



**Friends of
the Earth
International**

QUICK FoEI FACTSHEET

EQUITY REFRESHER

What is 'Equity'?

In terms of addressing climate change **equity** means ensuring that those countries who have emitted the most greenhouse gases will reduce (**mitigate**) their emissions more than the others: it means sharing the global **carbon budget** fairly. This means that developed countries must bear the bulk of the burden of the drastic emissions reductions needed because they have already used much more than their **fair share** of atmospheric 'space'.

What is 'Historical Responsibility'?

Developed countries have enormous **historical responsibility** for climate change, which equates to a huge ecological and **climate debt** to developing nations. Developed countries' unfair historical overconsumption, based on the plundering of developing countries' resources, has led to immense disparities in countries' **capacity** to deal with the climate crisis, and will continue to undermine peoples' right to build and live in **sustainable societies**.

AGREEING AN EQUITABLE CARBON BUDGET

A global **carbon budget** is the amount of carbon dioxide emissions we can emit while still having a reasonable chance of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. This budget should be apportioned according to:

(1) Responsibility: Countries who have put the greatest pressure on the climate system historically must make the biggest binding commitments to address their historical and current carbon pollution by cutting their emissions.

(2) Capacity: Countries with greater financial, technological and institutional capacity must take on a greater level of binding commitments to ensure that the climate crisis is addressed effectively.

(3) Right to sustainable societies: The needs and interests of the poorest and most vulnerable, and of future generations must be taken into account.

What is a safe, acceptable average global temperature increase?

Any increase in global temperature means more extreme weather events, more floods, more droughts, and more deaths. So no increase is safe. One hundred developing countries believe that we must do all we can to keep the global average temperature increase below 1.5°C. Many civil society organisations and social movements, including Friends of the Earth International, also believe that we must keep the global average temperature increase below 1.5°C.

What should developed countries do?

Developed countries must drastically reduce their domestic emissions at source by as much as is technically possible, and provide finance, intellectual property rights-free technology, skill sharing and capacity building for developing countries, in order to reduce emissions. Because of their historical responsibility for climate change, they must also provide finance for adaptation and loss and damage. This must be done without using carbon markets or offsetting of emission reductions, which are false solutions. Furthermore, developed countries must not impose patents or intellectual property rights on developing countries that prevent their access to needed technologies.

What should developing countries do?

Developing countries should take action and avoid a development path based on coal or other dirty energy. They must avoid increased emissions, which would harm their communities and environment. They should follow a 'just transition', and immediately transition away from the path of dirty energy.

Is it possible to keep the average increase below 1.5°C?

Research from the Stockholm Environment Institute states that the 1.5°C threshold is technically and economically achievable. The World Bank also recently stated that 1.5°C is possible. However, the average temperature has risen 0.8°C already and a further 0.6°C rise is, according to scientists, already inevitable because of the time lag between emissions and consequent temperature increases. This means that to have a chance of staying below the 1.5°C threshold, we would need an immediate revolution in the way we produce and consume energy, and also food and transport. In other words we only have a very limited carbon budget left.

What is the role of the UN?

Global action must be taken urgently and emissions reductions must be shared between nations on the basis of equity. The United Nations is the only possible forum where global agreements can take place, but the divisive question of how responsibility for tackling climate change should be shared has dogged the UN climate negotiations for more than twenty years. UN summits would help enforce the real solutions to the climate crisis if developed countries would accept their responsibility to act urgently and on the basis of equity.

What does the UN demand of developed countries?

All parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), a treaty which was adopted in 1992, agreed to “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.”

The UNFCCC recognises the historical and current responsibility of developed countries and requires them to “take the lead” in mitigation. It also states that developing countries’ ability to reduce emissions, which is also necessary, is dependent on developed countries meeting their commitments under the Convention: they agreed to provide financial resources and transfer technology to support developing countries who cannot otherwise afford to take the necessary actions.

WHAT IS MEANT BY ‘SYSTEM CHANGE—NOT CLIMATE CHANGE’ ?

The climate crisis may be a huge problem but it is just a symptom that there is something completely flawed in the current dominant economic system. Only through a transformation of current unsustainable and unjust ways of producing and consuming will we address the roots of climate change. We need universal access to clean, democratically controlled and community owned energy. We need a just and climate friendly food system that’s based on the principles of agroecology. We need community management of our natural systems and forests and an end to deforestation. And we need an end to neoliberalism, replacing it with an economic system that’s equitable, and accountable to people, not corporations.

We are calling for an energy revolution that:

- Ensures justice for people affected by climate change
- Stops fossil fuels and other dirty energy, while protecting workers in these areas
- Supports community-owned renewable energy – giving people the power, not corporations



Friends of the Earth International

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