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Wilton Park



Image: By tobkatrina

Report

## **The climate emergency: sharing perspectives to facilitate global climate action**

The 'Chevening COP'

Wednesday 4 – Friday 6 December 2019 | WP1745

In association with:

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CHEVENING



## Report

# The climate emergency: sharing perspectives to facilitate global climate action

## The 'Chevening COP'

Wednesday 4 – Friday 6 December 2019 | WP1745

### In association with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Chevening Secretariat

Wilton Park brought together 40 Chevening scholars currently studying in the UK, to discuss the climate emergency. They met at the same time as the COP25 gathered in Madrid.

### Key points

- Climate change science is clear, but education and communication are key to triggering citizens' behavioural change. Agreement of different national approaches within an international framework is critical to prioritising climate change measures in sub-national, national and international policy.
- Environmental protection is essential for addressing climate change. Nature-based solutions are recommended climate actions.
- Energy transition is happening slowly. Renewable technologies have improved, and prices are reducing but there are challenges in distribution. National economic perspectives as well as vested interests are restraining commitment.
- The Chevening scholars are committed to tackling climate change, acting individually and collectively.

"The Chevening scholars are committed to tackling climate change, acting individually and collectively"

### The Climate Science: where are we now?

1. There is general agreement amongst the scientific community that global warming is primarily caused by human activity, extreme events are made more likely or worse by man-made climate change and the speed and scale of current warming is alarming.
2. It can be helpful to distinguish between:
  - Geophysical events - Earthquake Tsunami and Volcanic activity
  - Hydrological event - Floods and Mass movement
  - Meteorological event - Tropical Storm, extra ordinary storm, convective storm and local storm
  - Climatological event - extreme weather, drought and wildlife.
3. Using models to estimate what will happen in the future, although there is uncertainty in some predictions there are aspects we can be sure of: sea levels are rising, oceans are becoming more acidic and extreme events are increasing.
4. Climate change communication is key to changing citizens' behaviours. Past efforts have not been effective, the complexity of the challenge risks defeatism and fear risks

"The scale of current warming is alarming"

paralysis. The challenge remains how to communicate climate change to drive action.

5. The participants agreed that in most of their home countries, climate change awareness has increased but more information is needed. Climate action needs to be localised and the local knowledge needs to be incorporated. On the other hand, many governments have not prioritised climate action, there are vested interests, and underfunding. Collective action and commitment from the industrialised countries is a necessity not an option to assist the poor and vulnerable of the world experiencing the largest impacts of climate change.
6. The current definition of economic growth conflicts with climate action. It is important to reflect if we need to change or rethink our development model (green growth versus degrowth); many countries depend on non-renewable energy sources and need economic growth. The circular economy and reduction in renewable energy technologies prices present opportunities; solutions may not be around degrowth, but decoupling growth and environmental degradation.

### **Environment protection and stewardship**

7. The rate of global change in nature during the past 50 years is unprecedented in human history:
  - The global rate of species extinction is 10 – 100 times higher than the average rate over the past 10 million years and is accelerating;
  - 75% of land surface is significantly altered;
  - 50% of live coral reefs lost since 1870s.
8. Without transformative change, negative trends in nature and ecosystems are projected to continue to 2050 and beyond.
9. Biodiversity loss is contributing to the climate emergency, both at global and local level. Nature-based solutions are an essential tool for combatting climate change. Marine and terrestrial ecosystems are sinks for about 60% of global anthropogenic emissions). Mangroves and coral reefs mitigate storm surge damage to islands. Environmental protection plays a significant role in addressing the climate change emergency; conservation and restoration are both key. Communities can accelerate environmental restoration and preparedness by:
  - developing and supporting impactful ecological restoration projects with the involvement of community members;
  - empowering changemakers such as the youth and local leaders and increase community involvement;
  - helping communities claim what belongs to them through educational awareness of their rights.

### **Energy futures: how to make the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy?**

10. The energy sector is different in every region. While countries like Zimbabwe and Colombia rely on local hydropower energy, others like Jordan import most of their energy. Opportunities exist for alternative energies such as solar and wind power; 400 km<sup>2</sup> of solar panels would provide sufficient renewable energy for world-wide needs however challenges would remain in storage and distribution.
11. There is insufficient commitment to renewable energy from governments and in some regions, vested interest. Some industrialised nations such as Russia and USA see renewable energy as a threat to growth which includes energy and raw material extraction as part of their economies. Tied to this is also scepticism from populations and a consequently limited individual and local response.

