



**Briefing for TDs in advance of Dáil “Statements on Climate Change”  
on Thursday 19 September 2019  
before the UN Climate Action Summit  
on Monday 23 September 2019**

Stop Climate Chaos Coalition is writing to you ahead of Dáil Statements on Climate Change on Thursday afternoon, **to urge you and your Party or political grouping to use this moment to signal your support for a significant increase in the ambition of climate policy, and in the speed of its implementation.** Common sense yet transformative actions that Parties can support and that should be advanced within this Dáil are set out below.

2019 is set to be yet another year of unprecedented warming. From warming and wildfires in Arctic regions, dangerous heat waves setting new temperature records across Europe, and violent hurricane activity in the Caribbean, clearly the signs of worsening climate impacts are becoming more evident year on year. In Ireland the footprint of increasing climate impacts is clear, and the island is projected to be a hotspot for both increased flooding and drought.<sup>1</sup>

Wealthy, high emitting countries such as Ireland have yet however to experience the persistent reality of the devastating impacts of climate change – poverty, forced displacement, food insecurity, water stress, death – on the poorest, most vulnerable people in the world, despite the fact that they have contributed least.

It is welcome that this debate takes place at the very outset of this Dáil session.

**It is almost a year to the day that the IPCC published its starkest warning yet on the risks and impacts of overshooting a temperature rise of 1.5°C.<sup>2</sup> We currently remain on course for warming of more than 3°C with catastrophic implications for society, environment and economies in all countries.**

There has been a welcome upsurge in political debate on climate change over the last eighteen months, including the Dáil’s declaration of a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency and the landmark process and recommendations of the Joint Committee

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/environment/ireland-at-risk-of-severe-flooding-from-climate-change-1.4000229>;

<https://www.independent.ie/business/farming/forestry-enviro/environment/ireland-at-risk-of-becoming-a-drought-hotspot-warn-climate-change-experts-37097043.html>

<sup>2</sup> IPCC, 2018: Summary for Policymakers. In: *Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty* [Masson-Delmotte, V., P. Zhai, H.-O. Pörtner, D. Roberts, J. Skea, P.R. Shukla, A. Pirani, W. Moufouma-Okia, C. Péan, R. Pidcock, S. Connors, J.B.R. Matthews, Y. Chen, X. Zhou, M.I. Gomis, E. Lonnoy, Maycock, M. Tignor, and T. Waterfield (eds.)]. *World Meteorological Organization, Geneva, Switzerland, 32 pp.* Available at: <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/summary-for-policy-makers/>

on Climate Action, some of which has been captured in the Government's new Climate Action Plan. **However, as the formidable leader of the global School Strike Movement, Greta Thunberg, has repeatedly stated, 'Emissions are increasing and that is the only thing that matters'.**

The IPCC has warned us we have to cut our emissions in half within ten years if we are to stand a chance of limiting warming to 1.5°C. As a rich nation with high per capita emissions Ireland should be doing more by 2030 and reaching net zero emissions well before the target date of 2050. However, if the Government Climate Plan is implemented in full and on time, it will deliver reductions of only 2% a year for the next ten years. **This is a plan that may bring Ireland into line with its current EU targets, but it is a plan that fails to respond to the stark warning of the IPCC, and it is a plan that will fail to deliver on the global limits to warming that Ireland committed to at the UN in 2015.**

The new President of the European Commission has recognised that the global and domestic EU interest demands an increase in ambition. With the support of numerous Member States, she will seek to achieve agreement amongst the European Council to increase the EU's collective ambition. **There is no situation in which Ireland's 2030 target will not increase, the question is whether the State will accept this, and join the progressive Member States who are calling for a transition aligned with the temperature goals of the Paris Agreement, and advance the many transformative actions that are simply waiting to be taken (see a short selection of these below).**

Thursday's debate is also particularly timely as it takes place on the **eve of what is likely to be the largest global climate mobilisation ever.** Led by the School Strikers, this Friday, September 20<sup>th</sup>, millions of people around the world will come out to 'Unite Behind the Science' and call on leaders to deliver an urgent and dramatic increase in action. In Ireland, School Strikers will lead the national level mobilisations in Dublin and Cork, joined by parents, faith leaders, community groups, workplaces and concerned citizens. Across the country local, self-organised actions will take place.

