



## **Why the next Government must deliver a minimum of 8% year on year greenhouse gas emissions reductions**

### **Full briefing document from the Stop Climate Chaos coalition (April 2020)<sup>1</sup>**

Earlier this year, [One Future](#), a coalition of organisations<sup>2</sup>, including Stop Climate Chaos, campaigning for climate actions in General Election 2020 published [a briefing document](#) outlining a vision for Faster and Fairer Climate Action. The first and most important demand was that political parties commit to delivering annual reductions in climate-polluting greenhouse gas emissions of *at least* 8% a year over the lifetime of the next Government. The UN Environment Programme's 2019 Emissions Gap report has stated that the global average reduction per year needs to be 7.6%. However, even this reduction figure makes assumptions about climate sensitivities, feedbacks, and the need for carbon dioxide removal in the second half of the century, suggesting that 7.6% is a conservative guess about the minimum that is required to stabilise the atmosphere. Rich countries must do more than average, so that means at the very least 8% per annum. Stop Climate Chaos has concluded that the legally binding Carbon Budget for the period 2021 to 2025 should be equivalent to reductions of at the very least 8% every year compared to 2020.

This briefing explains the background to this 8% minimum figure, why it is so important in the context of avoiding dangerous climate change, and what the next government must do to get Ireland's climate policies back in line with our obligations under the Paris Agreement.

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<sup>1</sup> Stop Climate Chaos is the civil society coalition campaigning for Ireland to do its fair share to tackle climate change. The Coalition's 35 members include many of Ireland's leading international development, environmental, youth and faith-based organisations. Stop Climate Chaos (SCC) was launched in 2007 based on a recognition by members that the objectives which our organisations serve are under significant threat from the global advance of disastrous climate change.

<sup>2</sup> Including the National Women's Council of Ireland, Union of Students in Ireland, Dóchas, The Environmental Pillar, Stop Climate Chaos Coalition and Fridays for Future Ireland.

## 1. The Science

[The Paris Agreement](#) of 2015 aims to greatly strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by holding the increase in the global average temperature ‘to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels’, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change.

Since 2015, new reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have highlighted the risks of even 1.5°C of warming. The [IPCC 2018 Special Report on 1.5°C \(SR15\)](#) is widely regarded as the most important climate science report of the decade. It offers the most exhaustive and authoritative assessment of the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and the action needed to stay below this threshold.

The SR15 report noted that 1.5°C is still feasible but that limiting global warming will require steep reductions in global emissions over and above what countries have committed to doing under the Paris Agreement. Based on current emissions pathways, and the commitments made by parties to the Paris Agreement, we will pass the 1.5°C marker by 2040 towards an [unliveable 3°C or 4°C world](#). The IPCC special report on 1.5°C makes it clear that even with much more ambitious action than is currently proposed under existing country commitments, increased action would need to achieve net zero CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in less than 15 years to stay below 1.5°C to avoid reliance on risky geoengineering and carbon dioxide removal technologies. And even if this is achieved, temperatures would only be expected to remain below the 1.5°C threshold if the actual geophysical response ends up being towards the low end of the currently estimated uncertainty range.<sup>3</sup> If net zero CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is achieved globally as late as 2050, the models used by the IPCC to calculate emission pathways suggest some form of CDR with carbon storage on land or sequestration in geological reservoirs. In light of these assumptions, taking a gamble on anything less than 8% reductions per annum would seem to be a very high-risk strategy.

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<sup>3</sup> Rogelj, J. et al, 2018: Mitigation Pathways Compatible with 1.5°C in the Context of Sustainable Development. In: Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5° C [Masson-Delmotte, V. et al (eds.)]. Available at <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/chapter-2/>.

