Canada – The Climate Pawn

The Myth of a Global Climate Campaign

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Contents

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THE MYTH OF A GLOBAL CLIMATE CAMPAIGN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The campaign to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is sometimes presented as a global undertaking in which Canada is "allied" with all other countries. Allegedly, we must not shirk our duty to our allies. This view rests upon a mistaken understanding of past and present trends in global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

From 1992 to 2014, the countries participating in international climate conferences set a series of increasingly stringent emissions reduction targets. With few exceptions, no country met the targets. In 2015, in Paris, the parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change agreed instead to adopt a global goal of restraining the growth in emissions so as to avoid an increase of more than 2 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels by 2100, with the aspirational goal of restraining temperature increases to less than 1.5 degrees C. In 2018 and after, influenced by the European Union, countries began to set political targets with the objective of attaining "net-zero" emissions by 2050 for developed countries and 2070 for developing countries.

Despite these agreements, global GHG emissions rose by almost 60% from 1990 to 2019.

The OECD countries reduced their emissions slightly, but the non-OECD countries did not. By 2019, emissions in the non-OECD accounted for two-thirds of the emissions and all of the growth.

This article examines the trends in the ten non-OECD countries that by 2021 accounted for about 55% of global emissions: China, India, Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, South Africa, Brazil, Vietnam and Thailand. Carbon Action Tracker is an organization of climate activists that closely monitors the targets that countries set for themselves and the progress, if any, they make towards the net-zero goal.

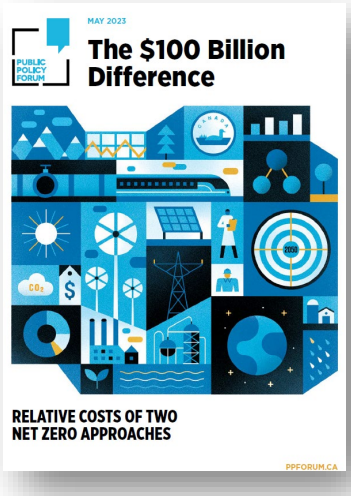
According to Carbon Action Tracker, no country in the world is "1.5 degrees C. Paris Agreement compatible". Six countries are rated "almost sufficient": the United Kingdom, Norway, Denmark, Nepal, Ethiopia, Morocco and Nigeria. The ratings for the 10 largest non-OECD countries are also revealing. China, India, Saudi Arabia, and Indonesia are rated "highly insufficient" and Russia, Iran and Vietnam are rated "critically insufficient". Only South Africa and Brazil are rated "sufficient".

Further, if every one of these countries met the targets that they have set for themselves in the emissions plans submitted to the United Nations, in every case but one (Brazil), their emissions by 2030 would be higher than they were in 2010. It is unlikely that they will even meet their own commitments.

Despite immense promotion and propaganda, the countries of the world are not on track to meet the net-zero goals. There is no global climate campaign, and Canada could not influence its outcome either way if there were.

Canada – The Climate Pawn

THE MYTH OF A GLOBAL CLIMATE CAMPAIGN



The Public Policy Forum, a non-profit organization based in Ottawa, has a mission "to develop practical measures that help Canada meet or exceed our 2030 emissions targets on the way to a net zero future". In a press release issued on May 11, 2023, it described a problem that it had encountered during its early public meetings. Some participants "espoused the view that Canada was such a small part of global emissions that the cost of action (economically, socially and politically) outweighed the potential climate gain." The PPF representatives reported that they ***"sought to tamp down this kind of reasoning with an analogy to the 20th century's world wars: imagine telling our allies that Canadian soldiers constituted such a small percentage of the overall effort that it made no sense to send them to the front."***

PPF's logic is wrong for several reasons. The campaign to reduce greenhouse gas emissions does not entail a war in which Canada is "allied" with other countries. It instead comprises the promotion of a set of deeply flawed theses about the underlying climate science[1], the accuracy and reliability of the modelling done on behalf of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)[2], and the credibility of international diplomacy's efforts to achieve collective emissions reductions[3]. Most important, it ignores the central issue - the uneven balance between the costs of the actions Canadians are being called upon to make and the benefits of the actual changes, if any, that would result in terms of global temperatures and climate[4]. In essence, Canadians are being told they must endure hundreds of billions of dollars in costs for changes in the global climate by 2100 that, if anything, are too small to measure.

