

Climate Change and Commonwealth Nations

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| AOSIS | Alliance of Small Island States |
| CDM | Clean Development Mechanism |
| CHOGM | Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting |
| CO ₂ | carbon dioxide |
| GDP | gross domestic product |
| IPCC | Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change |
| LDC | least developed country |
| PPP | purchasing power parity |
| UK | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland |
| UN | United Nations |
| USA, US | United States of America |

Summary

In his 1999 address to the UN General Assembly, the then Commonwealth Secretary-General spoke of the vital need ‘to avert serious environmental threats like climate change and sea-level rise’ and called for the Kyoto Protocol to enter into force as soon as possible, a call repeated at CHOGM in Durban that same year.

Climate change is expected to have severe adverse impacts on the majority of Commonwealth countries, especially developing country members. It is expected to reduce crop yields in most Commonwealth developing countries by up to 30 per cent by 2050, with food security in India, Pakistan and a number of African members severely jeopardized.

In addition, sea level rise is predicted to put millions of Commonwealth citizens at risk along the coasts of south and east Africa, the Indian sub-continent and South-East Asia. Of the 54 Commonwealth members, 27 are also members of the Alliance of Small Island States. Small island nations of the Commonwealth are particularly vulnerable, with three at risk of total submersion and major population displacement expected in others. By the end of the century, membership of the Commonwealth is expected to shrink for this reason.

Furthermore, developing Commonwealth countries are expected to suffer from the spread of tropical vector-borne diseases and the associated morbidity and mortality. Many developing country members of the Commonwealth do not have the resources to respond and adapt to the threat of climate change, so the costs will be high.

By contrast, developed Commonwealth countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom) are expected to suffer fewer adverse effects from climate change. They are also sufficiently wealthy to respond and adapt. The wealthy nations of the Commonwealth have a special responsibility to help protect developing country members from the potential catastrophes of climate change. Yet some rich Commonwealth countries show no concern and have effectively abandoned poor countries to their fate.

Australia and Canada in particular are responsible for a disproportionately large share of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions. Per capita emissions in these countries are far in excess of those of the countries most at risk of climate change. Australia’s are the highest in the industrialised world, and more than 20 times those of India. Yet in their approach to international climate change negotiations, Australia and Canada have displayed a callous disregard for the future well-being of the poorest and most vulnerable members of the Commonwealth. Australia has consistently attempted to sabotage and water down international efforts to tackle the problem.

While Australia’s Prime Minister, John Howard, makes grand statements about the need to ‘bridge the gap between the less fortunate in the world and the more fortunate’, his actions mean that the poorest members of the Commonwealth will bear the costs of climate change. Australia continues to enjoy the short-term economic benefits of record levels of greenhouse gas emissions. This is inconsistent with the Commonwealth’s commitment, outlined in the Singapore Declaration, to ‘a more equitable international society’. The Australian Government has done nothing but

protect Australian commercial interests and has repeatedly obstructed international efforts for coordinated reductions in emissions.

By their actions, Australia and Canada have scorned the principles of mutuality on which the Commonwealth is based. Other Commonwealth members, particularly those threatened by climate change, have strong moral grounds for questioning the continued right of Australia and Canada to participate in Commonwealth processes.

1. The Commonwealth's mission

The Commonwealth of Nations was founded to enable members of the former British Empire to maintain close ties with the United Kingdom after achieving independence. The Balfour Report and the 1931 Statute of Westminster stated that members of the Commonwealth were

autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.¹

In its Singapore and Harare declarations, the Commonwealth committed itself to 'a more equitable international society' and 'protection of the environment through respect for the principles of sustainable development'. Member countries are pledged to 'consulting and co-operating in the common interests of their peoples'.² According to the official website of the Commonwealth, the organization 'promotes respect, encourages trust and friendship and works towards economic prosperity for all its members'.³

In their Langkawi Declaration of 1989, Commonwealth Heads of Government declared that they were 'deeply concerned at the serious deterioration in the environment', noting especially that some islands and low-lying areas are threatened by the prospect of rising sea levels.⁴ Meeting in Edinburgh in 1997, the Commonwealth declared that 'all countries will need to play their part by pursuing policies that would result in significant reductions of greenhouse gas emissions'.⁵

In his 1999 address to the UN General Assembly, the then Commonwealth Secretary-General spoke of the vital need 'to avert serious environmental threats like climate change and sea-level rise' and called for the Kyoto Protocol to enter into force as soon as possible, a call repeated at CHOGM in Durban that same year.⁶

The contrast between these noble declarations and the behaviour of some Commonwealth countries on the issue of climate change could not be starker. In their approach to international climate change negotiations, Australia and Canada in particular have displayed a callous disregard for the future well-being of the poorest and most vulnerable members of the Commonwealth. While Australians and Canadians are responsible for the highest levels of greenhouse gas emissions in the world, their governments have consistently attempted to block and water down global efforts to deal with the problem.

