

# Confidential: Climate Activists

**TO:** Climate Activists at the United Nations World Climate Summit



**SUBJECT:** Advocacy Strategy Doc

You are attending the upcoming UN conference on climate change to advocate for the environment, for social justice, and for future generations.

You work within the growing climate movement, which includes non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that help shape global policy and support negotiators but also includes activists who are quick to use their voice and whatever means they have to non-violently advance their goals.



**Goals:** Your goal is to promote the strongest possible agreement to limit greenhouse gas emissions, starting immediately that is fair and equitable to the most vulnerable. At the 2015 UN climate negotiations in Paris, nations agreed to a goal of limiting global warming to “well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.”

**Context:** The scientific consensus is clear: over 97% of climate scientists agree that climate change is happening, that it is caused by human activities that produce greenhouse gases, like burning fossil fuels, and that the impacts could be devastating to civilization.<sup>1</sup> Already we can see the impacts, and we know that without immediate action to reduce emissions from fossil fuels and other sources, the poor, today’s young people, and future generations will suffer disproportionately. Despite the resistance you might meet from other groups, you know that it is in their best interest to take bold action. Increasingly, religious and civic leaders are calling for action on moral grounds, and marches across the world have drawn over half a million people. With every delay and continued reliance on fossil fuels, it becomes more expensive to make the necessary transition with the time we have.

**Opportunities:** Taking action to reduce fossil fuel use and a transition to clean energy sources would bring numerous health and social benefits unrelated to climate change, including improved air quality, public health, energy independence and security, and new jobs.

**Public opinion:** Fortunately, a majority of the public already believes climate change is real and that human activities contribute significantly to it. Most support some level of action to limit climate change. However, the public in most developed countries fails to grasp the scale and urgency of action needed, and climate change ranks near the bottom of their priorities. Meanwhile, many in developing nations blame wealthier nations for causing climate change and underestimate the role of the developing world in current and projected emissions.

**Actions:** As NGOs, you do not have the power to implement policies or make large financial investments that control the energy infrastructure of the global economy. However, unlike the other groups, you are not beholden to vested interests and are free to advocate for policies to swiftly and effectively address climate change. Through whatever means necessary you should:

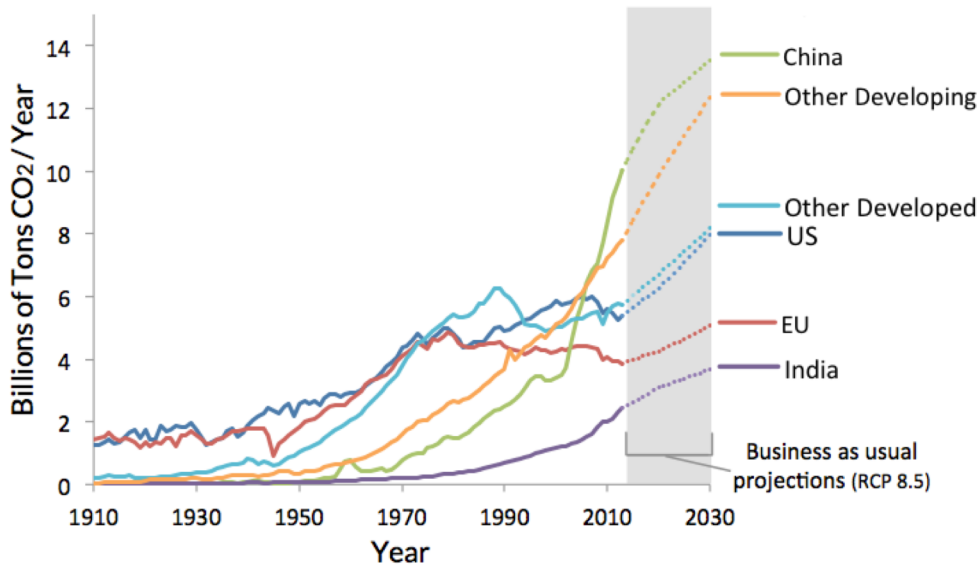
- Make the scientific, economic, and moral case for action clear to other delegates.
- Emphasize the need for collective action over self-interest: we all share the Earth as our home and action by all nations is needed to reach our common climate goals.
- Ensure that the voice of the most vulnerable people in all countries is heard: the poor, the young, and future generations will disproportionately suffer impacts and have done little to cause this problem. If possible, align yourself with others that support the rights of these groups.