Thinking about the argument that "we are all in this war together", it occurred to me that there is another key link in PPF's (flawed) logic chain that may not be apparent. **Climate campaigners appear to believe that countries other than Canada are all united in a climate campaign that equates to a universal war, that this has succeeded so far, and that it will continue to succeed if everybody just pitches in for another fifty or so years.**

Climate activists love the wartime analogy.

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[1] https://wattsupwiththat.com/2021/04/22/history-confirms-democrats-1988-senate-global-warming-hearing-got-everything-wrong-from-start-to-finish/
[2] https://friendsofscience.org/pdf-render.html?page=2797
[3] file:///Users/robertflyman/Downloads/Global-GHG-Emissions-will-Continue-to-Grow-FINAL%20(4).pdf
[4] https://www.policyschool.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Carbon-Pricing-McKitrickFINAL.pdf

How's that working out?

Let's start with the past. Climate-related issues first came to public prominence around 1988. In 1992 the first major international climate conference, attended by countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), produced an agreement to take collective action to stabilize GHG emissions at 1990 levels by 2000. At several conferences led by the United Nations over the next two decades, a series of ever-more demanding emissions reduction targets were set. None were ever met, so at the 2015 conference held in Paris, the parties agreed that they no longer would set binding targets. Instead, they agreed that they would collectively pursue the goal of constraining GHG emissions so that the rise in average global temperatures over pre-industrial levels would not exceed 2.0 degrees Celsius and, ideally, would not exceed 1.5 degrees C.

Why these numbers? Who knows?[5] They sounded good at the time. The parties agreed that every five years, they would submit plans indicating what efforts they planned to make to reduce emissions.

There were no legally binding commitments, and no penalties for failing to comply[6]. The UN and strong political forces led by the European Union have subsequently succeeded in convincing many OECD governments voluntarily to commit to ever-more-demanding political targets. Notably, since 2018, several governments, including Canada, have committed to reduce GHG emissions by at least 40% below 2005 levels by 2030 and to attain "net-zero" (still a largely undefined level of emissions) by 2050. The obligations flowing from this agreement were far from universal. The developing countries remain free to set whichever target, if any, they want, and there still are no legal penalties for any country failing to meet the political targets.

What have been the results? Global GHG emissions rose by almost 60% from 1990 to 2019[7]. Let me repeat that. **In spite of 26 "Conferences of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change" up to 2019 and unending propaganda about how the world soon would end unless "urgent" action were taken, emissions actually rose significantly.**

There was, however, a shift in the origin of the emissions. Over the period 2015 to 2022, the countries of the world spent $6.8 trillion on so-called "clean energy" including $2.9 trillion on wind and solar energy[8]. Most of this was spent by the OECD countries and China. The result was that emissions in the OECD countries actually declined slightly. They drank the Kool-Aid.