¹ The 1949 London declaration modified this slightly to enable republics to join the Commonwealth.

² See Commonwealth 1971; Commonwealth 1991

³ http://www.thecommonwealth.org/images/commonwealth/co_but1_r.gif

⁴ Available at <http://www.jas.sains.my/doe/egdeclar.htm>

⁵ Press Release 97/57, 27 October 1997, <http://www.thecommonwealth.org/hm/info/info/press/1997/9757.htm>

⁶ Address by the H E Chief Emeka Anyaoku, Commonwealth Secretary-General to the United Nations General Assembly, 27 September 1999



2. Climate change and Commonwealth developing countries

A complete list of Commonwealth countries is presented in Table A1 in the Appendix along with information on population, income levels, greenhouse gas emissions and participation in international climate change negotiations. The Commonwealth has 54 members, of which only six are classified as developed. The 48 developing countries, including island states, are spread across Africa (19 countries), Asia (8), the Caribbean region (12) and the Pacific (9). Around 93 per cent of Commonwealth citizens reside in developing countries.

Remarkably, 27 Commonwealth countries (half of the total) are members of the Alliance of Small Islands States (AOSIS), the grouping of countries that is pressing for the strongest measures to combat climate change.⁷ Sixteen members of the Commonwealth have ratified the 1997 Kyoto Protocol to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, which requires industrialised countries to take the lead and cut greenhouse gas emissions. None of the developed members have ratified and Australia has declared that it will refuse to do so unless the USA ratifies, something the US Government has ruled out.

For many Commonwealth countries, climate change is the most serious threat to their future. Indeed, the very survival of some Commonwealth countries is at stake with scientific forecasts indicating that some low-lying areas, including whole islands, will be inundated by rising sea levels. If the scientific forecasts prove correct then by the end of the century membership of the Commonwealth will have declined because two or three nations will have disappeared.

All scientific assessments of the impacts of climate change agree that developing countries will be especially hard hit. Although climate change is expected to result in greater warming at higher latitudes, the changes that will occur in tropical regions (where the majority of developing countries are located) are expected to exacerbate stresses on already-vulnerable systems. In particular, the populations of developing countries live in, and depend on, much more vulnerable areas. These include low coastal areas and low-lying islands subject to sea-level rise, flood-prone river valleys and drought-prone areas of subsistence agriculture where crops are growing under marginal conditions. In some small island states entire populations live within 1-2 kilometres of the coast in areas vulnerable to sea-level rise.

The most authoritative source of information on the likely impacts of climate change is the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a UN body that brings together hundreds of the world's leading climate scientists. Its Third Assessment Report paints an alarming picture, especially for the developing countries of the Commonwealth. A systematic overview of projected impacts on Commonwealth countries can be found in Table 1. Some relevant quotations from IPCC reports are provided in Box 1.

The expected decline in crop yields is of particular concern as it threatens food security and thus the basis of life support in many Commonwealth countries. Figure 1 shows projected changes in crop yields in 2050 in Commonwealth countries. Note that crop yields in some richer Commonwealth countries (UK, New Zealand and

⁷ Total membership of AOSIS is thirty-nine plus four observer countries.

Canada) are projected to improve, while yields in most Commonwealth developing countries are expected to decline. Declines in yields are expected throughout Africa, where 350 million citizens of the Commonwealth will be adversely affected. Moreover, drastic declines in yields of 20-30 per cent are expected for India and Pakistan, affecting more than one billion people of the Commonwealth.

Table 1 Expected impacts of climate change on Commonwealth countries

| Commonwealth Region | Crop Yields (2050) | Sea Level Rise (2080) | Diseases (expected to spread) |
|---|--|--|---|
| Africa South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique, Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria, Cameroon, Ghana, Sierra Leone, The Gambia | Decline (10-20%) in Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, Botswana and Namibia, Up to 10% decrease in other African Commonwealth countries | Ten to 50 million people expected to be affected along the coast stretching through Namibia, South Africa, Mozambique, Tanzania, Kenya. Major impact also on Nigeria, Cameroon, Ghana, Sierra Leone and The Gambia | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trypanosomiasis • Onchocerciasis • Yellow Fever • Malaria • Schistosomiasis • Filiariasis • Leishmaniasis • Dengue |
| Indian sub-continent India, Pakistan, Bangladesh | India and Pakistan to experience a 20-30% decline, rising towards 40% for Pakistan in 2080 | More than 50 million people affected across sub-continent coastline | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malaria • Schistosomiasis • Filiariasis • Leishmaniasis • Dengue |
| South-East Asia PNG, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei | Increase (0-10%) | More than 50 million affected in Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and Indonesian archipelago | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malaria • Schistosomiasis • Filiariasis • Leishmaniasis • Dengue • Yellow Fever |
| Central and South America Guyana, Belize, Caribbean Islands | Up to 10% decline throughout region (although greater in some non-Commonwealth countries) | Significant area of vulnerable wetlands | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trypanosomiasis • Onchocerciasis • Malaria • Schistosomiasis • Filiariasis • Leishmaniasis • Dengue • Yellow Fever |
| South Pacific and Indian Ocean Islands | Salt water infiltration into above and below ground fresh water supplies expected to have major impact | Extremely vulnerable to sea level rise. Maldives and Tuvalu at risk of complete submersion. Most of Kiribati and The Bahamas below 4 metres above sea level. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dengue • Others not reported |
| Industrialised Commonwealth Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom | Increase in Canada (10-40%), New Zealand (0-10%) and UK (10-20%), 0-10% decline in Australia | Relatively minor impact | No impact on Canada, New Zealand or the UK, possible spread of tropical diseases in northern Australia |

