

## **Communiqué from a meeting of the Chief Executives of UK Environmental Institutions**

*This is a communiqué from a meeting of the Chief Executives of six of the UK's environmental institutions:*

It is now clear that the climate is changing and we are in large part responsible. It is also clear that whatever mitigation strategies are pursued to reduce emissions and to control the severity of global warming, some degree of climate change is inevitable. We will need to adapt to this through a combination of behavioural change and technical innovation.

Climate variability and change have huge impacts on food production and security, water availability, energy security, human health and social and economic infrastructures, and may even because of this threaten global security. Climate change is adding increasing stresses to societies that are already vulnerable to hazardous weather and the natural vagaries of our climate and the inevitable environmental migration will add to the burden of our response. Climate change is also recognized as having severe consequences for biodiversity loss and ecosystem services and will be a further significant contributor to the current wave of species extinction.

To meet these challenges requires information at global, regional and local levels and at timescales from months, to decades, to centuries. This means investing in the capabilities to provide this information and it means that all those organisations involved in climate predictions will need to provide this information in a way that can be used effectively by legislators, policy-makers, businesses and society.

This autumn the Conference of the Parties will meet in Copenhagen to agree a new framework for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and this will not be an easy negotiation. However the consequences of not reaching a conclusion are huge and so now is the time for strong leadership and urgent action.

The global population is projected to increase from 6 to 9.5 billion by 2050. Our current rate of consumption is already using way beyond the resources that our earth is able to support and we are emitting greenhouse gases at levels that are not sustainable. Technical innovations are an important part of the solution to these issues but will not solve all of the problems that we face. We will have to find sustainable, fair and equitable solutions to stabilising global greenhouse gas emissions.

No one doubts the scale of this challenge and the difficult issues of national interest, but unless we can significantly reduce emissions then the evidence is that nationally and globally we will face significant environmental impacts. Some of these impacts may well be irreversible and are surely at odds with the responsibilities we, as society, have for the stewardship of our planet for future generations.

Many have now accepted what the science is telling us, but we have not yet responded to these challenges on a scale and in a timely way that will make a real difference. It is important to realise that climate change is not someone else's problem. We can all do something about it. But we need to think more responsibly about the role we can play individually in making a difference, we need to use our consumer choices to hold businesses to account if they fail to play their part and, most importantly, we need to hold our politicians

to account if they do not deliver the policy programmes needed to address global climate change.

Dramatic statements about the impact of climate change can have the effect of making us all switch off or ignore some of the important messages that we need to hear. We are truly at a crossroads and we need to take care that we do not follow the wrong pathway just because, as far as we can see, to do little or nothing seems an easier road to take.

We, the undersigned, therefore call for the following:

- World leaders to demonstrate a high level of commitment and resolve to address climate change in a way that bridges political and cultural differences.
- Protectionism and self-interest to be set aside for the greater good of humankind and for the benefit of the most vulnerable people on the planet.
- A robust new agreement that will create the conditions for transformational change to a low-carbon future and deliver the economic signals that businesses need to invest billions in low-carbon products, services, technologies and infrastructure.
- Population growth and consumption to be placed at the heart of future action on climate change. The quest for low-carbon living lies in a sustainable population and smarter consumption.
- World leaders to fix a global emissions cap and a long-term reduction pathway for all greenhouse gases by 2050, with interim targets guided by high quality science.

From the Chief Executives of the:

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(CIWM)



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