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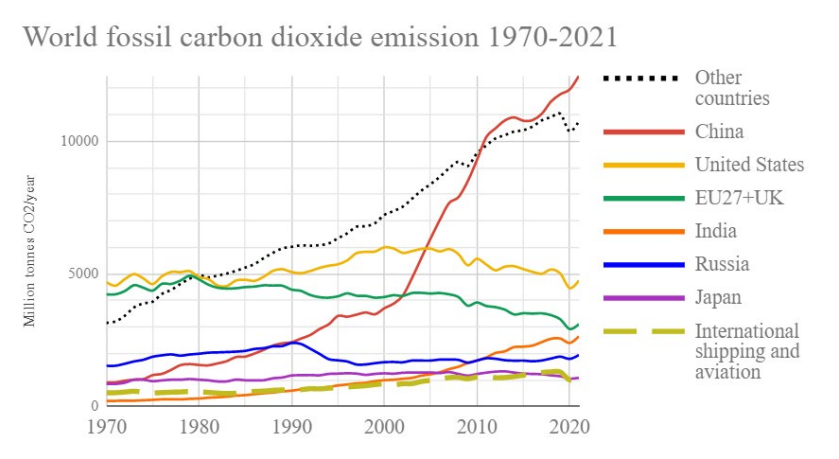
[5] https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/economics-literature-does-not-support-1.5c-climate-ceiling.pdf
[6] https://andrewromanviews.blog/2023/02/25/lets-stop-pretending-we-made-binding-commitments-under-the-paris-agreement/
[7] BP Statistical Review of World Energy
[8] https://mc-cd8320d4-36a1-40ac-83cc-3389-cdn-endpoint.azureedge.net/-/media/Files/IRENA/Agency/Publication/2023/Feb/IRENA_CPI_Global_RE_finance_2023.pdf?rev=8668440314f34e588647d3994d94a785

The non-OECD countries, however, generally did not. Guided more by a desire to increase the incomes and security of energy supply of their populations, the governments of the non-OECD countries continued to invest in the more economical and secure energy sources. As a result, the share of total GHG emissions in the non-OECD countries rose to two thirds of the global total by 2019. Most of this growth was in Asia.



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Let's express that in numbers. **Over the period 2011 to 2021, global carbon dioxide emissions from energy increased by almost 2 billion tonnes per year, from 32 billion tonnes to 34 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. Emissions from the OECD countries actually declined over that period, from 12.8 billion tonnes to 11.3 billion tonnes, with the largest share of that reduction made by the United States. Emissions from the non-OECD countries, in contrast, increased from 19.1 billion tonnes to 22.6 billion tonnes.**

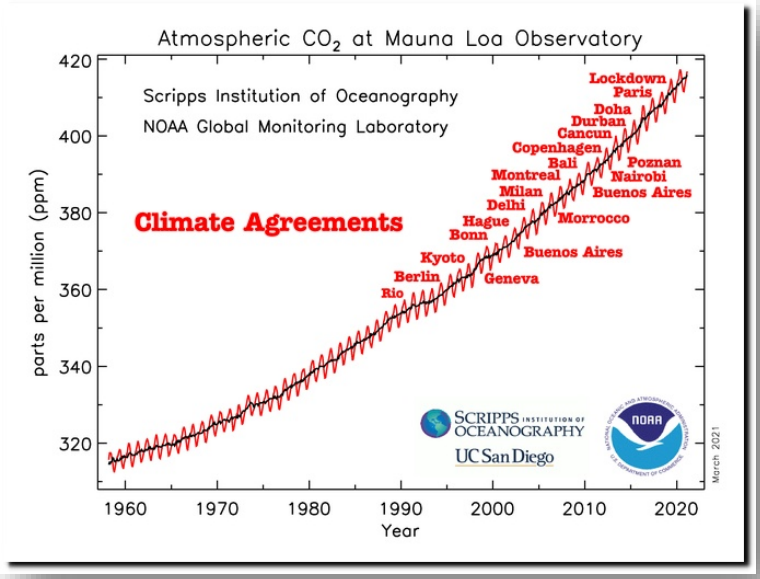


Table 1 summarizes the changes in GHG emissions levels in the 10 largest non-OECD countries over the 2011 to 2021 period.

