



71 NGOs call for new UK climate leadership ahead of the UN General Assembly

20th September 2024

The new UK government has promised to put climate and nature at the heart of foreign policy and to be a climate leader. With the UN General Assembly next week and COP29 climate finance negotiations off track, this will be the first test of that new UK leadership.

Today, 20th September, 71 civil society and faith organisations from large international development and environment charities to local groups from across the four nations, wrote to the Prime Minister calling for his leadership on climate action at the upcoming UN General Assembly, and warning that negotiations are off-track to deliver for communities on the frontline of the climate emergency.

At COP29 in Azerbaijan, an ambitious, fair, and needs-based new collective quantified goal (NCQG) for climate finance for developing countries must be agreed. But negotiations are dangerously off course, and failure to deliver on finance would unravel decades of global cooperation to tackle climate change.

The letter states that *“as the fifth largest historical emitter and sixth largest economy, the UK has both the responsibility and the capability to take far greater action on climate change - at home and overseas”*, and calls for the UK to lead by example domestically and contribute to fair financing of climate action globally, making clear: *“these are the benchmarks against which your government will be judged.”*

The letter calls out the injustice that it is currently *“communities and countries that are the least responsible for causing the climate emergency that are paying with their lives, livelihoods, homes, lands, ecosystems, and futures,”* with climate change costing African nations up to 5% of GDP, and Small Island Developing States like Vanuatu over 35% GDP annually and more in higher impact years. Stating plainly: *“It is simply not fair.”*

Catherine Pettengell, Executive Director of Climate Action Network UK (CAN-UK) said: *“Today we are calling for more ambitious and fair international climate action, and urging Prime Minister Starmer to play an important role in that. Countries and communities that have done the least to cause the climate emergency must not pay with their lives, livelihoods, and futures. We have to secure agreement at COP29 on a justice-based finance goal, and with the talks locked in acrimony, a new approach from the new UK government - starting next week at UNGA - could make an enormous difference.”*

Today's letter is just one of many activities around the world calling on governments from the Global North to #PayUp for Climate Finance, in a Global Day of Action in solidarity with those unfairly bearing the brunt - and the costs - of climate change.

Referring to the failures of the past \$100bn goal to meet the needs of development countries, **Catherine Pettengell** said: *“We need trillions and not billions globally, and the UK must pay our fair share. But there are fair ways to generate the finance by making polluters and the wealthiest in our society pay, that do not unfairly cost UK households. As Prime Minister Starmer prepares to travel to New York for the UN General Assembly, progress on climate finance ahead of COP29 must be a top priority for him and all World Leaders.”*

The letter also highlights that increasing ambition on international climate finance must go hand-in-hand with increasing ambition on domestic action, and calls for a new international standard when setting the next UK Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) and 2035 emissions reduction target, to catalyse greater action from other countries too.

The letter calls for the Prime Minister to:

1. Return UK ODA commitments to 0.7% and reverse last year's ICF accounting changes to rebuild the UK's reputation as a trusted partner that fulfils its international promises.
2. Champion an NCQG that centres the needs and priorities of affected countries and communities, and delivers the scale of public finance needed.
3. Commit to providing future UK ICF that is genuinely new and additional by putting in place polluter pays measures to generate new public finance in a fair way.
4. Raise ambition with a UK 2035 NDC that sets a new global benchmark commensurate with the UK's responsibilities and the urgency to keep 1.5°C alive, by going well beyond the existing sixth carbon budget and incorporating your government's new ambitions and plans for UK climate leadership, restoring nature, and becoming a clean energy superpower.

Flossie Boyd, Senior Campaigner, Global Witness said: *"As people from Brazil, to Germany, to Vietnam struggle with extreme weather, it's clear we need urgent action to redress climate damage. It's disappointing to see the new government without a bold plan on our climate finance promises when frontline communities are already paying."*

"As a fossil fuel power, the UK has the responsibility to take far greater action and we know that taxpayers can't foot this bill alone - and we also know big oil's profits could cover the damages that people are currently footing. The UK must lead in getting huge polluters like BP and Shell to pay their fair share."

ENDS.

Notes for editors:

- The published letter is [available here](#).
- Climate Action Network UK (CAN-UK) is the UK node of Climate Action Network (CAN), a global network of more than 1,900 civil society organisations in over 130 countries driving collective and sustainable action to fight the climate crisis and to achieve social and racial justice. climatenetwork.org
- CAN-UK brings together international development and environment organisations in the UK working on the poverty-nature-climate agenda to advocate for climate justice and sustainable development for all. Contact information@can-uk.org
- On the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) for climate finance, CAN-UK and CAN is calling for a public finance provision core that is at least \$1 trillion a year in grants and grant-equivalent finance, with subgoals for mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage, to ensure adequate and transparent finance for all three important pillars of climate action. [CAN's NCQG submission is available here](#).

- On the UK 2035 NDC, CAN-UK is calling for this to be an ambition raising exercise and therefore an increase on the existing sixth carbon budget (which sets the 2035 emissions reduction target at approximately 77-78% with international aviation and shipping and 81-82% without). CAN-UK's [Principles for the UK NDC is available here](#).
- 20th September 2024 is the Global Day of Action to #PayUp for Climate Finance, with actions happening around the world and online calling for the significant scale up of international climate finance that is needed. This is part of the Global Week of Action for Climate Finance and a Fossil Free Future. <https://payupandphaseout.org/>