

FRIENDS OF THE EARTH INTERNATIONAL – INTERNAL DOCUMENT
OUR POSITION ON EQUITY – 27 November 2014

1. Introduction

Historical and continuing emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG) are causing the Earth's climate to destabilise, with dire effects on peoples' lives and livelihoods. The international response to this planetary emergency – illustrated by the deteriorating outcomes of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) – has been completely inadequate, with weak proposed emissions reductions targets. Many developed country governments are still resisting calls to address the question of equity and fairness in how emissions reductions should be shared between nations.

Friends of the Earth International (FoEI) believes climate change is a symptom of the current dominant economic system, and that only through transforming the system will we address climate change and ensure that all people can live well, without endangering the earth's ability to sustain us. FoEI's vision is of a society of interdependent people living in dignity, in which equity and human rights are realised. This would be a society built upon peoples' sovereignty and participation. It would be founded on social, economic, gender and environmental justice and be free from all forms of domination and exploitation, such as neoliberalism, corporate globalisation, neo-colonialism and militarism. Our message on climate change has been and will continue to be framed by the need for system change.

We believe that developed countries have enormous historic responsibility for climate change. They owe a huge ecological and climate debt to developing nations who are experiencing the impacts of climate change and who have been denied environmental space for a basic life of dignity for billions of people.

This paper sets out a proposed approach for how FoEI believes equity should be addressed in relation to climate change. It adopts a temperature stabilisation threshold of below 1.5 degrees Celsius, above which the world will become unsafe for humanity and other living beings. It then suggests that from this temperature threshold we use a fair share approach to divide the remaining carbon budget, which would be established and elaborated later – ie, how much carbon could be used without overshooting the temperature threshold. It then defines principles for how this carbon budget should be divided amongst countries fairly, with implications for binding emissions reductions and flows of financing (as repayment of the historical climate debt) from developed countries to developing countries.

2. Setting a global temperature threshold

We strongly believe that climate impacts, especially deaths, already occurring due to climate change are totally *unjustifiable*. Hence, it is difficult for FoEI to accept any temperature increase.

But 0.8°C temperature rise has *already* happened and a further 0.6°C rise has already been locked in¹. We recognise that any additional carbon emitted is also too much, since impacts are already being felt. So the ‘remaining carbon budget’ is based on the recognition that the world is not able to stop emitting right away. Hence, we demand that warming must be kept under 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and this must be communicated with the proviso that we are in an emergency situation.

For FoEI a temperature threshold isn’t a public demand. At the same time, we will continue to push for discussions to be about real issues that people face rather than vague things like temperature rise and carbon budgets.

Many civil society organisations and social movements, and 100 developing countries now hold to a 1.5°C temperature threshold. Our silence on this can be misconstrued as support for a higher, less scientifically rigorous position.

Hence, FoEI hereby adopts, notwithstanding difficulties of probability and feasibility, a temperature threshold of below 1.5 °C. We request the FoEI Excom to remove the current moratorium on signing on to statements with a temperature target reference. This will not be used as part of our top-line communications on climate change, but will form a strong basis for our work on carbon budgets and allocation of responsibility for emissions reductions and transfer of finance and technology.

Is this 1.5°C temperature threshold achievable?

Research from our allies at the Stockholm Environment Institute states that the 1.5°C threshold is techno-economically achievable. Even the World Bank recently admitted that 1.5°C is possible. But we are well aware of the state of the world and we know that politically this is incredibly difficult. The corporate capture of most of our governments and international institutions has caused this lack of accountability and political will to really stop the climate catastrophe. There is also a lack of understanding/recognition of the climate emergency among large parts of the public; not least among those who are advantaged by easy access to forms of energy and food that contribute to climate change but who are not victims to climate change yet – and there is consequently also a lack of will to change behaviour or lifestyle. We will continue to push the political limits in our campaigning and continue to demand that governments act to keep temperature under 1.5°C.

3. Setting a global emissions budget

Having a temperature target then allows us to set a budget for the remaining carbon that can be emitted without overshooting 1.5°C, called a global carbon emissions budget. This will help us more easily establish the climate debt that developed countries owe to developing countries.

¹ There is now widespread scientific consensus that 1.4 degrees of warming is unavoidable. This is because an additional 0.6 degrees in warming is already considered to be locked in See: Hansen et al, Earth’s Energy Imbalance: Confirmation & Implications, Science, Vol 308, Jun05: http://pubs.giss.nasa.gov/docs/2005/2005_Hansen_etal_1.pdf

This will also help us challenge developed country governments' grossly inadequate, unscientific and unfair voluntary pledges which do not meet their 'fair share' of the effort, be it for emissions cuts or finance.

Setting a global emissions budget is a useful tool as it can then translate into concrete figures for emissions cuts and responsibility for finance that can be divided equitably between nations. However, there has been insufficient work around budgets that would keep temperature rise below 1.5 °C. Setting this budget will be the next step undertaken in this equity process by the CJE programme involving the whole federation.

4. Equity - sharing the emissions budget fairly

Tackling emissions reductions and staying under 1.5°C must go together with the principles of equity, common but differentiated responsibility (CBDR) and different capacities. Not exceeding the remaining emissions budget will be extremely challenging.

The world's poorest and most vulnerable people, who didn't create the climate crisis, are already being affected most and will continue to be hit hardest by the impacts of climate change. Some communities and ecosystems are being hit harder and faster than others.