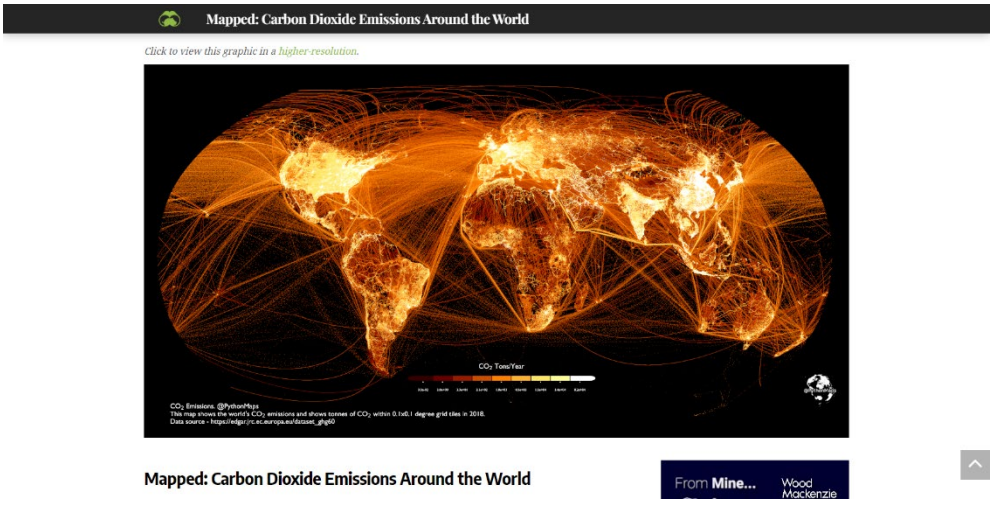
TABLE 1

Trends in Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Country 2011-2021

Country	2011 (MT)	2021 (MT)	World Share(%)
China	19,062	25,592	33.1
India	1,728	2,553	7.5
Russia	1,559	1,581	4.7
Iran	517	661	1.9
Saudi Arabia	500	569	1.7
Indonesia	471	573	1.7
South Africa	466	439	1.3
Brazil	424	437	1.3
Vietnam	132	273	0.8
Thailand	249	269	0.8

Source: BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2022

These 10 non-OECD countries account for over half (54.8%) of the world's GHG emissions. The OECD countries together only account for 33%. In other words, what has happened in terms of these 10 countries, and what will happen in future, is more important to global GHG emission trends than what happens in all of Europe, North America, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and the other OECD countries.



What about the future?

If the world is to meet the goals of "net-zero" by 2050 for the OECD and 2070 for the developing countries, major changes from past trends will have to occur. As no one knows the future, the only way to form a judgment about it is by examining what governments say they will do in their publicly-announced plans and to compare this to what is now happening. Probably the best online source for this is Carbon Action Tracker[9], a website established and maintained by climate campaigners. Carbon Action Tracker offers its assessment of the adequacy of the GHG emissions actions in each country based largely on two factors – how ambitious are the announced plans to attain "net-zero" and how much progress is each country making in reducing emissions. It then assesses overall performance in five categories: "1.5 degrees C. Paris Agreement compatible"; "almost sufficient"; "insufficient"; "highly insufficient"; and "critically insufficient".

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According to Carbon Action Tracker, no country in the world is "1.5 degrees C. Paris Agreement compatible". That alone should tell you what you need to know about the likely attainment of the net-zero objective. Six countries are rated "almost sufficient": the United Kingdom, Norway, Denmark, Nepal, Ethiopia, Morocco and Nigeria.

The ratings for the 10 largest non-OECD countries are also revealing. China, India, Saudi Arabia, and Indonesia are rated "highly insufficient" and Russia, Iran and Vietnam are rated "critically insufficient". Only South Africa and Brazil are rated "sufficient".

Stating this in summary does not adequately illustrate how far the world is from a unified global emissions reduction campaign. To see the truth, one needs to "drill down" and examine the plans and actions of those ten key countries. Note that Carbon Action Tracker uses different data than the BP Statistical Review of World Energy; its figures for total emissions are based on emissions from all sources, including the reduction in emissions from Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF). Developing countries typically state two different targets; the unconditional ones and the ones conditional on receiving large technology and financial aid from wealthier countries.

The following are some key points noted in Carbon Action Tracker's most recent assessments.