Source: UK Meteorological Office 1997; Watson 2001; IPCC 1997

Box 1**Climate change and Commonwealth developing countries***Poor countries will suffer most*

‘The impacts of climate change are likely to fall disproportionately upon the poorest countries and the poorest persons within countries ...’ (IPCC 2001, p. 32)

Many people will get sick and die

‘Climate change is projected to primarily affect human health adversely, particularly in lower income populations of tropical and sub-tropical countries ... [through] direct effects (e.g., increased heat stress but reduced cold stress, loss of life in floods and storms) and indirect effects that operate through infectious disease vectors (e.g., mosquitoes), water-borne pathogens, water quality, air quality, food availability and quality (e.g., decreased protein content in some cereals), population displacement and economic disruption.’ (IPCC 2001, p. 28)

Crop yields will fall

‘In most tropical and sub-tropical regions yields are projected to decrease for almost any increase in temperature. ... Warming of more than a few °C is projected to increase food prices globally, and may increase the risk of hunger in vulnerable populations.’ (IPCC 2001, p. 29)

‘Decreases in agricultural productivity and aquaculture due to thermal and water stress, sea-level rise, floods and droughts, and tropical cyclones would [take place] in many countries of arid, tropical and temperate Asia.’ (IPCC 2001, p. 101)

Modelling shows that by 2050 yields of wheat, maize and rice are expected to fall by between 20% and 30% in India and Pakistan and by up to 20% in all African countries. (Watson 2001, p. 17)

Small islands inundated

‘Populations that inhabit small islands and/or low-lying coasts are at particular risk of severe social and economic effects. ... Projected sea-level rise will increase the average annual number of people flooded in coastal storm surges.’ (IPCC 2001, p. 30)

Desertification spreads

‘Changes in rainfall and intensified land use would exacerbate the desertification processes. ... [In the West African Sahel, and northern and southern Africa] increases in droughts and other extreme events would add to stresses on water resources, food security, and human health, and would constrain development in the region.’ (IPCC 2001, p. 103)

The very existence of several small island states in the Commonwealth is threatened by sea-level rise. According to IPCC analysis, sea-levels are projected to rise by up to 95 centimetres by the end of the century, increasing the impacts of storm surges. In the Pacific, the following Commonwealth countries are the most vulnerable:

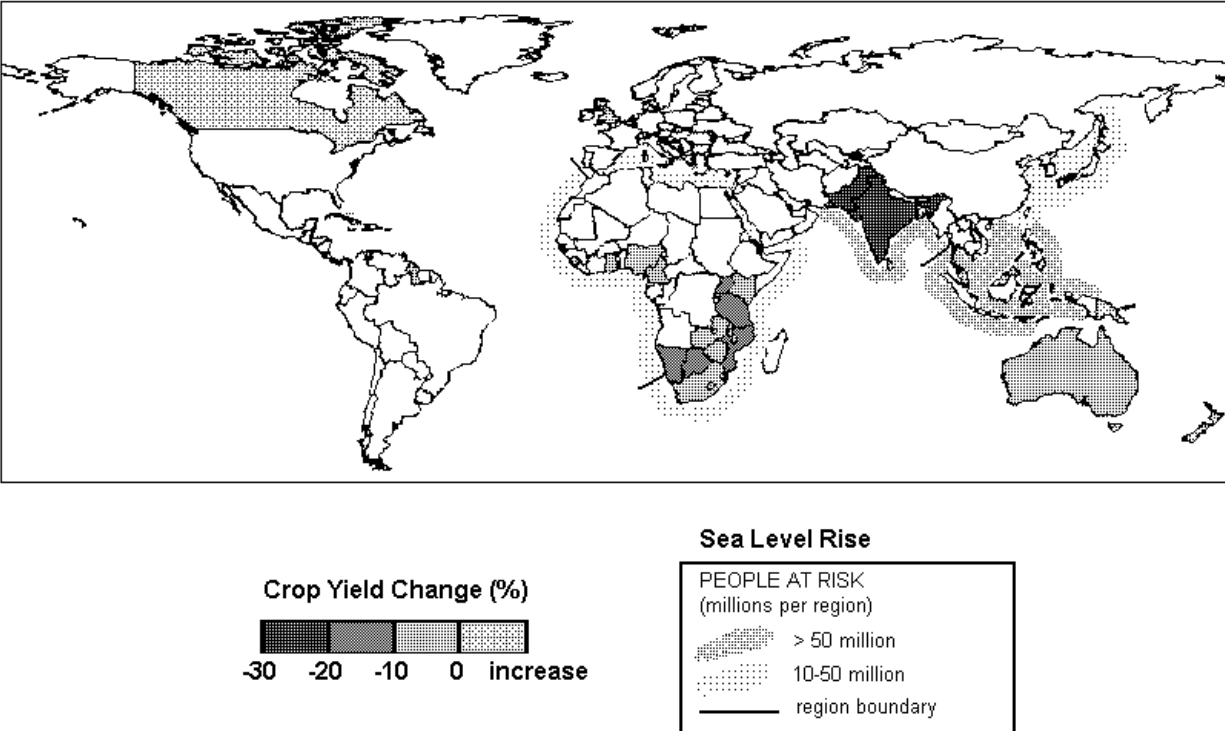
- Tuvalu and Kiribati are predicted to suffer the greatest impact, including disappearance in a worst-case scenario;
- Nauru and Tonga will be subject to severe impacts, resulting in major population displacement;
- Fiji and the Solomon Islands will be susceptible to moderate impacts; and
- Vanuatu and Samoa are predicted to experience ‘local severe to catastrophic’ effects (IPCC 1997).

In the Indian Ocean, the Maldives are likely to suffer a profound impact, possibly complete submersion, with the highest point in the entire nation only 2.4 metres above sea level. In the Caribbean, settlements in many countries are located on vulnerable low-lying coastal plains. With the exception of The Bahamas, they are less susceptible than Pacific islands to severe impacts such as submersion; yet the impact of climate change on coastal zones in the Caribbean is likely to have a major effect on the economic infrastructure of these countries.

In addition, large numbers of Commonwealth citizens in Africa, the Indian subcontinent and South-East Asia are threatened by sea-level rise. As can be seen from Figure 1, along the East African coastline running from Namibia around to Kenya (all Commonwealth countries), 10-50 million people are expected to be at risk from rising sea levels. More than 50 million are at risk along the coasts of Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. There are also risks for Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and Papua New Guinea.

Furthermore, a majority of Commonwealth countries are located in the tropics. As a result, they are subject to a higher incidence of vector-borne diseases. Experts generally agree that ‘most of the impacts of climate change on human health are likely to be adverse’ and it is predicted that a number of diseases will increase their range and prevalence (IPCC 1997). The health systems of many Commonwealth developing countries are already over-stretched at current rates of infection. As can be seen from Table 1, climate change is likely to increase the impact of malaria, schistosomiasis, lymphatic filariasis, sleeping sickness, river blindness, leishmaniasis, dengue and yellow fever.

Figure 1 Changes in crop yields and sea level rise in Commonwealth countries



(Commonwealth countries shaded, non-Commonwealth countries blank)

3. Commonwealth principles violated

According to all of the evidence, developing country members of the Commonwealth are expected to suffer severely as a result of impending climate change, while the developed members – principally Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom⁸ – are expected to suffer less. While being the most vulnerable, the Commonwealth developing countries are also among those least responsible for climate change.

The wealthy members of the Commonwealth have a special responsibility to protect developing country members from the effects of climate change. Not only are they in a stronger economic position to help, but they are high polluters. Indeed, the richer countries have become rich in large measure by burning fossil fuels. Table 2 shows some important facts about a selection of Commonwealth countries including their per capita energy-related greenhouse gas emissions. Australia and Canada have the highest greenhouse gas emissions per person in the industrialised world, even higher than the USA.⁹

In the Singapore Declaration of Commonwealth Principles, Heads of Government identified ‘equal rights for all citizens’ as a key principle. This ought to extend to an equal right to use the global atmosphere. Some members of the Commonwealth are abusing this right by generating emissions far in excess of any fair allocation of rights to use the global atmospheric commons.

This state of affairs is contrary to the Commonwealth principles of achieving a ‘more equitable society’ because climate change will have a greater impact on the poorer Commonwealth members who bear far less responsibility for causing the damage. Nor is it consistent with ‘working towards economic prosperity for all its members’ and ‘co-operating in the common interests of their peoples’ when some members of the Commonwealth have protected their own interests without any regard for the impacts on poorer members of the Commonwealth.