Developed countries have used far in excess of their fair share of the atmospheric space, and it is they who must bear the bulk of the burden of drastic emissions reductions. Unfair historical overconsumption and plunder of resource extraction by developed countries from developing countries has led to disparities in countries' capabilities to deal with the climate crisis and will continue to greatly undermine the right to build and live in sustainable societies.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) recognises the historical and current responsibility of developed countries and requires them to "take the lead" in mitigation and that developing countries' ability to reduce emissions, which is also necessary, is dependent on developed countries meeting their commitments under the Convention related to financial resources and transfer of technology (Article 4.7). FoEI calls for developed countries to fulfil their obligations and encourages developing countries to take national actions. We are also aware that there are elites in developing countries who are benefiting from dirty energy projects. There are some exceptions but mostly the trends on dirty energy are very worrying. Hence we urge developing countries to not follow on a development path based on coal or dirty energy, which harms their own local communities and environment, and also increases emissions. We want a 'just transition' away from these destructive development pathways. But inequities between and within countries will need to be considered at a later step of this process.

We recommend using three key principles to govern how the global emissions budget is divided fairly and equitably:

Responsibility: Countries who have put the greatest pressure historically on the climate system now must make the biggest binding commitment to address their historical and current carbon pollution and cut emissions. Historical emissions should be the primary measure of responsibility - measured in cumulative per capita GHG emissions by country.² The accepted year from which emissions should be measured from is 1850 - the first year for which reliable datasets are available.

Capacity: Countries with greater financial, technological and institutional capacity, due to the plunder of resources from developing countries enabled by their command of fossil energy and hence by their higher historical emissions, must take on greater level of binding commitments to address the crisis. Countries have greatly varying capability to act with different levels of resources, including finance and technology. A variety of indicators (or combinations of indicators) can be used for measuring capability: gross wealth, technological capacity, poverty indices and Human Development Index. GDP per capita is often used as data is easily available, but it is not the best approach. We acknowledge that these indicators are not ideal and that further work is required to establish a fair method to measure capacity.

Right to sustainable societies: The needs and interests of the poorest and most vulnerable, and of future generations must be considered when establishing indicators. Providing a threshold for income and emissions levels under which responsibility and capability are not assigned allows for the reality that many countries have populations in poverty who are not able to live a life of dignity which everyone deserves. We also acknowledge that elites in developing countries cannot be allowed to hide behind their poor to continue enriching themselves at the cost of the poor. There is also a requirement of binding commitments beyond mitigation to ensure that those affected by climate change are supported to adapt to unavoidable climate impacts they have not caused and are compensated for the loss and damage where adaptation is impossible. We also stress that adapting to climate change cannot and should not be in lieu of continuing to fight to stop climate change.

Fair share for emissions reduction from developed countries with high historic responsibility and capacity entails repaying the ecological and climate debt and financing adaptation and compensating for the irreparable loss and damage that some communities and countries will experience.

5. Sharing the responsibility for implementing a global carbon budget

All countries are responsible for meeting their own fair share of the effort, but developed countries have very high historical responsibility, and also high capacity to act. Only with very ambitious domestic action will they ever be likely to fulfil their obligations and fair share of the global effort.

Developed countries must drastically reduce their domestic emissions at source by as much as technically possible, and they must also provide the finance, intellectual property rights (IPR)-

² 'A Vision for Equity' available at: http://climate-justice.info/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/EquityVision_v4.pdf

free technology, skill-sharing and capacity building for developing countries to reduce emissions to ensure the balance of their effort can be fulfilled internationally, as well as finance for adaptation and loss and damage. This must be done without using carbon markets or offsetting of emission reductions. This must also be done without geo-engineering. Further, developed countries must not impose patents or intellectual property rights on developing countries that prevent their access to needed technologies.

Any demands for potential future emissions reductions targets on developing countries would be based on historical responsibility, capacity and the right to sustainable societies, and be dependent on steps taken by developed countries to carry out binding emissions reduction targets and finance and technology for mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage in the global South, commensurate with what science and equity/justice demand.

6. Conclusion

Our vision is for system change that brings genuine transformation for both people and the planet. As FoEI we need a fair and ambitious position on equity so that we can stand with our allies and with affected communities.

We adopt a temperature threshold of staying below 1.5°C, then using a fair share approach to divide the remaining carbon budget which will need to be elaborated as the next step.

We will use responsibility, capacity and right to sustainable societies as indicators for dividing up the carbon budget fairly, and that this also includes financial responsibility and climate debt repayment, not purely emissions reductions.

Next steps:

- This is a policy position. We still need to discuss as a federation the best tactics and strategies to push this position in different spheres.
- We will develop some external communications talking points for the Lima COP.
- Next step would be to use the help of allies to work out the remaining global emissions budget numbers and then to assess fair shares of actions for specific countries, with a view to developing specific asks for countries hopefully by March 2015.
- We ask the Excom to remove the moratorium on FoEI signing up to any statements with a temperature target.
- We also recognise that there are important debates around elites in developing countries, and around indirect emissions (e.g. the EU reduces its emissions by exporting production to China – who should be responsible for these emissions), and around corporate emissions responsibility (e.g. a small number of trans-national corporations (TNCs) are historically and currently responsible for a vast amount of emissions globally – how do we hold them to account). We will further explore these topics over the next year, and where possible look to form positions.