Update.** Include a mechanism for periodic reviews of developments in the science and the effectiveness of the program and to require the Environmental Protection Agency and other agencies, as appropriate, to adjust the regulatory response and propose legislative changes if the latest science indicates that greater reductions are needed.
- **Take International Leadership.** Facilitate work with other nations to reach an equitable climate agreement at the Copenhagen climate summit at the end of 2009 that keeps further warming to below 2 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels. Lead a worldwide effort to finance clean energy deployment, protections for forests in developing countries, and adaptation to unavoidable climate impacts, including a robust U.S. program of international global warming assistance for developing nations.

² These emissions-reduction targets are equivalent to a 35 percent reduction from today's (2006) levels by 2020 and an 83 percent reduction from today's levels by 2050.

³ This emissions-reduction range is equivalent to a 20-25 percent reduction from today's (2006) levels by 2020.

Be Effective and Efficient.

- **Auction All Pollution Allowances and Devote All Proceeds to Mitigation and Addressing Impacts on Consumers, Workers, Vulnerable Communities, and Natural Resources.** By placing a price on carbon, the auctioning of allowances should generate the maximum amount of revenue feasible, amounting to hundreds of billions of dollars a year. These precious dollars should not provide polluting industries windfall profits nor should such industries be able to spend our public resources indiscriminately. Instead, the revenue should be used to most effectively achieve our nation's pollution-reduction goals, assist consumers and affected workers transition to a clean energy economy, protect our natural resources from the impacts of global warming, and finance mitigation and adaptation for developing countries.
- **Effectively Include and Fund Sound Land Use, Agriculture, and Forest Practices.** A robust set of financial incentives and policies are needed to encourage American land owners to enhance the sequestration of carbon on private lands with healthy forests, sustainable agriculture, and other actions. The nation's public lands should be managed to preserve sequestered carbon. Further, financial incentives and other programs are needed to ensure reductions in domestic and international deforestation and forest degradation; international deforestation alone contributes about 20 percent of worldwide emissions. These incentives and programs should protect biodiversity and the rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- **Ensure Strong Parameters for Any Offsets.** Offsets within a cap-and-auction program should only be used with strong quality safeguards to ensure they are real, additional, verifiable, permanent, and enforceable. If offsets are included, they should be limited to a percentage of the required emissions reductions set in a manner to ensure that they do not undermine either the rapid transformation beginning this decade to a clean energy economy or the pollution reduction targets, including the need to reduce domestic emissions from fossil fuels by at least 8-14% from 1990 levels by 2020. This will create jobs, reduce our dependence on oil, and galvanize the made-in-America technologies that will be needed to accelerate emission reductions by nations around the world. In addition to meeting the quality criteria, international offsets should be allowed only if they result in emissions reductions beyond a nationally appropriate country emission-reduction commitment consistent with our global science-based emission-reductions goals.
- **Reject Mechanisms that Delay Pollution Cuts.** Mechanisms that provide compliance flexibility cannot be allowed to interfere with the schedule for achieving the necessary reductions in pollution. Delays only serve to increase climate risks and costs to future generations.
- **Preserve the Ability of States to Act.** State innovation has been critical to our environmental progress over the last four decades and must be permitted to continue. States should be allowed to set standards for energy, transportation, and global warming emissions that go beyond what is required nationally, with the federal standard serving as a floor, not a ceiling.

- **Don't Dig the Hole Deeper.** We cannot reduce U.S. global warming emissions to levels consistent with the science if at the same time we construct new sources of global warming pollution. A responsible carbon-reduction plan must prohibit the construction of new coal-fired power plants that do not sequester the vast majority of their carbon dioxide emissions.
- **Don't Offshore U.S. Global Warming Emissions.** The United States has the world's largest coal reserves. If even a fraction of the carbon contained in these coal reserves is released, it will be impossible to prevent catastrophic effects of global warming. The United States should phase out the export of coal to countries that do not have a carbon control program comparable to that of the United States.
- **Provide for Strong Citizen Enforcement and Public Involvement.** Ensure the vital check and balance of strong citizen enforcement and public involvement in order to help guarantee that our pollution-reduction goals are met and to guard against agency failure in implementation and enforcement.

