

Climate Activists



To: Climate Activists at United Nations World Climate Summit
Subject: Advocacy Strategy Document

Goals

You are attending the upcoming UN conference on climate change to advocate for the environment, for social justice, and for future generations. You work within the growing climate movement, which includes nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that help shape global policy and support negotiators but also includes activists who are quick to use their voice and whatever means they have to non-violently advance their goals.

- Your goal is to promote the strongest possible agreement to limit greenhouse gas emissions, starting immediately, that is fair and equitable to the most vulnerable. At the 2015 UN climate negotiations in Paris, nations agreed to a goal of limiting global warming to “well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.”

Context

The scientific consensus is clear: over 97% of climate scientists agree that climate change is happening, that it is caused by human activities that produce greenhouse gases, like burning fossil fuels, and that the impacts could be devastating to civilization. (1) Already we can see the impacts, and we know that without immediate action to reduce emissions from fossil fuels and other sources, the poor, today’s young people, and future generations will suffer disproportionately. Despite the resistance you might meet from other groups, you know that it is in their best interest to take bold action. Increasingly, religious and civic leaders are calling for action on moral grounds, and marches across the world have drawn over half a million people. With every delay and continued reliance on fossil fuels, it becomes more expensive to make the necessary transition with the time we have.

Opportunities

Climate change poses both opportunities and risks to the industry. Climate change itself is making vast oil and gas reserves in the Arctic accessible as the Arctic ice melts. Nearly one-quarter of the Earth’s remaining oil and gas reserves are in this region.

Public Opinion

Fortunately, a majority of the public already believes climate change is real and that human activities contribute significantly to it. Most support some level of action to limit climate change. However, the public in most developed countries fails to grasp the scale and urgency of action needed, and climate change ranks near the bottom of their priorities. Meanwhile, many in developing nations blame wealthier nations for causing climate change and underestimate the role of the developing world in current and projected emissions.

Actions

As NGOs, you do not have the power to implement policies or make large financial investments that control the energy infrastructure of the global economy. However, unlike the other groups, you are not beholden to vested interests and are free to advocate for policies to swiftly and effectively address climate change. Through whatever means necessary you should:

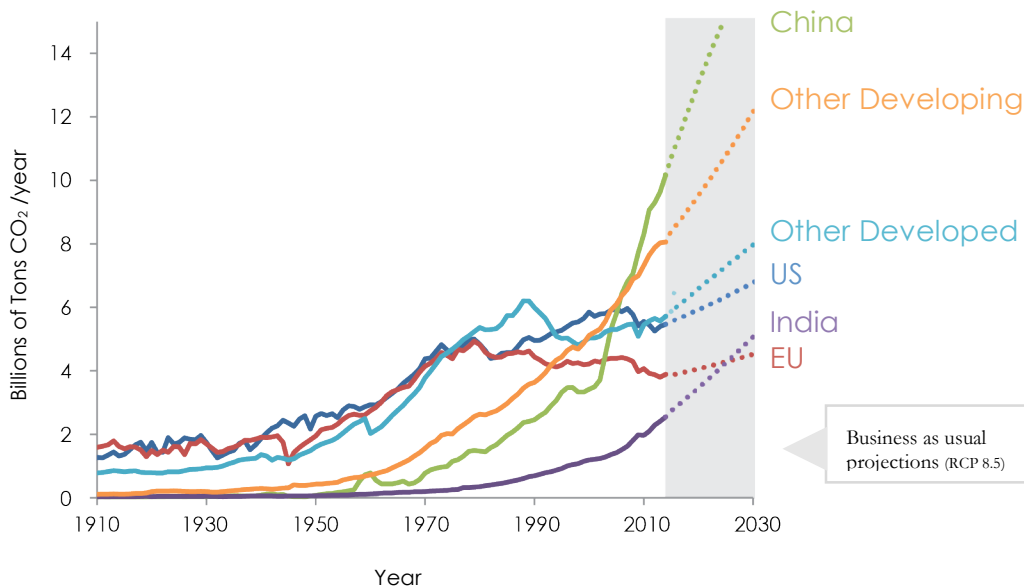
- Make the scientific, economic, and moral case for action clear to other delegates.
- Emphasize the need for collective action over self-interest: we all share the Earth as our home and action by all nations is needed to reach our common climate goals.
- Ensure that the voice of the most vulnerable people in all countries is heard: the poor, the young, and future generations will disproportionately suffer impacts and have done little to cause this problem. If possible, align yourself with others that support the rights of these groups.

