

Submission to the Climate Change Authority's *Targets and Progress Review Draft Report*

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1 Summary and recommendations

- 1.1 Oxfam Australia congratulates the Climate Change Authority on its draft report - *Reducing Australia's Greenhouse Gas Emissions: Targets and Progress Review* - and welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback. Before making some specific comments on the report and its recommendations, we wish first to acknowledge the high quality of the report and commend the Authority for its invaluable contribution to the climate policy debate in Australia.
- 1.2 Oxfam Australia agrees strongly with the Authority's view that Australia must take a long-term view of emissions limits. Further that this means setting a long-term national emissions budget commensurate both with the science and with principles of fairness, and that this budget must be regularly reviewed in line with emerging science and international developments.
- 1.3 Having studied the draft report in detail, we wish to offer feedback on two key issues:
 1. The size of the global emissions budget that should inform Australia's emissions goals, including our national carbon budget.
 2. Approaches to determining Australia's fair share of the global response.
- 1.4 Based on this feedback, Oxfam Australia encourages the Authority to:
 - a) **Base its recommended emissions reduction goals for Australia on a fair share of a global effort to limit global warming to 1.5°C.** (Sections 3.1,3.2)
 - b) **Ensure its determination of Australia's fair share of the global effort takes at least some account of historical responsibility.** (Sections 4.4-4.7)
 - c) **Include in its final report details of how Australia's contribution can be defended in terms of the principles of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and therefore within international negotiations.** (Section 4.10)

2 About Oxfam Australia

- 2.1 Oxfam Australia is an independent, not-for-profit, secular international development agency. We are a member of Oxfam International, a global confederation of 17 Oxfam affiliates that work together to fight poverty and injustice in almost 100 countries.
- 2.2 Around the world, our local partners are reporting an increase in extreme weather events and other climate pressures. These changes threaten our already fragile food system and cause many to go hungry. Oxfam International regards climate change as a fundamental development challenge, threatening decades of hard-won gains in the fight against poverty.
- 2.3 Oxfam Australia has worked with local communities around the world for over 50 years. Our organization undertakes long-term development projects, provides emergency response during disaster and conflict, and conducts campaigning and advocacy for policy and practice changes that promote human rights and justice, including scaled-up action to address the global climate crisis. We support over 400 long-term development projects in 30 countries across Africa, Asia, the Pacific and Indigenous Australia.

3 Global Emissions Budget

- 3.1 The view of Oxfam Australia, as expressed in our initial submission to the Authority, is that Australia's emissions reduction goals should be based on a fair share of a global effort consistent with a high probability of limiting global warming to 1.5°C. This view is informed by our experience as an international development and humanitarian aid agency, and the knowledge that many of the communities we work with around the world are already facing very significant challenges at current levels of warming.

- 3.2 The Authority recognizes (p. 122) that the international community may agree in 2015 at the end of its review of the adequacy of the 2°C goal, to strengthen this goal to 1.5°C. Oxfam Australia concurs with the Authority that more limited attention has been given in the literature to pathways that provide a 50% or greater chance of limiting warming to 1.5°C. Further, that planning for 1.5°C may require setting a budget to at least 2100. Nonetheless, recognizing that it may be very difficult to impose a tighter budget and further accelerate action at a later stage, and upholding the precautionary approach established by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, a 1.5°C goal provides the more appropriate context and starting point for the review.

