

## Parliamentary Briefing

# Raising Scotland's Climate Ambition

**For the Ministerial Statement, *Scottish Greenhouse Gas Emissions Annual Target Report for 2015*, Tuesday 31 October 2017**

## Summary

- 2016 was the warmest year ever recorded globally, and 2017 has seen a series of devastating extreme weather events including hurricanes, floods and wildfires.
- Already, at just 1°C of warming, people around the world are losing their lives, their livelihoods and being forced into climate induced migration.
- Next week's UN Climate Change Conference will see the usual arguments with vulnerable nations pushing richer countries to do more in terms of cutting emissions, and to deliver on climate finance promises.
- Scotland has a unique opportunity to act, and deliver on the aims of the Paris Agreement, with our upcoming Climate Change Bill. But current proposals are not ambitious enough.
- The new Climate Change Bill should set stronger targets of 77% emissions reductions by 2030, and reach zero emissions by 2040.

## The UN Climate Change Conference

The 2017 UN Climate Change Conference will take place in Bonn, Germany from 6 – 17th November and is presided over by the Government of Fiji<sup>1</sup>. It is the 23rd conference of the parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP23), where nations of the world will meet to work out the details of how to deliver on the aims and ambitions of the Paris Agreement. This will include preparing for every nation to report on their progress in cutting emissions at the next COP in Poland in 2018, and reviewing progress on international promises on climate finance.

This year's conference is chaired by Fiji, a nation of low lying islands who are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. It is estimated that up to 1.7 million people from Pacific Islands could be displaced by climate change by 2050. With sea levels rising, some villages have already been forced to move to higher lands.

Friends of the Earth Scotland's Head of Campaigns, Mary Church, and our Climate and Energy Campaigner, Caroline Rance, will be in Bonn from 2-19 November.

## Implementing the Paris Agreement

The Paris Agreement, which came into force in November last year, obliges all countries to contribute to global emissions reductions with the goal of keeping temperature rises this century “well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels” and requires countries to “pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C”.

**The current emissions reductions put forward by countries fail to meet the Paris goals, and would result in a catastrophic temperature increase of at least 3.5°C by 2100.** A report from the UN Environment Programme makes clear that no UN member state is yet on track to deliver the promise of limiting temperature rises to 1.5°C.<sup>2</sup>

COP23 will launch a ‘facilitative dialogue’, which will run throughout 2018, to take stock of the collective efforts towards meeting the Paris Agreement goals so far and encourage all countries to raise their ambition. This conference will also lay the foundations for the process around the ‘global stocktake’ of emissions, which will take place in 2023.

## **Raising Scotland’s ambition**

The 2017-18 Programme for Government commits Scotland to “introducing a new Climate Change Bill to increase our statutory 2050 target and **make sure Scotland plays its full part in efforts to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5°C** above pre-industrial levels.”<sup>3</sup>

Scotland is one of the first countries to debate new domestic climate legislation following the ratification of the Paris Agreement, so we have a key role to play in upholding the Agreement. Parliaments including those in Catalonia and Sweden have already committed to a zero-emissions target, and the new Prime Minister of New Zealand pledged just last week to set legislation for New Zealand to be zero-carbon by 2050.

If Scotland follows suit and raises our ambition beyond the current proposals, we can set a positive example and accelerate momentum for increasing ambition and action around the world.

## **The new Climate Change Bill**

The new Climate Change Bill is an opportunity for Scotland to show continued leadership on climate change and set ambitious targets. However, despite strong words from the Scottish Government and the First Minister, **the proposed targets fail to act fast enough or go far enough to meet the Paris Agreement.**

In particular, the proposals consulted on over the summer suggest almost no further effort is required between now and 2030, a plan which certainly does not accord with the urgency of the climate crisis or the need to make a fair contribution to the Paris Agreement goals.

Friends of the Earth Scotland is calling for the Bill to set stronger targets, with 77% emissions reductions by 2030, and net-zero emissions by 2040. Nearly 20,000 people responded to the public consultation, almost all of them calling for the Scottish Government to increase the targets in the Bill.

The First Minister and the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform are expected to travel to the climate conference next week. We urge the Scottish Government to use this opportunity to reflect on the international impacts of climate change, and announce increased targets in the upcoming Climate Change Bill.

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<sup>1</sup> You can follow proceedings at the United Nations’ [COP23 website](#).

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Environment Programme, [The Emissions Gap Report 2016](#).

<sup>3</sup> Scottish Government, [A Nation With Ambition: The Government’s Programme for Scotland 2017-18](#), p40.