



Climate Parliament

A global political strategy to combat global warming

Climate scientists tell us that we need urgently to reduce the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. To do so, we have to emit less carbon dioxide than the planet absorbs. That means reducing fossil fuels fast, and saving our forests. Given the volatile price of oil, gas and coal, a switch to sun, wind and water could also save us a lot of money in the long run. Meanwhile, we have to ensure that the 2 billion people who don't even have a lightbulb in their homes can gain access to modern energy services to power their development, without further damage to the planet. Here are eight key steps which can help us to achieve these objectives:



Pay farmers and landholders to conserve forests and other key ecosystems, and to re-forest areas where the trees have been lost. Costa Rica had 85% forest cover in 1900, and was down to 29% by 1987. Thanks in part to innovative "payment for ecosystem services" laws, Costa Rica is back to 51% forest cover today. The same approach could be applied anywhere.



Where appropriate, build "supergrids" linking countries within each region, or simply linking all parts of large nations like China, India or the US, using high voltage direct current (HVDC) cables. HVDC lines, which lose very little energy in transmission, can bring solar, wind, hydro or geothermal energy to everyone from wherever these sources are abundant.



Feed into the grid inexpensive, reliable energy from solar thermal power stations in deserts and other sun-rich areas. These power stations, already operating in Spain and the US, use mirrors to concentrate the sun's heat to boil water and drive a steam turbine. Scaled up, they could produce far more energy than the world uses, while prices will continue to fall.



Rapidly expand wind power. Where long-distance transmission cables can be built, coastlines and other wind-rich areas can feed energy to everyone. Across a wide region, the supply is fairly steady: when the wind drops in one place, it is blowing elsewhere. Wind power is already competitive on price with natural gas.



Put solar photovoltaic (PV) panels on rooftops and in solar farms throughout the world. The cost of PV is falling, and new developments such as "thin film" technology will reduce costs further. PV can help to meet daytime demand from offices and factories. Modern "smart grid" technology can help us to produce reliable power from highly decentralised sources.



Use hydroelectric dams as back-up for wind and solar power, to ensure reliable supply. Norwegian hydro power, for example, already provides back-up for Danish wind energy through an under-sea cable. If extra back-up is needed, energy can be stored by pumping water uphill into reservoirs in mountains or on coastal hills.



Build mini-grids for rural villages where the national grid doesn't yet reach. Clean energy mini-grids use whatever combination of solar, wind, biomass or mini-hydro is most suitable for their location. If linked into larger grids later on, they can form part of a decentralised power generation system for the whole region.

The Climate Parliament is working with democratic national and state legislators around the world to advance these and other essential steps to prevent dangerous global warming. The Climate Parliament strategy contains the following five key elements:

- **International parliamentary committee hearings and fact-finding visits** bring together legislators from different countries to examine ideas for legislative action. The action agenda summarised above has emerged from a series of hearings around the world.
- **Regional action networks** link up legislators who support stronger measures to combat climate change. We have begun building up regional networks in Africa, Europe, India and small island states on renewable energy, and a network of legislators in tropical forest nations on forest conservation. Where needed, we support the creation of cross-party groups to advance proposals within national or state parliaments.
- **Policy papers** are being developed which give legislators the information they need to advance action proposals within their own political systems. These will ultimately feed into a White Paper outlining a comprehensive set of policy options for legislators on climate change.
- **Climate Parliament** plenary sessions will in the future bring together members of parliaments around the world to work together on legislative initiatives on clean energy, forests, and other climate related themes.
- Once the Climate Parliament has built up its global network of legislators, a **Climate Council** may be convened bringing together a small group of heads of government who share a strong personal concern with climate change. The Council can promote similar proposals for rapid action among the executive branches of the world's governments.

We are thus creating a global political network which can help both developed and developing country parliaments and governments to deal with the threat that climate change poses to every nation.

The Climate Parliament is an initiative of the e-Parliament, an international forum to help legislators spread and implement good policy ideas. For more information about the e-Parliament, email info@e-parl.net, or visit

www.e-parl.net