4 Determining Australia's fair share

- 4.1 Oxfam Australia welcomes the detailed consideration given by the Authority to determining Australia's fair share of the global climate response (Chapter 9). We further welcome the Authority's explicit acknowledgement that Australia has a clear national interest in limiting global warming to no more than 2°C and the recognition that "it is clearly in Australia's national interest to persuade and encourage other nations to strengthen their contributions to international action; Australia is likely to be more persuasive and encouraging if its own goals are viewed as a fair contribution by others." (p 97)
- 4.2 Oxfam Australia notes that during the recent UN Climate Change Conference in Warsaw, as at previous COPs, the issue of 'equity' was at the core of negotiations aimed at achieving a global agreement capable of limiting warming to 2°C. The path to an effective 2015 climate agreement requires that *all* Parties, including advanced economies like Australia, fully embrace the equity challenge. A perceived disregard for the equity principles contained in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) remains a fundamental sticking point.
- 4.3 While Oxfam Australia, like the Authority, recognizes that deciding on a fair share for Australia is "necessarily a matter of judgment" (p. 97) we believe that Australia, as a Party to the UNFCCC, must be able to defend its contributions against the Convention's equity principles. Drawing on the work of Climate Action Network, Oxfam Australia recognizes these as: 1) a precautionary approach to adequacy; 2) common but differentiated responsibility and respective capability; and 3) the right to sustainable development. Further that these can be adequately captured by five quantifiable equity indicators: adequacy, responsibility, capability, development need, and adaptation need.¹
- 4.4 Oxfam Australia therefore has some concerns with the Authority's preferred approach to determining fair shares. As acknowledged on p. 102, a budget that begins with the status quo and aims for eventual convergence to equal per person emissions does not explicitly consider historical responsibility.
- 4.5 While Oxfam Australia recognizes historical responsibility as one of several relevant determinations of a country's fair share, we do not regard it as the only one. We have therefore not supported the positions of many countries within the

¹ See: http://climatenetwork.org/sites/default/files/can_equity_indicators_brief_-_two_page_summary.pdf

Like Minded Group,² which typically place very strong or sole emphasis on historical responsibility. Further, we share the Authority's view that "*distant* past emissions should not be included in determining a country's fair share," (emphasis added) and have advocated for 1990 as an appropriate start year for measuring cumulative emissions,³ not the 1850 start date chosen by some parties.

- 4.6 However, Oxfam Australia is concerned that an approach that has no explicit regard to historical responsibility will face fierce opposition from a number of key actors including large emerging economies such as Brazil and India, and is insufficient in terms of helping break the current deadlock in international negotiations. It may therefore work against Australia's national interest in limiting warming to 2°C, and in encouraging other countries to strengthen their contributions to international action.
- 4.7 Oxfam Australia notes that part of the Authority's assessment of different approaches to fairness was from the perspective of "whether the approach would help Australia play a constructive role internationally" (p. 97). We suggest that while the Authority's preferred approach may win favor with other developed nations, given the concerns outlined above it may not help improve the overall dynamic of international negotiations.
- 4.8 In regard to the Greenhouse Development Rights (GDRs), Oxfam Australia has tended to give only qualified support to this approach, and recognizes some of the practical concerns raised by the Authority. At the same time, we recognize that unlike the various forms of contraction and convergence, the GDR approach attempts to operationalize *all* the equity principles of the UNFCCC. For this reason alone it deserves a more detailed consideration by the Authority. As noted in our original submission, the high near-term targets implied by a more comprehensive approach to effort sharing should not be regarded as a problem with GDRs and similar approaches *per se*, but rather taken on board as a valid indication of the scale of reductions that a full operation of established equity principles demands.

² The Like Minded Group is a group of developing countries that operate as a negotiating bloc within negotiations under the UNFCCC, as well as within the World Trade Organization and other international organizations. The group includes Algeria, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bhutan, China, Cuba, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Burma, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Vietnam and Zimbabwe.

³ See Oxfam's 2009 report *Hang together or separately?* <http://www.oxfam.org/en/policy/fair-climate-deal-copenhagen>

- 4.9 In conclusion, Oxfam Australia encourages the Authority to ensure its determination of Australia's share takes at least some account of historical responsibility, alongside other relevant factors. We believe the latest version of the Climate Effort Sharing Calculator⁴ provides one useful input into such deliberations, as it allows flexibility in the weight to be ascribed to cumulative emissions, the setting of a development threshold, and other parameters.
- 4.10 Oxfam Australia encourages the Authority to also include in its final report details of how Australia's fair share can be defended in terms of the principles of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and therefore within international negotiations. As indicated above, we believe this requires defending Australia's fair share in terms of our historical responsibility, our relative economic capability, and protecting other countries' right to sustainable development.
- 4.11 Finally, Oxfam Australia welcomes the Authority's acknowledgement that "equity on climate change has implications beyond Australia's emissions reduction goals," (p. 103) and encourages the Authority to consider, in due course, how to ensure Australia makes a fair contribution to helping meet the adaptation needs of poor and vulnerable communities, as well as addressing the loss and damage suffered by communities as a result of climate change.

⁴ <http://www.gdrights.org/calculator/>