The Strike takes place in advance of the UN Climate Action Summit on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup>. The UN Secretary General has called this Summit ahead of the entry into force of the Paris Agreement in 2020 in recognition of the dangerous disconnect between current emissions reductions pledges, and what is needed to deliver on the Paris goals. **Ahead of the Summit the Secretary General stated, 'Preventing irreversible climate disruption is the race of our lives and for our lives'.** The Summit is intended to build momentum ahead of next year when States will submit new national emissions reductions pledges to the UN as their contribution to delivering on the Paris Agreement goals (the EU submits a collective target). There will be no formal or negotiated outcome to Monday's gathering of global leaders. It is the national statements to the Summit, and the concrete commitments with regard to increasing ambition that they contain – or lack - that will define the success of the Summit.

There are a host of transformative, common sense actions that can be taken during the remainder of this Dáil, laying robust foundations for the next. Many of them are in the report of the Joint Committee on Climate Action, and others build on these. Stop

Climate Chaos stands ready to engage with all Parties to discuss, develop and advance these. Below is a small selection of only a few of these actions, which this Government and this Dáil can act on immediately. **In your Party's statement/s to the Dáil on Thursday we urge you to recognise the urgency for an overall increase in national ambition as stated above, and to signal your Party's support for the immediate actions set out below.**

**1. Call on/endorse a commitment by the Taoiseach to Ireland joining EU member states at the UN Summit calling for an increase in EU ambition**

It is expected that at the upcoming UN Summit in New York, the Commission President-elect will present a proposal for a higher EU 2030 climate target of 55% reductions in greenhouse gas reductions by 2030. In a multilateral context where 'rogue' leaders are risking the collective fate of all nations, political leadership from the EU is absolutely essential to sustain the hard won Paris Agreement and put pressure on all other international leaders to increase their national contributions to the Agreement.

**If Ireland fails to join those supporting an increased EU target, this would be deeply concerning, and a nail in the coffin of the Government's stated intention to move Ireland from climate laggard to climate leader.** Presenting the Government Climate Action Plan as Ireland's contribution to increased ambition would be highly disingenuous. The Plan is a welcome, but much belated plan to deliver on the State's longstanding and now irrelevant existing target under the EU.

The mandate provided by the Citizens' Assembly, the cross-party consensus from the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action and the huge upsurge in public concern collectively provide an historic opportunity to step up ambition at all levels to help put us on track to meeting our Paris Agreement obligations.

- *At the Climate Summit, the Taoiseach must signal clear support for the proposal by the President-elect of the European Commission for the EU to up its 2030 target to at least 55% emissions reductions.*

**2. Enact the promised amendments to the Climate Act 2015 as soon as possible and before the next election**

The report of the Joint Committee on Climate Action, and the Government's Climate Plan, included [important governance proposals](#) aimed at strengthening the planning, delivery and oversight of climate measures going forward. As it is the stated intention of the Government and the will of the Joint Committee on Climate Action, it is essential that these governance arrangements be enshrined into law if we are to drive a sustained agenda of action and policy measures.

It is essential that the legislative amendments needed to implement the new governance framework proposed in the Plan are brought forward as soon as possible and on track to be enshrined into law in advance of a general election.

*The Government's plan to hold pre-legislative scrutiny on the Bill before the end of 2019 is welcome. We urge all Parties to work constructively to deliver an ambitious and robust amendment act before an election is called.*

**3. In the new Climate Action Act, enshrine a national target of reaching net-zero emissions as soon as possible and by 2050 at the latest.**

The IPCC makes it explicitly clear that net-zero emissions is the appropriate emissions target for 2050, and the EU's collective target for 2050 (currently 80-95% below 1990 levels) will be revised on this basis. The Government has already signalled its support for this move on the long-term EU target, but has yet to commit to and enshrine it as a national target. Currently, Ireland's 2050 national policy position is far from Paris-aligned (it is currently a target of 80% reductions by 2050). In early 2020, the Government will need to specify in detail, through its Long Term Strategy to the EU, the process it proposes to follow to put Ireland's emissions on a pathway aligned with the Paris Agreement.

- *It is time for the State to endorse the net zero target as soon as possible and by 2050 at the very latest as a national target. So that the lost decade of 2010-2019 is not repeated, it is essential that the national 2050 target, and interim targets to 2030 be formally enshrined in the Act to amend the Climate Act.*

**4. The Government must immediately set up a National Just Transition Taskforce based on dialogue with trade unions and other stakeholders to negotiate a fair deal for fossil fuel workers and their communities, and ensuring an orderly exit from coal and peat as soon as possible.**

Climate Justice is one of the principles enshrined in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015. A Just Transition aims to provide decent jobs, up-skilling, social protection and security to workers and communities affected directly by the transition to a low-carbon economy. To be just, all individual climate policies must be socially and rurally proofed. The transition needs to be well planned and managed if it is to be effective in minimising the impact on workers and communities, and be used to redevelop skills, redirect employment into long-term sustainable sectors while supporting regional and national growth.

