

Simple steps that could save planet

Aubrey Meyer

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Time is running out to save the planet from irreversible damage from greenhouse gases but a remedy is at hand.

Tony Blair must do what numerous MPs and most of the other political parties have already done - affirm the governance of global climate policy by the principle of contraction and convergence.

As the all-party House of Commons environment committee put it: "The government must provide leadership on climate change this year, at the G8 and during the EU presidency, by committing itself to C&C as the framework within which future agreements to tackle climate change are negotiated."

Ministers now openly talk of climate trends as being absolutely terrifying. We don't have to go there. We simply have to organise C&C now. The secretariat to the UN climate change convention says it is "inevitably required" to achieve the convention's aim - safe and stable greenhouse gas concentration in the atmosphere.

C&C has four simple steps:

1. Imposing a safe upper limit on the concentrations;
2. A future shrinking budget in fossil fuel consumption is agreed to meet that limit;
3. The international sharing of this budget is agreed, converging to equal shares per capita;
4. The international entitlements arising are tradable between high and low emitters per capita.*

Almost all political parties are committed to cross-party action after the election, establishing C&C as the basis for action as soon as possible.

The Global Commons Institute is hosting a simple election pledge online.** It asks all prospective parliamentary candidates to support the findings of the Commons environment committee.

C&C is in the manifestoes of the Greens and the Liberal Democrats and is the stated party position of Conservative environment spokesman Tim Yeo; supported by about 200 Labour MPs, Plaid Cymru, Scottish Nationalists and Respect; by the Church of England, the Corporation of London, the Environment Agency, the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution and numerous other organisations.

C&C has been the position of the Africa Group of Nations to the UN climate negotiations since 1997; 178 MPs, most of whom were Labour, signed early day motions in the previous parliament endorsing C&C.

Blair has been more vocal on the dangers of climate change than just about any serving politician. Yet he and his government have not endorsed C&C so far. They are also trying to weaken the already feeble Kyoto protocol. Worse are comments from his chief climate civil servant who is breaking traditional civil service purdah by speaking in the middle of an election.

Apparently preparing to further appease the still reluctant George Bush for the G8, this man says: "We must accept the future may not be like the past and repeat a target and trading approach." If Bush gets his way, forget about "making poverty history"; the G8 is fruitless because climate change can make history of us all within a generation or so.

We don't have to accept all that. We can affirm the C&C rationale instead. Write and encourage all your prospective parliamentary candidates to do that by taking the C&C pledge.

Tony, this time God is on your side. The Archbishop of Canterbury has said that "anyone who thinks C&C is utopian, simply hasn't looked honestly at the alternatives." Taking the C&C route will make a credible leader of our prime minister and protect our children's future.

* Briefing at: www.gci.org.uk/briefings/ICE.pdf

** Pledge at: www.gci.org.uk/climate-pledge/

· Aubrey Meyer is director of the Global Commons Institute