[9] https://climateactiontracker.org/

China

Before COP 21 in 2015. China committed to "peak" its GHG emissions by 2030. In 2021, it submitted a plan eventually to achieve "carbon neutrality" by 2060 and before then to reduce the carbon intensity of its economy and to increase renewable energy generation capacity.

If China's currently announced plans were met, by 2030 its emissions would be in the range of 13.4 to 14.7 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, 22% to 33% above 2010 levels. By 2050, according to Carbon Action Tracker, China's plan would result in GHG emissions of 5.6 to 5.8 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, 34-37% below 2010.

As a matter of industrial policy, China has made large investments in modernizing and increasing the efficiency of its industry and energy systems. It has significantly expanded its renewable energy production, adding more than 1,000 GW of capacity in 2021, and built many electric vehicle plants. It aims to generate 3300 Twh of electricity from renewable energy by 2025.

The BP World Energy Review 2022 data shows that China's energy use alone in year 2021 exceeds the energy use of the U.S., EU and UK combined and represents 26.49% of all global energy use, which is by far the largest of any nation.

China has achieved this level of energy consumption by hugely increasing its use of coal. Coal use increased from 2005 to 2021 by over 30 exajoules. China's increase in coal energy use in 2021 alone was 12.6% greater than the entire world's energy provided by wind and solar in that year. In 2021, it also produced its highest-ever annual coal output.

India

At COP27, India submitted its Long-tern Strategy for Low Carbon Development, which provides a breakdown of initiatives by sector, but these do not go beyond current policies. It provided no emissions "pathway" to demonstrate that India will reach net-zero by 2070. India's 2022 Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) submitted to the United Nations contained three elements: an emissions-intensity target of 45% below 2005 levels by 2030; a target of having at least half of electricity generation capacity from non-fossil fuels sources by 2030; and creation of a carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes through additional forests by 2030.

If India met its announced targets, its emissions would be about 4.4 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent excluding LULUCF in 2030, 96% above 2010 levels.

India has an aggressive program in place to increase renewable energy generation capacity, seeking to increase wind and solar capacity by three to six times what it had in place in 2021.

At the same time, India is fast increasing its coal-fired electricity generation capacity, and plans to install another 26 GW of coal-fired capacity by 2026-2027. It plans to continue developing its coal production and use capacity for the long term. It also plans to increase the share of natural gas in the primary energy mix and is approving the development of new gas infrastructure.

India has stated during UN meetings that to meet a net-zero goal it will need significant financial and technical assistance from wealthier countries. Specifically, it demanded at least $1 trillion. It is highly unlikely that the granting countries will make payments of that size.

Russian Federation

According to Carbon Action Tracker, Russia is not making any serious efforts to reduce GHG emissions. Its few relevant policies are "unambitious" or have an unclear expected effect on emissions. It NDC announced in November 2020 is to reduce GHG emission levels to 30% below 1990 levels by 2030.

In theory, it has a goal of attaining net-zero by 2060, but the government assumes that by 2050 forests would take up twice as much carbon as they do today. A recent announcement by the Russian Environment Ministry outlined Russia's intention to include unmanaged "reserve" forests alongside managed forests in accounting of net forestry emissions. This is in violation of the UN's guidelines covering carbon accounting practices.

The main factor influencing Russia's future GHG emissions is more likely to be the economic problems that it brings on itself than any explicitly "climate" policies.

Saudi Arabia

In October 2021, Saudi Arabia stated its commitment to reach a net-zero emissions target by 2060. However, **Saudi Arabia's updated Paris Agreement pledge is explicitly based on a scenario with substantial fossil fuel exports and has a "getout clause" if international climate policies negatively affect these exports.** As the export of oil and refined petroleum products is central to the health of the Saudi economy, it seems highly unlikely that it will take a restrictive approach to emissions.

Saudi Arabia has announced ambitious but probably unrealistic targets for increasing renewable electricity generation capacity; the target is for renewables to provide 50% of capacity by 2030, but in 2019 the actual share was 0.1%.