Act in a Fair and Just Manner to Alleviate the Impacts of Climate Justice Issues.⁴

- **Help Low- and Moderate-Income Americans Transition to Clean Energy.** Because low- and moderate-income households, especially people of color, spend a larger share of their budgets on energy and other basic costs of living than better-off households, ensure that any energy-related price increases are offset by direct consumer rebates that effectively and efficiently reach these households and workers, with the assistance delivered in ways that are consistent with energy conservation goals, and with particular attention to those most in need.
- **Protect American Workers' Transition to a Low Carbon Economy.** Provide assistance to workers in older industries that are highly reliant on carbon-based energy – and the communities they live in, especially minority communities. Make available the tools necessary to make the transition to the clean energy economy and to be competitive for good jobs within it. In addition, ensure that American companies and workers do not face unfair competition from countries that fail to address global warming, providing worker and community transition benefits, including training, education, and job placement assistance, as well as wage replacement, health care, retirement bridges, and other forms of economic and social assistance.
- **Address Needs of Less Developed Countries.** Assist developing countries that have contributed the least to global warming to increase their resilience, adapt to global warming impacts that are now unavoidable, and develop sustainable low-carbon economies. Funding for adaptation and mitigation must be in addition to other overseas relief and development commitments. Expediently provide these countries appropriate technology for both adaptation and mitigation.

Accelerate the Transition to a Clean Energy Economy.

- **Invest in a Clean Energy Economy.** Invest a significant portion of the revenue from auctioning pollution allowances in energy efficiency and clean energy, targeted to the technologies and

⁴ Much of the language and concepts in this section are drawn from the Climate Equity Alliance principles. <http://www.greenforall.org/what-we-do/working-with-washington/climate-equity>

practices that are the cleanest, cheapest, safest, and fastest at reducing pollution, as determined by the application of clear standards set by Congress.

- **Establish Clean Energy Standards.** Move forward with aggressive clean energy standards including, but not limited to, stronger building codes, appliance standards, and vehicle and fuel standards; an energy efficiency resource standard for electric and gas utilities; and an aggressive renewable electricity standard.
- **Invest in Transportation Infrastructure that Reduces Global Warming Emissions.** Reform transportation policies to focus on moving people rather than cars and trucks. Prioritize efficiency through mass transit, passenger rail, and bicycle and pedestrian options, and encourage more efficient land-use and development patterns, giving people viable alternatives to driving.
- **Expand Opportunity for America's Workers and Communities.** The shift to a clean economy has the potential to create large numbers of quality green-collar jobs for American workers, grow emerging industries, and improve the health of low- and moderate-income Americans and people of color, who suffer disproportionately from cancer, asthma, and other respiratory ailments in the current pollution-based economy. This shift represents a significant opportunity to make cost-effective public and private investments that help rebuild and retrofit our nation, and through training and job readiness programs, to ensure that those who most need work are prepared to do the work that most needs to be done.⁵
- **Promote a Global Clean Technology Transition.** A global clean technology transition is needed to avoid the worst impacts of global warming. Many developing countries will need support to transition to lower carbon economies without compromising basic development needs and without undermining basic rights. The United States should assist in this transition by investing in a global clean energy economy.

Plan for a Warming World.

- **Prepare for the Changes We Cannot Avoid.** Assist states, localities, and tribes in preparing to adapt to the degree of global warming that is now unavoidable. Provide targeted assistance to low-income communities, especially people of color, which face distinct and disproportionate economic and public health threats from the impacts of global warming and climate justice issues.
- **Safeguard Our Natural Resources.** Ensure that our natural resources, upon which all human health and economic vitality depend, are protected from impacts of global warming that are now unavoidable. Investments should be guided by an interagency national strategy, based upon the best available science, and dedicated to efforts at the federal, state, tribal, and local levels to make our fish and wildlife populations, forests, coasts, and other ecosystems more resilient in the face of a changing climate.

⁵ Drawn from the Climate Equity Alliance principles. <http://www.greenforall.org/what-we-do/working-with-washington/climate-equity>

Organizations Endorsing the National Call to Action on Global Warming:

1Sky • ACORN • Alliance for Climate Protection • Audubon • Catholic Healthcare West • Center for International Environmental Law • Ceres • Clean Water Action • Climate Law and Policy Project • Climate Protection Campaign • Climate Solutions • Defenders of Wildlife • Democracia USA • Earthjustice • Eco-Equity • Ecology Center • Energize America • Energy Action Coalition • Environment America • Environment and Energy Study Institute • Environment Northeast • Environmental Law and Policy Center • Green for All • Greenpeace • Health Professionals for Clean Air • Hip Hop Caucus • ICLEI USA • Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy • Interfaith Power and Light • International Forum on Globalization • Kyoto USA • League of Conservation Voters • League of Women Voters • League of Young Voters • Massachusetts Climate Action Network • National Hispanic Environmental Council • National Teach-In on Global Warming Solutions • National Wildlife Federation • Oceana • Oxfam • Physicians for Social Responsibility • Progressive Future • Public Citizen • Religious Witness for the Earth • Rock the Vote • SEED Coalition • Sierra Club • Southern Alliance for Clean Energy • Teleosis Institute • The Humane Society of the United States • The Student Public Interest Research Groups • The Wilderness Society • Union of Concerned Scientists •