Being poor, developing countries are also in a much weaker position to protect themselves from the affects of climate change through changes to agricultural practices, investing in water infrastructure, such as dykes, and public health spending to ward off increases in diseases such as malaria. Effectively, developing countries are unable to protect their economic infrastructure from the impact of climate change, leading to a proportionally greater impact on these countries.

⁸ Cyprus, Malta and Singapore may also be added to this list.

⁹ See ‘An analysis of per capita emissions among industrialised countries’, www.tai.org.au which reports on comprehensive measure of greenhouse gas emissions (i.e. including sources other than energy).

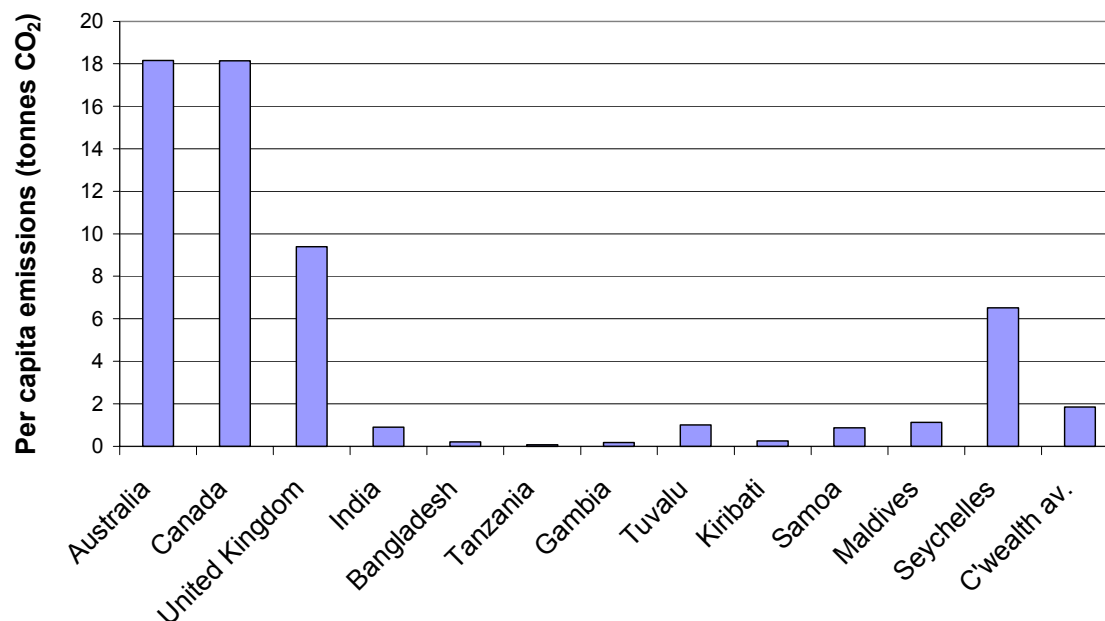
Table 2 Key characteristics of some Commonwealth countries

| <i>Country</i> | <i>Population (000s)</i> | <i>GDP per person (PPP\$)</i> | <i>Emissions per person^a (t CO₂)</i> | <i>Ratified Kyoto Protocol</i> | <i>Member of AOSIS</i> |
|----------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| Australia | 18,967 | 24,574 | 18.2 | | |
| Canada | 30,491 | 26,251 | 18.1 | | |
| UK | 59,501 | 22,093 | 9.4 | | |
| India | 999,515 | 2,248 | 0.9 | | |
| Bangladesh | 127,669 | 1,483 | 0.2 | * | |
| Tanzania | 32,923 | 501 | 0.1 | | |
| The Gambia | 1,251 | 1,580 | 0.2 | ✓ | |
| Tuvalu | 11 | ~800 | <1.0 | ✓ | ✓ |
| Kiribati | 88 | ~1,200 | 0.3 | ✓ | ✓ |
| Samoa | 169 | 4,047 | 0.9 | ✓ | ✓ |
| Maldives | 269 | 4,423 | 1.1 | ✓ | ✓ |
| Seychelles | 80 | 10,600 | 6.5 | ✓ | ✓ |

a. This covers energy-related emissions only, as they are the only data available for developing countries. When account is taken of all emission sources and sinks, per capita emissions in Australia rise to 27.6 tonnes of CO₂-equivalent per person.

* Government of Bangladesh approved ratification on 25 June 2001 (see <http://www.climatenetwork.org/eco/Cop6bis/en/eco5.html#10>).

Source: Table A1 in Appendix

Figure 2 Greenhouse gas emissions per person in selected Commonwealth countries (t CO₂, energy emissions only)

4. The politics of climate change

Despite having extremely high emissions, Australia and Canada in particular have actively resisted progress towards an effective international response to the problem of climate change. At the 1997 Kyoto Conference, Australia threatened to wreck the emerging consensus unless it received special concessions. While most other industrialised countries were required to reduce their emissions by 6-8 per cent, Australia was allowed to increase its emissions by 8 per cent. In addition, a special 'Australia clause' covering measurement of land clearing means that Australia will in effect be able to increase its emissions by well over 20 per cent (Hamilton and Vellen 2000).