Saudi Arabia has announced a plan to plant 450 million trees by 2030. It will be interesting to see how they thrive in a desert climate.

Indonesia

In September 2022, Indonesia announced its plan to reduce emissions to 32% below a business-as-usual scenario by 2030. Indonesia's target depends heavily on the forestry sector, which accounts for about 60% of the emissions reduction effort. **If Indonesia met its unconditional target, its emissions in 2030 would be about 1805 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent excluding LULUCF, 150% above the 2010 level.**

Renewables accounted for about 13.5% of Indonesia's electricity generation mix in 2021, while coal-fired generation accounts for 61% and is projected to continue increasing until 2027. Under the current electricity sector plan, coal-fired capacity will represent 64% of the total by 2030. Coal is also Indonesia's largest export product, so it seems highly unlikely that it will reduce either production or consumption.

South Africa

South Africa has an ambitious emissions reduction target. In its updated Nationally Determined Contribution of 2021, South Africa commits to achieve emissions target levels in the range of 350–420 million tonnes, including LULUCF, for 2030. **Assuming LULUCF remains at the average level over 2007–2017 (16 million tonnes per year), this NDC target range translates to emission levels in 2030 of between 366–436 million tonnes excluding LULUCF, equivalent to a 3–23% increase above 1990 levels excluding LULUCF.**

It is uncertain, however, whether the country can meet these targets due to an existing electricity crisis and the serious financial and operational problems being experienced by the state-owned utility Eskom. These have resulted in rolling power cuts and a declaration of a state of emergency.

South Africa seems to be placing its hopes for major emissions reductions on the availability of $8.5 billion in concessional financing made available under the Just Energy Transition Partnership to pay for the retirement of coal mines, the deployment of renewable energy, "repurposing" mine sites and supporting green hydrogen and low-carbon transport technologies.

Brazil

Brazil has submitted two updates to its original NDC, one in 2020 and the second in April 2022. Brazil strengthened its economy-wide unconditional 2030 target in 2022 to 50% below 2005, but due to changes in how base year emissions are estimated, the latest update is still weaker than Brazil's original NDC in terms of absolute emissions reductions.

If Brazil met its unconditional target, its emissions in 2030 would be about 962 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent excluding LULUCF, 4% below the 2010 level.

Brazil's commitments also include a long-term objective to achieve "climate neutrality" by 2050. Despite a pledge during COP26, Brazil still has not submitted a long-term strategy to the UNFCCC.

At the same time, Brazil emphasizes increasing the use of natural gas for power generation to offset the effects of hydropower shortages caused by droughts in 2021. **Brazil's long-term energy plans foresee expanded roles for oil and natural gas. Investment in the exploration and development of oil and gas could reach $500 billion in the period to 2030.**

Deforestation in Brazil has increased and is expected to continue to rise in the coming years. In addition, weak law enforcement and illegal activities have facilitated access to protected lands. Preliminary reports indicate that deforestation has hit record levels in the Amazon area.

Given this, it is difficult to take seriously Brazil's ability to meet emission reduction commitments.

Vietnam

Viet Nam has unconditionally committed to reduce GHG emissions by 15.8% below business-as-usual levels (BAU) by 2030. **The new unconditional target translates to a 2030 emission level of 863 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per year excluding LULUCF, or 212% above 2010.**

In 2021, renewables accounted for 42% of electricity generation capacity, with most of that (31%) hydro. Vietnam's coal-fired power capacity grew by around 57% between 2014 and 2021, and the country has a further 15.6 GW coal capacity in the pipeline. This is the fourth largest "pipeline" in the world, after China, India, and Indonesia.

The latest draft economic plan suggests that 24 GW of new LNG-fired electricity generation capacity will be constructed by 2030 and another 34 GW by 2045.

There clearly is a disconnect between the announced emissions reduction plans submitted to international agencies and the energy development policies announced to Vietnam's domestic audience.