**Global landscape:** The fossil fuel industry has profited enormously from actions that, ultimately, threaten human society. They wield power and money, which they will use to influence delegates. Despite this power, creative, clear, and effective communication that speaks to the multiple economic and health benefits of climate action, as well as the moral choice that climate action represents could win hearts and minds.

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<sup>1</sup> Cook J. 2013. The scientific consensus on climate change. *Europhysics News* 44:29-32.

### CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions from Fossil Fuels (and Cement)

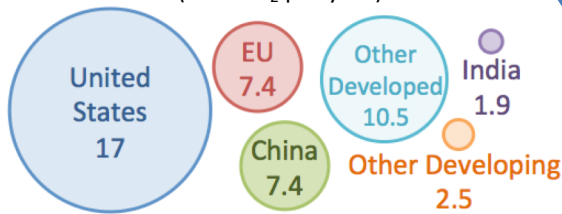


Approximately three-quarters of the total CO<sub>2</sub> released by burning fossil fuels since the start of the Industrial Revolution came from the developed nations.

Sweden sustained annual emissions reductions of 4.5% to reduce their dependence on oil (1976-1986). France and Belgium saw similar reductions around this time. Otherwise, most significant historical emission reductions have come from financial or political crises. According to a UNEP report, a 3.5% annual reduction rate is extremely ambitious.

Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions, primarily from fossil fuels, for each region from 1910 to 2013 (solid lines), as well as projected emissions through 2030 under a business as usual scenario (dotted lines).

### Emissions per person in 2013 (tons CO<sub>2</sub> per year)

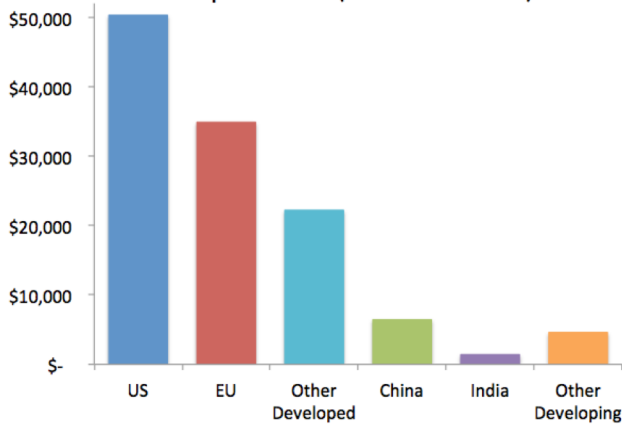


CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per person in the US, EU, and other developed countries are far higher than emissions in the developing countries (i.e., India, and other developing countries). With less than 5% of the world's population, the US alone generates 15% of global emissions.

GDP per person in the US is more than 7.5 and 35 times higher than in China and India, respectively.

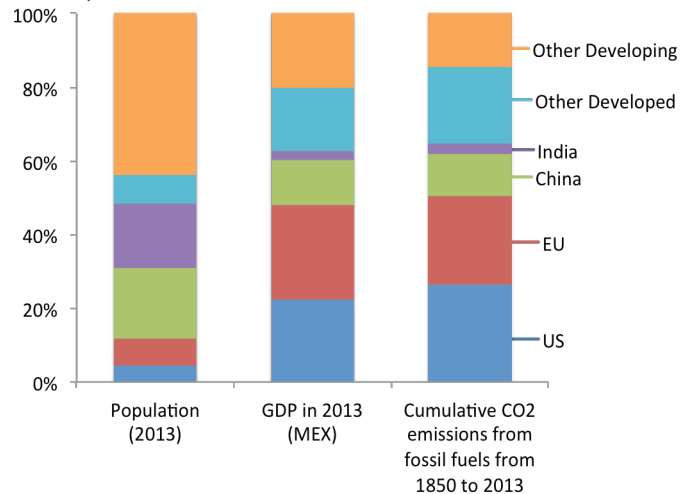
China, India, and other developing countries are home to 81% of the world's population, but only 35% of the world's wealth and 29% of the world's cumulative emissions.

### GDP per Person (2010 US Dollars)



Wealth, as measured by 2013 levels of GDP per person (in 2010 US\$ MEX/Year) distributed across the regions.

### Population, wealth, and cumulative emissions



The distribution of global population, GDP (both in 2013) and total cumulative emissions from 1850 to 2013 across the regions.