The UK, on the other hand, joined with the rest of Europe in an attempt to bring about a much tougher climate treaty, and has since committed itself to cutting its emissions by 20 per cent.

The Australian Government has made it clear over the years that it will protect Australia's economic interests above all else, abandoning any pretense of concern for the well-being of poor people in developing countries. For example, Industry Minister, Senator Nick Minchin has stated that the Government's commitment to its Kyoto obligations 'will not come at the expense of Australia's competitive position'.¹⁰

At the 1997 South Pacific Forum, Prime Minister John Howard dismissed the concerns of Pacific island states as 'exaggerated' and 'apocalyptic' and even questioned the science of climate change, suggesting that 'the jury is still out'.¹¹ The Government's chief economic adviser on climate change told a conference in London that it might be more efficient to *evacuate* small island states subject to inundation rather than require industrialised countries like Australia to reduce their emissions.¹²

In fact, officials from Tuvalu have asked the Australian and New Zealand Governments to accept their citizens as migrants should rising sea levels render their country uninhabitable.¹³ However, according to the assistant secretary of Tuvalu's Ministry of Natural Resources, 'while New Zealand responded positively in the true Pacific way of helping one's neighbours, Australia on the other hand has slammed the door in our face.'¹⁴ In contrast to the trickle of asylum seekers now being turned away from Australia, it is likely that a flood of environmental refugees will demand entry to Australia, a fact that former US President Bill Clinton has recently pointed out.¹⁵

In accordance with the Commonwealth principles, Commonwealth countries are committed to 'co-operat[e] in the common interests of all their citizens' (Commonwealth 1971). Australia has historically produced a larger share of the greenhouse gas emissions that are causing climate change and is partly responsible for the impacts that will

¹⁰ Address to Outlook Conference 2001, Energy, 1st March 2001

¹¹ *Australian Financial Review*, 20-21 September 1997

¹² The comments were reported in *The Weekend Australian*, 8-9 June 1996, p. 8.

¹³ *Inter Press Service (IPS)*, 26 July 2001

¹⁴ *BBC News Online*, 9 October 2001

¹⁵ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 September 2001

Box 2**What the climate agreements say about the responsibilities of rich and poor countries****The Framework Convention on Climate Change (1991) (UNFCCC 1991)**

The Parties should protect the climate system for the benefit of present and future generations of humankind, on the basis of equity and in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. Accordingly, the developed country Parties should take the lead in combating climate change and the adverse effects thereof (Article 3.1)

The extent to which developing country parties will effectively implement their commitment under the Convention will depend on the effective implementation by developed country Parties to their commitments under the Convention related to financial resources and the transfer of technology and will take fully into account that economic and social development and poverty eradication are the first and overriding priorities of the developing country Parties (Article 4.7)

The developed country Parties ... shall also assist the developing country Parties that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change in meeting costs of adaptation to those adverse effects. (Article 4.4)

The developed country Parties ... shall take all practicable steps to promote, facilitate and finance, as appropriate, the transfer of, or access to, environmentally sound technologies and know-how to other Parties, particularly developing country Parties, to enable them to implement the provisions of the Convention. (Article 4.5)

The Parties shall take full account of the specific needs and special situations of the least developed countries in their actions with regard to funding and transfer of technology. (Article 4.9)

The Berlin Mandate (1995) (UNFCCC 1995)

[Parties are guided by] the fact that the largest share of historical and current global emissions of greenhouse gases has originated in developed countries, that the per capita emissions in developing countries are still relatively low and that the share of global emissions originating in developing countries will grow to meet their social and development needs (Paragraph 1.(d))

[The Parties will] not introduce any new commitments for Parties not included in Annex I [ie. developing countries], but reaffirm existing commitments in Article 4.1 and continue to advance the implementation of these commitments in order to achieve sustainable development ... (Paragraph 2.(b))

The Kyoto Protocol (1997) (UNFCCC 1997)

[Developed countries] shall strive to implement policies and measures under this Article in such a way as to minimize adverse effects, including the adverse effects of climate change...on other Parties, especially developing country Parties...taking into account Article 3 of the Convention (Article 2.3).

[Developed countries] shall strive to implement the [emission reduction] commitments...in such a way as to minimize adverse social, environmental and economic impacts on developing country Parties (Article 3.14).