The Joint Committee on Climate Action recommended that the Government establish a National Just Transition Taskforce encompassing all stakeholders, to deliver protection and security and drive opportunities for those impacted. An urgent focus on the peat workers and the communities of the Midlands was also recommended. Unfortunately, rather than an actual taskforce, the Government's Climate Action Plan downgraded this recommendation to the establishment of a Review Group positioned within the National Economic and Social Council.

- *Communities in the midlands region are already impacted by the move away from peat production for energy. The Government must now establish a properly-resourced, independent Just Transition Taskforce with the mandate from Government to negotiate a deal between workers, their trade*

*unions and the ESB and Bord na Móna, community representatives and environmentalists for an "orderly exit" from fossil fuel extraction in the affected region, and to bring about long-term security for affected communities. Parties should support the Bill brought forward by the Green Party that would deliver such a Taskforce. This Bill will be debated at Second Stage the same afternoon as the Climate Statements on Thursday afternoon.*

**5. Commit to no more new licenses for oil and gas exploration off the coast of Ireland**

The expert evidence that already proven global fossil fuel reserves alone are more than enough to blow the Paris Agreement limits.<sup>3</sup> Yet the State currently remains intent on finding and exploiting new Irish reserves. Energy security is used as a justification for this but as former **Minister Naughten stated earlier this year, ‘We cannot and must not base our future energy security on a possible oil find. This is like playing Russian roulette’**. Opening up new reserves anywhere poses profound risks and promises a highly uncertain future for the young people who will take to the streets across the world on Friday. We cannot know whether any oil or gas reserves are even there or would be economically viable. Overshooting the Paris Agreement goals, or a late adjustment to achieve them, both pose significant risks for energy security. All policy, research and investment capacity should be placed on realising Ireland’s energy security without fossil fuels, whether indigenous or imported.

Ireland is set to champion intergenerational dialogue and mobilisation at the upcoming UN Summit. This role will ring hollow in the absence of a clear commitment from all Parties to end the licensing regime for fossil fuel exploration, one of the first demands of the growing global Strike movement.

- *All Parties should signal their intention to legislate to end the licensing regime for fossil fuel exploration as soon as possible, impose a ban on importing fracked gas and withdraw support from developing LNG terminals in Cork and on the Shannon Estuary. At the Climate Summit, the Taoiseach should issue a moratorium on new licenses ahead of renewed debate on legislating for the move in the Oireachtas.*

**6. Support the establishment of a National Stakeholder Forum on Climate Action to engage stakeholders in meaningful dialogue**

Although comprising positive elements, the Government’s ongoing stakeholder engagement initiatives, such as the National Dialogue on Climate Action and the Minister's recent town hall events do not contribute to an overall coherent framework for effective stakeholder and public participatory engagement on the complexities of climate action.

At the Economic Dialogue in July this year it was clear that stakeholders, despite their often disparate positions, largely agree on the urgent need for a more sustained forum

---

<sup>3</sup> IPCC (2018). McGlade C, Ekins P (2015) The geographical distribution of fossil fuels unused when limiting global warming to 2°C. Nature 517:187–190

for engagement on climate policy as Ireland transitions to a low carbon economy. Fundamentally, social dialogue and engagement need to amount to more than just one-way opportunities for citizens to ask questions and decision makers to listen. There needs to be a discernible link between dialogue and policy development, as reflected, for example, through the Citizens' Assembly process.

All Parties should signal support for the establishment of an effective, sustained high-level strategy for stakeholder and public engagement that for example, could easily be modelled on the successful processes of the Citizens' Assembly, or the Brexit Stakeholder Forum. The Government should commit to establishing this strategy as soon as possible during this Dáil to deliver on proposals included in the Climate Action Plan, with a mandate to engage in the collective ratcheting up of climate action.

We are at your disposal if you wish to discuss any of the above points in advance of the Statements on Thursday 19th, or the numerous other concrete and practical proposals available to increase Ireland's contribution to the urgently needed increase in ambition, and to increase Ireland's resilience to current and future climate impacts. We also wish to share again our assessment of the Government's recently published Climate Action Plan (available [here](#)).

**Contact:**

Catherine Devitt  
Head of Policy  
The Stop Climate Chaos Coalition  
catherine@stopclimatechaos.ie