

# eco

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## Putting the “2 (degrees)” Back in Workstream 2

It is well-trodden ground that there is a huge gap between *what Parties say they want* (staying below 2°C and keeping the door open to 1.5°C) and *what Parties have pledged* to contribute between now and 2020 to achieve that planetary necessity. In theory, Workstream 2 has already identified how to bridge the gap through: 1) improving developed countries' woefully inadequate 2020 emission reduction targets; 2) identifying ways to enable and support developing countries in upping their own pre-2020 ambition; and 3) joint complementary action in addition to the first two areas on everything from phasing out HFCs to fossil fuel subsidies. The task now is to JUST DO IT.

ECO thought “doing it” would re-

quire no explanation, but some recent happenings in many developed countries are getting their positions all wrong. First and foremost – and we really thought this was obvious – the thing that needs to go up is the target, not the temperature. For the EU this means moving to 30% - a move which really shouldn't be that difficult considering that it has already achieved its 20% target almost 8 years ahead of schedule and will actually achieve more than that (around 25-27%) by 2020. How can the EU host 2 COPs over the next 3 years and ask the rest of the world to do more while it decides to take a break? In addition, the EU's incompetence at repairing its own emissions trading scheme is pretty mournful. A modest measure to temporarily limit the surplus of allow-

ances in the EU carbon market was recently rejected by some within the European Parliament.

The rest of the developed world is no better, and many are far, far worse. There are rumours that Japan is planning to lower its ambition from its current 2020 pledge. Australia is not likely to do anything about its tiny 5% pledge and, depending on the outcome of the upcoming national elections, things could hit rock bottom, even though the Australian public is strongly in favour of climate action. The US pledge could be labelled ambitious, if the ambition was to overshoot 4°C, while the country is barely on the path to achieve its very weak 2020

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## Mothers of Ambition

Plato observed in *The Republic* that necessity is the mother of invention. Parties, he was speaking about you. Humanity formed the State to enable the conditions for sufficient food, shelter and security. Today we face an unprecedented challenge – how will we respond?

At this early stage in developing the global climate agreement in 2015, “ambition” dominates the agenda – and for good reason. The IPCC's forthcoming AR5 will shine a bright and unyielding light on the planetary emergency we now face.

It's not just about the need to close the emissions gap. While those 11 gigatonnes will help the atmosphere,

they won't break the back of the politics to get us below 2°C. What is required is for collective agreement to dramatically change the course of human development with the climate clock ticking. So it's simple: the 2015 deal must deliver ambition compatible with a below 2°C trajectory.

There is a sense in some quarters that a top-down method to achieve that kind of ambition is out of reach politically, so a bottom-up approach will have to suffice. But these under-achievers are missing the point. Either they wilfully ignore the fact that climate change will ravage the globe and its inhabitants, or they think Plan B[ottom-up] can keep us out of

harm's reach of unavoidable climate change. But Plan B isn't working. After all, despite floods, droughts, fires and the vanishing Arctic sea ice, developed country commitments have hardly changed since Copenhagen and the Green Climate Fund still has no money.

For those of us, like ECO, who defend the legally binding regime, we get pinned as idealists. But ECO begs to differ. You are the idealists. We are the realists. We know what is needed to avoid dangerous climate change and to

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**Workstream** continued

target. And Canada – well, their only ambition is to withdraw from as many international treaties as possible (if you hadn't heard, they've also withdrawn from the UN Convention to Combat Desertification).

This drooping ambition level needs to stop. By 2014 ALL Parties (Kyoto Parties and free-riders alike) will have to increase the ambition of their 2020 pledges. Without this, you won't get a global agreement in 2015, and – worse – you will not prevent dangerous climate change from destroying entire civilisations and threatening the future of your children.

There is also a role for developing countries in increasing near-term ambition. It is worth assessing what ad-

ditional ambition more advanced developing countries can muster as well as what precise support will enable all to do even more. Jointly, developing and developed countries should use Workstream 2 to create an upward spiral of increasing support (finance, technology and capacity building) and ambition triggered and enabled by such support. This could also help avoid that, due to, for example low levels of climate finance, developing countries may find themselves in situations where they lock-in low ambition because of inadequately supported actions.

Finally, there are the complementary actions. The COP in Warsaw would ideally invite other bodies (Montreal Protocol, ICAO and IMO, G20 and so forth) to foster actions in their spheres of expertise and influ-

ence to result in additional emission reductions. Those actions would need to come in addition to what Parties have committed to do based on their 2020 targets, pledges and NAMAs, rather than as means to achieve them. This is why ECO and some Parties have used the expression "complementary", a word whose proximity to the somewhat less ambitious "complimentary" should not create the false impression that avoiding catastrophic climate change is an issue of voluntary action – it is not. It is an obligation Parties have towards the *millions* of people suffering climate change already today, and towards the *hundreds of millions* if not *billions* who will be suffering tomorrow, whose lives and livelihoods are threatened by inaction, complacency and pretension currently at display at these negotiations.

**Mothers** continued

keep us on a below 2°C trajectory.

Of course, these bottom-up actions are helping, but it's not enough. Moreover, those proactively promoting Plan B[ottom-up] are neglecting the investors and businesses that require a strong signal from governments to shift their assets. And ECO knows that a strong signal doesn't mean a "yeah, I can do that, for sure". Nope, it needs a legally binding, long-term commitment for governments to decarbonise their economies.

So ECO wants to see everyone behave in our new (albeit temporary) accommodation here in Bonn. And in particular on equity. ECO would like to see here in Bonn the development of a strong equity framework that provides both context and metrics to measure progress. We are seeing notable progress in refining that framework, anchored firmly in the Convention and the foundational, but dynamic, concepts of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, and equitable access to sustainable development. But progress is not yet completed, and Parties must stay focused on achieving a shared understanding on equity.

While necessity is the mother of invention, invention, in this case, requires a top-down regime.

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