All Parties...without introducing any new commitments for [developing countries]...shall:

(c) Cooperate in the ... the transfer of, or access to, environmentally sound technologies, know-how, practices and processes pertinent to climate change, in particular to developing countries ...; (Article 10(c))

The Sixth Conference of the Parties, Part II (2001) (UNFCCC 2001)

[Developed countries] shall implement domestic action...with a view to reducing emissions in a manner conducive to narrowing per capita differences between developed and developing country Parties... (Paragraph VI.1.4)

adversely affect the livelihood of Commonwealth citizens in developing countries. Accordingly, Australia must either significantly reduce its greenhouse gas emissions or take responsibility for some of the adaptation costs that developing countries will bear, including offering sanctuary to environmental refugees. This extra responsibility of developed countries is acknowledged in international agreements on climate change, the most important of which – the Framework Convention – Australia has already ratified. Relevant quotations from these agreements appear in Box 2.

The Australian Government is doing all it can to deny its responsibility. It has joined with the USA to declare that, despite its extremely lenient target, it will not ratify the Kyoto Protocol unless poor countries also commit to reducing their emissions. Australia's emissions per person are ten to twenty times higher than those of most developing countries. Foreign Minister Alexander Downer has recently said:

the Bush Administration is taking a harder line ... on the participation of developing countries ... I think the Bush Administration is absolutely right to take a very strong position ... [I]t is no solution at all ... if China and India and Brazil can go ahead and pollute the environment to their heart's content because we're all feeling a bit sorry for them.¹⁶

This sentiment was echoed by Industry Minister, Senator Minchin, has said: '... we are not prepared to sacrifice Australian industry and jobs, when ratification of the Protocol as it stands will not constrain emissions from developing countries'.¹⁷

During the international climate change negotiations in Bonn in July 2001, Australia sought to water down the compliance regime to render unenforceable the greenhouse gas emission reduction targets in the Kyoto Protocol. Australia further demonstrated its disregard for the plight of developing countries by choosing not to contribute any funding to the Special Climate Change Fund, the Least Developed Country (LDC) Fund or the Climate Change Adaptation Fund. In comparison, Canada contributed US\$10 million to the LDC Fund.¹⁸ However, this is one of the few magnanimous gestures made by Canada, which approached the negotiations in a way not dissimilar to Australia. Canada lobbied for the inclusion of nuclear power in the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and suggested that the 'polluter pays' principle should not apply to international relations.¹⁹ Canada also proposed for the CDM an environmental assessment regime far weaker than what is required within its own borders. Both Australia and Canada lobbied unceasingly for anything that would limit their obligation to actually reduce their emissions.²⁰

¹⁶ *Australian Financial Review*, 26 March 2001

¹⁷ Media release, 'Kyoto must include developing countries', 8 May 2001.

¹⁸ *Earth Negotiations Bulletin*, Vol. 12 No. 172, Tuesday, 24 July 2001

¹⁹ *ECO*, CoP-6bis Issue 6, 21 July 2001

²⁰ The Climate Action Network, an international grouping of environmental non-government organisations, nominated Australia as the overall winner of the 'Fossil of the Day' award for the COP6bis conference in Bonn in July 2001, in recognition of the attempts by Australia to undermine climate change negotiations. Canada was overall runner-up, followed by Japan.

CHOGM is a venue for grand declarations and statesman-like gestures, especially from the host country. Prime Minister Howard has said of the CHOGM meeting to be held in Brisbane that it 'will provide [Commonwealth leaders] the opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to the principles of freedom, democracy and mutual assistance.' He also declared that the Commonwealth 'is very strongly committed to ... bridging the gap between the less fortunate in the world and the more fortunate'.²¹

These words ring hollow in the face of the Australian Government's callous disregard for the future well-being, and in some cases the very survival, of Commonwealth developing countries. The Australian Government appears quite willing to see poor countries bear the costs of climate change while Australia enjoys the benefits of continued high levels of greenhouse gas emissions. At no point in the history of world climate change negotiations has the Howard Government demonstrated any concern for the welfare of developing countries. Indeed, it has been more inclined to attack developing countries for 'refusing to participate'.

While eager to enjoy the benefits of Commonwealth membership, including hosting the 2006 Commonwealth Games, the Australian Government has refused to accept the responsibilities that accompany membership and has actively sought to undermine the Commonwealth principles. By behaving in this way, the Australia Government is making a mockery of the principles on which the Commonwealth is founded. Other Commonwealth members, particularly those threatened by climate change, have strong moral grounds for questioning the continued right of Australia and Canada to participate in Commonwealth processes.

