



With breaking stories and
newswire products from

UN NEWS CENTRE



UN study provides guidelines to meet greenhouse gas emissions targets by 2020



23 November 2011 –

A new United Nations study [released](#) today provides policy-makers with technical and economically feasible guidelines on how to cut down greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions so governments can meet their environmental targets by 2020.

[Bridging the Emissions Gap](#), released by the UN Environmental Programme ([UNEP](#)), argues that the world already has the solutions to avert damaging climate change, and gives specific recommendations to put these into action, highlighting the need for changes in the energy system and examining various economic sectors such as electricity production, transport, aviation, forestry and agriculture to consider for emissions reductions in the next 10 years.

“The annual UNEP Gap Report is a vital contribution to the global effort to address dangerous climate change,” said [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon. “It shows that we have much to do, both in terms of ambition and policy, but it also shows that the gap can still be closed if we act now. This is a message of hope and an important call to action.”

The report also examines research on the gap between the pledges made by countries to cut their GHG emissions and what measures will be needed to keep the global temperature rise below the two degrees Celsius (35.6 degrees Fahrenheit) target by 2020.

“This report puts into the hands of governments and policy-makers vital information about their options if the world is to meet the climate change challenge,” said Achim Steiner, UNEP Executive Director.

In particular, the report cites aviation and shipping as important sectors to focus on as they account for five per cent of carbon dioxide emissions. However, these sectors fall outside the Kyoto Protocol, the emissions reduction treaty, whose first commitment period is due to expire in 2012.

“Options for reducing emissions from both sectors include improving fuel efficiency and using low-carbon fuels. For the shipping sector, another promising and simple option is to reduce ship speeds,” says the report.

Some of the report’s recommendations for policy-makers include agreeing to implement their emissions reduction pledges with stricter rules, deciding to target their energy systems using more non-fossil fuels and renewable energy sources, and putting in place long-term, specific-sector policies to achieve the full emissions potential of the different economic sectors.

The report includes the financial costs of these measures, addressing a key concern for policy-makers. According to UNEP, global average marginal costs range from \$25-\$54 per ton of removed carbon dioxide, with a median value of \$34 per ton. The report also presents far more pessimistic scenarios, warning of what could happen if countries do not fully realize their commitments.

The provision of the guidelines, which involved 55 scientists and experts from 28 scientific groups across 15 countries, comes just a few days before the start of the UN Climate Change Convention in Durban, South Africa, and seven months before the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

“Time is short, so we need to optimize the tools at hand,” said Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change ([UNFCCC](#)).

“In Durban, governments need to resolve the immediate future of the Kyoto Protocol, define the longer path towards a global, binding climate agreement, launch the agreed institutional network to support developing countries in their response to the climate challenge, and set out a path to deliver the long-term funding that will pay for that,” she said.

News Tracker: past stories on this issue

[Current efforts to mitigate climate change fall short of reaching vital goal, UN warns](#)