(1) Cook J. 2013. The scientific consensus on climate change. *Europhysics News* 44:29-32.

Global Landscape

The fossil fuel industry has profited enormously from actions that, ultimately, threaten human society. They wield power and money, which they will use to influence delegates. Despite this power, creative, clear, and effective communication that speaks to the multiple economic and health benefits of climate action, as well as the moral choice that climate action represents could win hearts and minds.

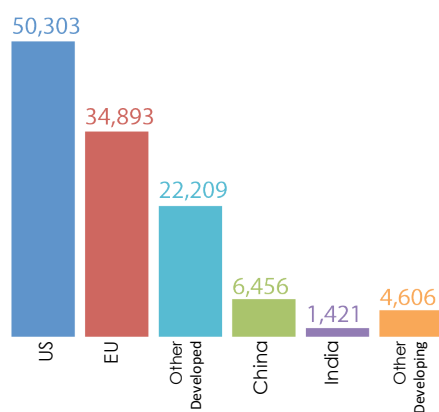
CO₂ Emissions from Fossil Fuels and Cement



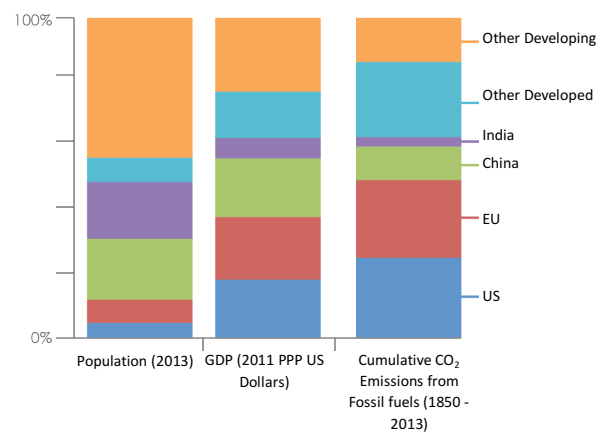
China is the world's largest emitter of CO₂. Without action, developing countries' emissions from fossil fuels are projected to more than triple by 2100.

Sweden sustained annual emissions reductions of 4.5% to reduce their dependence on oil (1976-1986). France and Belgium saw similar reductions around this time. Otherwise, most significant historical emission reductions have come from financial or political crises. According to UNEP, a 3.5% annual reduction rate is extremely ambitious.

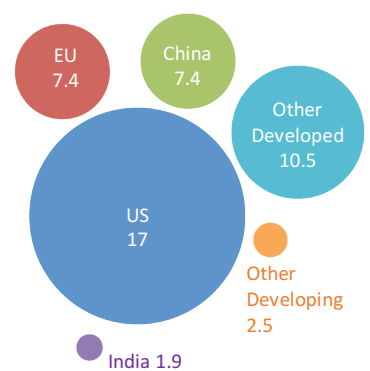
GDP per person (2011 PPP US Dollars)



Population Wealth and Cumulative Emissions



Emissions per person 2013 (tons of CO₂ per year)



While cumulative emissions so far have been higher in the developed countries (i.e., the **US**, **EU**, and **other developed countries**), the growth of population, GDP per person, and emissions in the developing nations far outpaces growth in the developed countries. Under business-as-usual assumptions, cumulative emissions of all developed countries (**US**, **EU**, and **other developed**) are expected to fall to 37% of total by 2100.

Since 1980, emissions per person have risen dramatically in **China** and **India** (by 391% and 285%, respectively) but have fallen in the **US** and **Europe** (by 20% and 26%, respectively).