“Nature-based solutions are an essential tool for combatting climate change”

“There is insufficient commitment to renewable energy”

12. Transition to renewable sources is key to reduce emissions. Speed and scale are important, but the transition must be achieved sustainably. Public investment in renewable energy needs to increase, moreover private sector engagement is needed. Housing accommodation needs to be structured in an environmental manner. There are less subsidies given to renewable energy compared to fossil fuels and fewer policies that promote positive social impacts especially implementing large scale renewable projects. Another obstacle is large upfront cost in implementing renewable energy projects especially at micro scale.

### Greening the economy: how?

#### Financing renewable energy projects in low income developing countries: the case of Nepal

- Rivers fed by the Himalayas hold tremendous potential for hydropower electricity generation for South Asia. But Nepal is importing electricity and has only been able to harness around 2% of its hydropower potential.
- The Government of Nepal together with the World Bank developed a test case project – structured as an international standard energy infrastructure project to attract private developers and private sector participation.
- An off-take agreement with the state-owned electricity utility was put in place that had a portion of the tariff in USD. The World Bank also provided funding for building the transmission line for power evacuation. These factors de-risked the project to a degree where the private sector was willing to develop the project. The project managed to raise USD 99.5m
- Nepal is now working to develop a large-scale export project whereby the electricity generated in Nepal will be transmitted to Bangladesh via India. This framework and financing model can be structured to develop other forms of renewable energy projects as well as infrastructure projects in other sectors.

### Investment for green economy

13. Climate change is both an opportunity and a risk for the financial sector. It is a big new market, but uptake is limited due to novelty, limited data and investments being too small scale. There are many definitions for green finance but there is no consensus.

### Greening the economy

14. With each individual responsible for approximately 5 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> and an increasing world population, behavioural change is a vital aspect of combatting the sources of climate change; policies are needed which encourage individual inclusion and incentivise energy consciousness. Cities present concentrated challenges regarding waste, pollution, sewage, the built environment and water management however, opportunities exist in new funding through private/public alliances, green bonds, and knowledge transfer.
15. Sustainable transportation systems need to be consistent with human and ecosystem health and promote equity within and between successive generations. Actions such as pricing public transportation to reduce car usage, cycle and pedestrian lines; reducing the price of, or subsidising, and more charging points for electric cars; renewable energy for ships; media awareness on the importance of green transport system; banning importation of 2<sup>nd</sup> hand vehicles to curb carbon emission. Solutions need to be location specific.
16. Using the circular economy model there are opportunities for increasing demand for recycled goods, upscaling, and innovation. Governments need to incentivise consumers to recycle more promoting individual commitments and encourage the move away from single use plastic, as well as extending the lifecycle of products.

“Frameworks and financing models can be structured to develop forms of renewable energy”

Technology offers some solutions such as 3D printing to reduce waste and climate resistant GM-developed crops, but technical initiatives need to be supported by policies such as data-based best practices for agriculture and improved public policy for food security including price control, storage, distribution.

### **Facilitating global action: climate diplomacy and beyond**

“The UK’s international offer needs to be linked to its domestic delivery, to act and drive change in the world, show that it can be done, and give hope for others”

17. The UK’s international offer needs to be linked to its domestic delivery, to act and drive change in the world, show that it can be done, and give hope for others.
18. A lesson from 2015 is to work ‘through’ COP, not up to COP; one of the biggest achievements of the Paris COP is occurring through subnational commitment to meeting the 1.5 degree goal and NDC targets. Organisations and countries are increasing their contributions to compensate for the US leaving the Paris agreement however, most climate conventions are not nationally or internationally binding.
19. Developmental emissions could offset gains made but national differences need to be recognised in achieving the NDCs. For example, Colombia shows focus on deforestation, meanwhile Nigeria faces the challenge of being a fossil fuel economy, Pakistan has other distracting problems and priorities and has limited resources. There are skills shortages in many countries both to work directly on climate action and to gain funding.

### **Turning theory into action**

The scholars drew the following conclusions:

“Developed countries need to take credible actions, implementing net zero policy measures at national and subnational levels”

- developed countries need to take credible actions, implementing net zero policy measures at national and subnational levels;
- knowledge and expertise should be shared internationally to build capacity in developing countries;
- funding for climate action should be increased as should the availability of skills to access that funding in developing countries;
- individual climate actions should be encouraged through climate education and promoting sustainable lifestyles, particularly among youth and women who should be encouraged to lead climate campaigns;
- areas of collaboration on climate action should be sought with China.

### **Mohamed Dakane and Angelica Santodomingo**

Wilton Park | February 2019

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