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# An Equal Chance

**RAPHAEL HANMBOCK** and **AUBREY MEYER** say that unequal patterns of consumption must be tackled alongside emissions, if dangerous climate change is to be avoided



Z. Janonovic/UNEP/Still Pictures

**H**igh and low per capita carbon emissions are a proxy for wealth and poverty both within and between nations. One third of the world's people enjoy 94 per cent of the global dollar income and account for 90 per cent of the greenhouse gases so far emitted throughout history; the other two thirds share just 6 per cent of this income and 10 per cent of the emissions.

We will not correct the over-consumption of fossil fuels that is leading to dangerous climate change without also

correcting these unequal consumption patterns. And this has to be 'designed': it will not happen by accident.

'Contraction and Convergence' (C&C) is a simple model for sharing the reduction of future greenhouse gas emissions internationally. Guided by the science, it takes a safe and stable target for concentrations of the gases in the atmosphere, and then calculates the global 'contraction budget' of future emissions required to achieve it. Within this limit, it recognizes that all citizens

of the Earth, regardless of income, have an equal right to emit greenhouse gas.

It pre-distributes future emissions entitlements so that they 'converge' by a given date on the global average per capita value, while total emissions 'contract' to meet the safe global target. The shares created in this way are tradable, and so can be a valuable resource to combat poverty and promote clean development.

Thus, based on current assessment of the danger, a 'ceiling' of the equivalent of 450 parts per million of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere could be set. A global emissions budget would then be calculated, and this would contract to near zero by around 2080, to keep concentrations within that 'safe' ceiling. Convergence to equal per capita emissions would be achieved by 2030.

## Climate calamity

The model will, however, calculate any contraction budget chosen, and convergence at any rate to equal shares per person. Whatever the eventual figures, the principles remain true.

Such, therefore, is C&C in principle. We need it in practice as soon as possible since rising gross emissions indicate looming climate calamity, while increasingly inequitable consumption patterns are now equally an indicator of looming conflict. As the situation becomes more urgent, it is futile to continue basing climate negotiations on a mere 'aspiration' to succeed, while randomly picking targets out of a hat. It is similarly futile

to try to defend unequal rights, if agreement by consensus is what we seriously seek.

The C&C model is a rational calculus to account for how we can all do enough soon enough to avoid the worst. Negotiations for a 'post-Kyoto' settlement must be based upon it. However arbitrary, or even Utopian, it may seem to some, it is still less arbitrary than the random alternatives on offer. And, as the Archbishop of Canterbury observed last year, "anybody who thinks C&C is Utopian simply hasn't looked honestly at the alternatives."

The objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), like that of C&C, is to stabilize the rapidly rising greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere. Its principles are precaution and equity. Contraction provides 'precaution' and convergence ensures 'equity': Parties should now negotiate the rate for both. In 2003, Joke Waller Hunter, the late UNFCCC Executive Secretary noted that the objective of the Convention "inevitably requires contraction and convergence."

**Take action**

This is what the world's poorest peoples – those most vulnerable to the impacts of changing climate – have been asking for. The Africa Group first made their call for the C&C framework a decade ago in Kyoto. They won the point but lost the moment as the patchwork of measures in the Kyoto Protocol came into play. Since then, progress with the

Protocol has been painfully slow, while the problem has grown much faster than predicted.

The twelfth Conference of the Parties in Nairobi is a moment of truth. The deal we all need, if we are to survive, is more than simply an agreement between some countries, after 15 years of deadlock, to take action 'if you will'. This would be welcome,

but unless any agreement is governed by a C&C framework, it will be directionless. Without this vision, our best efforts will gradually perish ■

*"Raphael Hanmbock is Co-ordinator of the African Network for a Climate Community (ANCC) West and Central Africa, and Chairman of ACAN Cameroon and Aubrey Meyer is Director of the Global Commons Institute."*

**CONTRACTION for CO<sup>2</sup> CONCENTRATIONS at 450 ppmv and Convergence by 2030**

