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Global warming must stay below 2C or world faces ruin, scientists declare



Mark Henderson, Science Editor

The world's carbon emissions must peak within just six years, if humanity is to stand a chance of preventing dangerous global warming, a group of 20 Nobel Prize-winning scientists, economists and writers has declared.

Greenhouse gas emissions will have to fall by 50 per cent from 1990 levels by 2050, to keep global temperature increases below 2C, the St James's Palace Nobel Laureate Symposium has declared. Developed countries must aim for a reduction of between 25 and 40 per cent by 2020.

The ambitious global carbon budget is set out today in the St James's Palace Memorandum, drawn up by some of the world's leading scientists and intellectuals, which was signed this afternoon in the presence of the Prince of Wales. It is intended to inform the agenda for the United Nations climate summit at Copenhagen in December, which will negotiate a world climate change deal.

The memorandum also calls for an emergency package of financial support for measures to prevent deforestation, without which it says serious efforts to contain global warming will be impossible.

The memorandum was agreed after three days of debate at the Royal Society, the Science Museum and St James's Palace in London. *The Times* was media partner for the event.

The document states: "The St James's Palace Memorandum calls for a global deal on climate change that matches the scale and urgency of the human, ecological and economic crises facing the world today. It urges governments at all levels, as well as the scientific community, to join with business and civil society to seize hold of this historic opportunity to transform our carbon-intensive economies into sustainable and equitable systems. We must recognise the fierce urgency of now."

The Copenhagen agreement, the memorandum says, must acknowledge "the compelling evidence of science we should confine the temperature rise to 2C to avoid unmanageable climate risks. This can only be achieved with a peak of global emissions of all greenhouse gases by 2015 and at least a 50 per cent emission reduction by 2050 on a 1990 baseline. This in turn means that developed countries have to aim for a 25-40 per cent reduction by 2020. A robust measure of assessing the necessary emission reductions is a total carbon budget, which should be accepted as the base for measuring the effectiveness of short-term (2020) and long-term (2050) targets".

It must also require "the creation of carbon prices adopted across large parts of the global economy combined with measures to lower the price of low-carbon energy, especially in developing countries. Funds raised should be used to provide the necessary financial support for adaptation".

The agreement must also "acknowledge the priority of developing countries to overcome poverty while ensuring sustainable development".

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