Thailand

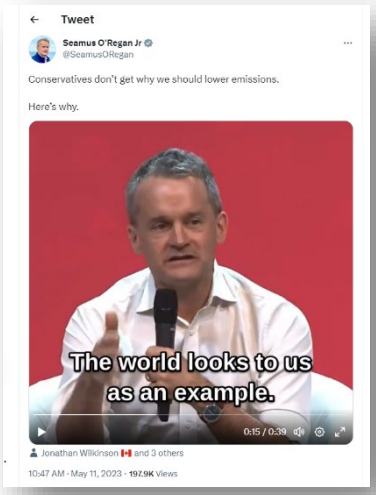
Thailand's conditional NDC target is to reduce GHG emissions by 40% from projected business-as-usual levels, "subject to enhanced access to technology development and transfer, financial resources and capacity-building support". That would result in emissions of 333 million tonnes per year, 1% below 2010, excluding LULUCF.

Its unconditional target is to attain national GHG emissions of 389 million tonnes per year by 2030, 15% above 2010 levels excluding LULUCF.

To achieve these targets, Thailand aims to expand renewable energy generation, reduce energy intensity, move towards 100 EV sales starting in 2035, and continue expansion of carbon sinks in the forestry sector. **Its present energy system, however, is heavily dependent on coal, oil and natural gas. It is not at clear how it will move from one energy system to another.**

Comments

Carbon Action Tracker, as an organization, seeks to promote much higher expenditures on GHG emissions reduction and a much higher level of engagement by all the world's governments. When they report that they consider the efforts made to date to be far from sufficient to attain net zero, it is not because they see the goal as undesirable. **Ironically, that is what makes their reports so credible as an illustration that, despite immense promotion and propaganda, the countries of the world are not on track to meet the net-zero goals. Not even close. In most cases, the projected emissions in 2030 are higher than they are today.**



https://twitter.com/SeamusORegan/status/1656702464337367041?t=yWwkv5dxKLRUbtpJY1Bglw&s=03

The average person, unfamiliar with the controversies that rage over climate science and policy, might consider what I have written here as difficult to believe. After all, have there not been 27 major international climate conferences all reported breathlessly by the media as though the world's future is at stake? What he or she might not have grasped from all these highly publicized meetings and the media attention they have been given is that it is mostly theatre, with politicians and activists each playing their assigned roles. As in watching any other theatre, however, one should be aware that watching the proceedings requires a certain suspension of disbelief. **What matters is what countries do, not what their leaders say. The countries with the largest and fastest growing GHG emissions are effectively ignoring the net-zero UN goal.**

There is no denying that a powerful set of leaders in Europe, North America and some other OECD countries are determined to use claims of impending climate catastrophic as justification to completely transform the economies of the "west" and greatly to increase the power of governments to control energy and therefore to control people's lives. Even if they succeed within their countries, it should be clear by now that the majority of people in the world, and especially the majority of the large country emitters, are not persuaded by their message, and will not follow their agenda.

For countries like Canada that produce only 1.6% of global GHG emissions, and represent only 0.0005% of humanity, it should be patently obvious that the rest of the world will not be influenced by what we do or not do with respect to GHG emissions. There is no global climate campaign, and we could not influence its outcome either way if there were.

About the Author

Robert Lyman is an economist with 27 years' experience as an analyst, policy advisor and manager in the Canadian federal government, primarily in the areas of energy, transportation, and environmental policy. He was also a diplomat for 10 years. Subsequently he has worked as a private consultant conducting policy research and analysis on energy and transportation issues as a principal for Entrans Policy Research Group. He is a frequent contributor of articles and reports for Friends of Science, a Calgary-based independent organization concerned about climate change-related issues. He resides in Ottawa, Canada. Full bio.

About Friends of Science Society

Friends of Science Society is an independent group of earth, atmospheric and solar scientists, engineers, and citizens that is celebrating its 21st year of offering climate science insights. After a thorough review of a broad spectrum of literature on climate change, Friends of Science Society has concluded that the sun is the main driver of climate change, not carbon dioxide (CO2).

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