²¹ Joint doorstep interview with Commonwealth Secretary General, <http://www.pm.gov.au/news/interviews/2001/interview1025.htm>

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Appendix

Table A1 Economic and climate change indicators for Commonwealth countries

| Commonwealth country | Population (thousands) | GDP per capita (PPPS) [@] | Greenhouse gas energy emissions per capita (t CO ₂) | Annex B [#] | Ratified Kyoto Protocol (as at 27 August 2001) | Member of AOSIS |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| Antigua and Barbuda | 67 | 10,225 | 6.4 | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Australia | 18,967 | 24,574 | 18.2 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | |
| Bahamas, The | 298 | 15,258 | 12.2 | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Bangladesh | 127,669 | 1,483 | 0.2 | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| Barbados | 267 | 14,353 | 5.3 | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Belize | 247 | 4,959 | 1.1 | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Botswana | 1,588 | 6,872 | 2.1 | | | |
| Brunei Darussalam | 322 | ~17000 ^a | 13.9 | | | |
| Cameroon | 14,691 | 1,573 | 0.5 | | | |
| Canada | 30,491 | 26,251 | 18.1 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | |
| Cyprus | 760 | 19,006 | 9.5 | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Dominica | 73 | 5,425 | 1.1 | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| *Fiji Islands | 801 | 4,799 | 1.1 | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Gambia, The | 1,251 | 1,580 | 0.2 | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| Ghana | 18,785 | 1,881 | 0.2 | | | |
| Grenada | 97 | 6,817 | 1.4 | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Guyana | 856 | 3,640 | 1.8 | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| India | 997,515 | 2,248 | 0.9 | | | |
| Jamaica | 2,598 | 3,561 | 4.3 | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Kenya | 29,410 | 1,022 | 0.3 | | | |
| Kiribati | 88 | ~1200 ^a | 0.3 | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Lesotho | 2,105 | 1,854 | 0.1 | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| Malawi | 10,788 | 586 | 0.1 | | | |
| Malaysia | 22,710 | 8,209 | 4.5 | | | |
| Maldives | 269 | 4,423 | 1.1 | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Malta | 379 | 15,189 | 3.6 | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Mauritius | 1,174 | 9,107 | 2.1 | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Mozambique | 17,299 | 861 | 0.1 | | | |
| Namibia | 1,701 | 5,468 | 0.7 | | | |
| Nauru | 12 | ~10,000 ^a | 14.1 | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Nigeria | 123,897 | 853 | 0.7 | | | |
| New Zealand | 3,811 | 19,104 | 8.5 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | |
| *Pakistan | 134,790 | 1,834 | 0.8 | | | |
| Papua New Guinea | 4,705 | 2,367 | 0.6 | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Saint Kitts and Nevis | 41 | 3,279 | 2.5 | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Saint Lucia | 154 | 11,596 | 1.3 | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

| Commonwealth country | Population (thousands) | GDP per capita (PPPS) [@] | Greenhouse gas energy emissions per capita (t CO ₂) | Annex B [#] | Ratified Kyoto Protocol (as at 27 August 2001) | Member of AOSIS |
|--------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| Saint Vincent/Grenadines | 114 | 5,509 | 1.2 | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Seychelles | 80 | 10,600 | 6.5 | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Sierra Leone | 4,949 | 448 | 0.2 | | | |
| Singapore | 3,952 | 20,767 | 23.6 | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Solomon Islands | 429 | 1,975 | 0.3 | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| South Africa | 42,106 | 8,908 | 8.7 | | | |
| Sri Lanka | 18,985 | 5,309 | 0.5 | | | |
| Swaziland | 1,019 | 3,987 | 1.1 | | | |
| Tanzania | 32,923 | 501 | 0.1 | | | |
| Tonga | 100 | ~1800 ^a | 1.4 | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Trinidad and Tobago | 1,293 | 8,176 | 20.3 | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Tuvalu | 10,838 ^b | 800 ^b | <1.0 ^b | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Uganda | 21,479 | 1,167 | 0.05 | | | |
| United Kingdom | 59,501 | 22,093 | 9.4 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | |
| Vanuatu | 193 | 3,108 | 0.3 | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Samoa | 169 | 4,047 | 0.9 | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Zambia | 9,881 | 756 | 0.2 | | | |
| Zimbabwe | 11,904 | 2,876 | 1.3 | | | |

Note: Population, income per capita and emissions per capita for 1999. Kyoto Protocol ratification as at 27 August 2001.

[@] Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) measured at current international dollars, as defined in World Bank 2001. An international dollar represents the purchasing power of local currency converted to the equivalent purchasing power of the US dollar in the USA.

[#] Included in Annex B of the Kyoto Protocol, i.e., developed country Party with an emission target.

* Currently suspended from the Commonwealth, although Fiji may be re-admitted shortly.

a. Estimated from UNDP 2000.

b. Data for Tuvalu from CIA 2000. GDP per capita estimate is based on 1995 figures, so therefore excludes income from licensing of its '900' area code and '.tv' Internet domain name. Total electricity consumption is estimated at 3 GWh and the country has no heavy industry. Accordingly, per capita emissions are estimated at <1.0 tonnes pa.

Government of Bangladesh approved ratification on 25 June 2001 (see <http://www.climate-network.org/eco/Cop6bis/en/eco5.html#10>).

Source: World Bank 2001; US DOE 2001; UNFCCC 2001; AOSIS 2001; CIA 2000; UNDP 2000



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