

31 May 2019

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing as 250 members of the UK's climate change research community to urge you to robustly challenge President Trump during his official State Visit to the United Kingdom next week about his reckless approach to climate change.

The President's refusal to tackle climate change, and particularly his initiation of the withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Agreement, is increasing risks for lives and livelihoods in the United States, the United Kingdom and around the world.

Since his inauguration in January 2017, President Trump has taken a series of decisions that undermine both international and United States domestic efforts to stop the continued rise in atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gas concentrations that are driving climate change.

In the United States, President Trump's administration has been abandoning many of the policies and measures, including the Clean Power Plan, introduced by his predecessor to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Annual emissions of energy-related carbon dioxide by the United States increased by 137 million tonnes, or 2.7 per cent, between 2017 and 2018, to 5,268 million tonnes, according to the United States Energy Information Administration. It is the largest annual rise in emissions, in absolute terms, since 2009-10.

President Trump has also sought to prevent the public from learning the truth about climate change. His administration has removed large amounts of information about climate change from the websites of the White House, Government Departments and federal agencies. The President has publicly stated his rejection of the scientific evidence for climate change and the White House is considering the creation of a committee to cast doubt on the robust and rigorous analysis presented in the United States Fourth National Climate Assessment.

On the international stage, President Trump has refused to support statements on climate change by the G7 and G20 nations. He has withdrawn funding from the Green Climate Fund, which provides support to poor countries to reduce their emissions and to adapt to those impacts that cannot now be avoided. And on 1 June 2017, the President announced his intention to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement, citing a discredited report on the economic impacts of tackling climate change. President Trump's administration officially notified the United Nations Secretary-General on 4 August 2017 of the intention to withdraw from the Agreement.

By contrast, the United Kingdom has been showing international leadership on climate change. It has set an important example to other countries by reducing its annual territorial emissions of greenhouse gases by more than 44 per cent since 1990 while its gross domestic product has expanded by almost 77 per cent. The 2008 Climate Change Act, with its long-term target for emissions reductions and five-year carbon budgets, is acknowledged around the world as a legislative model. The Committee on Climate Change, also created by the Act, is also regarded as a model institution for providing expert advice, including its recent report recommending that the United Kingdom's annual emissions are reduced to net zero by 2050.

The United Kingdom has been a major contributor to global research on climate change, including the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. It has earned praise for using overseas aid to support the efforts of poor countries to tackle climate change. It has played a very effective role in United Nations negotiations on climate change, and has been a strong champion of the Paris Agreement. It is co-leading the development of the action portfolio on resilience and adaptation at the climate action summit that will be hosted by the United Nations Secretary General in New York on 23 September 2019.

The United Kingdom has also submitted an official bid to host the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2020, a crucial milestone for the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

However, we consider that it is incompatible with the credibility of global leadership by the United Kingdom on climate change for President Trump to be honoured with an official State Visit in June 2019 while he is still undermining United States domestic and international efforts to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. The United States is currently the second largest emitter of greenhouse gases, and its emissions are creating a mounting risk to citizens of the United Kingdom and every other country. President Trump's reckless approach to climate change is a threat to the whole world.

We urge you, as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, to challenge President Trump to take immediate action in three main ways:

1. Accept and publicly endorse the overwhelming scientific evidence, collected and documented by experts across the world, that climate change is happening, is driven by human activities, and poses a very serious threat to the lives and livelihoods of people globally, now and in the future.
2. Initiate and support federal policies in the United States to reduce annual greenhouse gas emissions to zero by the middle of this century.
3. End the withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Agreement and fully support international efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to adapt to those impacts of climate change that cannot now be avoided.

Yours sincerely (in alphabetical order as individuals and not as representatives of our institutions),

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