

Rt Hon Boris Johnson  
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29 November 2019

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing as 350 members of the climate change research community in the United Kingdom to urge you to challenge robustly the President of the United States of America, Donald Trump, during his visit to the United Kingdom next week about his reckless approach to climate change and his false claims about the Paris Agreement.

The United Kingdom is likely to be confirmed next month at the United Nations climate change summit in Madrid as the host of the 26<sup>th</sup> session of the Conference of the Parties (COP26) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2020.

Next year's summit, which your Government has indicated will take place in Glasgow, will be absolutely vital to international efforts to avoid dangerous climate change. Parties to the Paris Agreement are expected to submit ahead of the summit revised nationally determined contributions which include more ambitious pledges to reduce annual emissions of greenhouse gases.

The United Kingdom has been attempting to lead by example on climate change and has reduced its annual production of emissions of greenhouse gases by 44 per cent between 1990 and 2018, while increasing its gross domestic product by about 75 per cent over the same period. The United Kingdom's consumption emissions have also started to decline.

Although the United Kingdom is currently not on track to meet its fourth and fifth carbon budgets, according to the Committee on Climate Change, the UK Government made a very significant advance on domestic policy earlier this year by successfully securing the passage of legislation through Parliament to strengthen the Climate Change Act such that the new target is to reduce annual emissions of greenhouse gases to net zero by 2050.

Nevertheless, the United Kingdom is already suffering the impacts of climate change. Our ten warmest years since records began in 1910 have all occurred since 2000, a period during which we have also experienced six of our seven wettest years. Earlier this year, many parts of the nation were subject to a summer heatwave which reached a record peak temperature, and killed several hundred people. Met Office research shows that the risks of heatwaves are increasing due to climate change. Lives and livelihoods are also being threatened by increasing risks of flooding due to heavy rainfall and sea level rise.

Climate change is also a recognised threat to the national security of the United Kingdom. The 'National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015' warned:

*By 2030, the world could face demands for 50% more food and energy and 30% more water, while their availability becomes threatened by climate change. The Middle East and North Africa region will be particularly at risk, given existing high levels of water*

*stress and high rates of population growth. Sub-Saharan Africa may suffer from climate change impacts on crop production in particular. Rising sea levels threaten coastal cities and small islands. More frequent extreme weather events are likely to disrupt populations, agriculture and supply chains, making political instability, conflict and migration more likely.*

This is in line with national security assessments by other countries. For instance, the United States Director of National Intelligence earlier this year released his statement for the record on the Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community, warning: “Global environmental and ecological degradation, as well as climate change, are likely to fuel competition for resources, economic distress, and social discontent through 2019 and beyond”.

The NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, told an audience in Australia this summer that it is important to realise that climate change has security implications because “it can force people to move, change the way we live, where we live, and so on, and of course that can fuel conflicts”.

However, President Trump, who will be visiting the United Kingdom next week to attend the NATO Leaders Meeting, has ignored the warnings about climate change from scientists and national security experts. He has attempted to ridicule the scientific evidence for climate change, and his Administration has hidden the truth from the American people by removing information from many federal websites about the rising threats they face.

President Trump has also abandoned federal policies to tackle climate change, and is attempting to stop some States from regulating their emissions of greenhouse gases. Energy-related emissions of carbon dioxide by the United States increased by 2.7 per cent between 2017 and 2018. The United States is the second largest annual emitter of greenhouse gases after China.

Earlier this month, President Trump’s Administration initiated the withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Agreement. It should be completed on 4 November 2020, not long before the United Kingdom hosts COP26. President Trump has repeatedly misrepresented the Paris Agreement. In a speech last month, President Trump falsely claimed that the Agreement would mean “shutting down American producers with excessive regulatory restrictions like you would not believe, while allowing foreign producers to pollute with impunity”. The White House’s website wrongly describes the Agreement as “fraudulent, ineffective, and one-sided”.

President Trump’s unscientific denial of the risks of climate change is harming lives and livelihoods of people in the United Kingdom, United States and across the world. His attempts to undermine the Paris Agreement are making the world a more dangerous place and threatening the prosperity and safety of current and future generations.

We urge you to challenge President Trump about his irresponsible approach to climate change, and seek to persuade him both to take strong domestic action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to join coordinated international action, including the Paris Agreement.

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

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