## 2. Does 1.5°C of warming pose risks to Ireland?

The difference between 1.5°C and 2°C of warming is stark. The earth is already 1°C warmer than the pre-industrial era, and this means that much of the planet is already experiencing climatic changes including increased frequency and severity of extreme weather events such as heatwaves, droughts and storms.<sup>4</sup>

Ireland's climate has already warmed by over 1°C. Preliminary attribution studies<sup>5</sup> by climate scientists show that the 2018 summer's heat wave was considerably more likely as a result of climate change. Analysis of temperature data shows that the highest anomalies were in northern Scandinavia and in western Ireland, with heat waves already more than five degrees warmer than the average hottest three days of the year in 1981-2010. Prof. Peter Stott of the UK Met Office and Hadley Centre, in a presentation to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action in 2018, pointed to the unequivocal evidence that the climates of Ireland and the UK have shifted with warmer average temperatures, more precipitation and more weather extremes.<sup>6</sup> The EPA has warned that climate change impacts are projected to increase in the coming decades and during the rest of this century.<sup>7</sup> While it is not possible to predict the scale and extent of these impacts, particularly during the second half of the century, or how to reflect the potential of global actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in emission scenarios, there is no doubt that climate change poses severe risks for Ireland. Predicted adverse impacts for Ireland include:

- sea level rise,
- more intense storms and rainfall events,
- increased likelihood and magnitude of river and coastal flooding and water shortages in summer in the east,
- adverse impacts on water quality,
- changes in distribution of plant and animal species,
- effects on fisheries sensitive to changes in temperature.

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<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.climate-lab-book.ac.uk/2017/defining-pre-industrial/>.

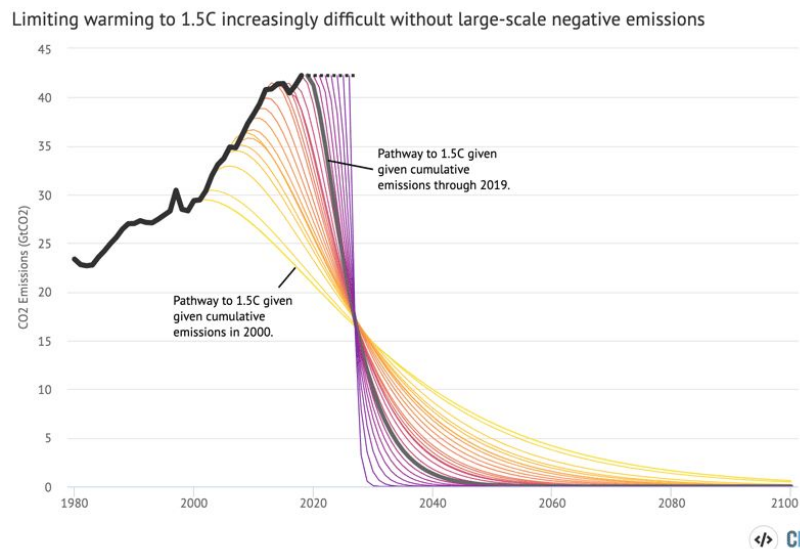
<sup>5</sup> See <https://www.worldweatherattribution.org/attribution-of-the-2018-heat-in-northern-europe/>.

<sup>6</sup> Stott, P. Evidence given to Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2018. [https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/joint\\_committee\\_on\\_climate\\_action/2018-10-02/3/](https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/joint_committee_on_climate_action/2018-10-02/3/)

<sup>7</sup> Desmond, M., O'Brien, P. and McGovern, F., 2017. *A summary of the state of knowledge on climate change impacts for Ireland*. EPA research report no.223. [http://www.epa.ie/researchandeducation/research/researchpublications/researchreports/EPA%20RR%20223\\_web.pdf](http://www.epa.ie/researchandeducation/research/researchpublications/researchreports/EPA%20RR%20223_web.pdf)

### 3. What is a carbon budget?

In its 2019 Emissions Gap Report, the UNEP estimated where GHG emissions should be by 2030 in order to be consistent with a least-cost pathway towards limiting global warming to specific temperature goals - 2°C, 1.8°C and 1.5°C. Scientific understanding of the global carbon cycle is now unequivocally confident in making a direct causal link between increased atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases and changes in global temperature. Because of this linear relationship between greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere and temperature increases (see p.18 of the synthesis report of the [5<sup>th</sup> Assessment Report of the IPCC](#) in 2018), it is possible to calculate the total cumulative emissions budget that is consistent with a given temperature increase. In other words, for any given global temperature rise limit (such as those enshrined in article 2 of the Paris Agreement), there is a corresponding, finite limit on how much more CO<sub>2</sub> can ever be released. This is the reason why emissions from carbon intensive fossil fuels such as coal, oil, gas and peat must be ceased in their entirety as quickly as possible, and no new fossil fuel-related infrastructure can be considered in order to avoid ‘lock-in’ of additional emissions or reliance on carbon dioxide removal technologies later in the century (also known as negative emission technologies). This limit on allowable CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is called the Global Carbon Budget (GCB). It may be understood as the area under an emissions curve rather than the emissions trajectory itself. See the interactive graph by [Carbon Brief](#) which highlights the increasing challenge of staying below 1.5° if mitigation is delayed:



For example, for a 66% probability of keeping temperatures below 1.5°C in 2100 (peaking below 1.7°C), the total carbon budget for 2030 is ~25 GtCO<sub>2</sub>e. For a 66% probability of keeping temperatures below 2°C of warming, global emissions would need to not exceed ~41 GtCO<sub>2</sub>e in 2030.

The most important greenhouse gas in this calculation is carbon dioxide or CO<sub>2</sub>, since it remains in the atmosphere for so long<sup>8</sup>, and thus functions as a ‘stock’ pollutant. Thus, it is not the *rate* of emissions (or how much is emitted per annum for example) that captures the real impact of carbon dioxide. Rather, we need to focus on the *cumulative* or total amount released over time to determine its impact on the atmosphere.

However, current policies as reflected in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) submitted by countries to the UNFCCC secretariat are projected to result in emissions of ~60 GtCO<sub>2</sub>e in 2030 which will put the world on track for triggering catastrophic and irreversible global heating of 3-4°C – a ‘hothouse earth’ scenario<sup>9</sup> in which widespread human suffering and ecosystem collapses due to climate change would be unavoidable.

The important message from this is that political feasibility, while essential, cannot be the only or even primary consideration in designing climate strategies. The atmosphere will not respond to good intentions and incremental progress: what is required is an approach that respects physics, and physical limits.

#### **4. Non-CO<sub>2</sub> GHGs affect the carbon budget: methane and nitrous oxide**

Methane and nitrous oxide are two powerful non-CO<sub>2</sub> greenhouse gases which also impact global warming as a result of human activities. The IPCC SR15 report states that global emission pathways meeting 1.5°C or 2°C with no or limited overshoot require deep reductions in methane and black carbon by 35% or more by 2050 relative to 2010.<sup>10</sup> Nitrous oxide reductions corresponding to the global carbon budget must be in the order of a 20% reduction by 2050.

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<sup>8</sup> Inman, M., 2008. Carbon is forever. *Nature reports climate change*, pp.156-158.

<sup>9</sup> Steffen, W. et al., 2018. Trajectories of the Earth System in the Anthropocene. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 115(33), pp.8252-8259.

<sup>10</sup> IPCC, 2018 SR15: Summary for Policy Makers C1.2 ‘Modelled pathways that limit global warming to 1.5°C with no or limited overshoot involve deep reductions in emissions of methane and black carbon (35% or more of both by 2050 relative to 2010).’ <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/spm/>

Methane is especially important and frequently misunderstood or misrepresented because its warming effect is very strong, but peaks about 10 years after release and then declines, unlike CO<sub>2</sub> and nitrous oxide which have a much longer lasting warming effect. However, the contribution of methane to global warming is not just due to a single pulse or year of emissions. Its impact is a function of the ongoing flow to the atmosphere due to continued/rising fossil fuel (coal and fossil gas) extraction and distribution, and to continued/rising rice and ruminant (cattle and sheep) agriculture. If methane emissions increase, then there is a very strong warming effect. If methane reduces very slowly, by about 10% every 30 years there is no additional warming. Crucially though, the existing contribution is maintained, and this level can be very substantial: in Ireland's case, total to-date warming responsibility contributions are about 40% from methane and 7% from nitrous oxide, most of the remainder being due to CO<sub>2</sub>.

However, the converse is also true: if the annual emissions flow of methane, globally or from any individual nation, can be steadily reduced then a reduction from methane's current warming contribution occurs. Thus, by pointing to a requirement of an average global 35% methane flow reduction by 2050 in Paris-aligned pathways, the IPCC are indicating that this methane warming reduction effect is critical to determining the estimated carbon dioxide global carbon budget. If methane flow is not reduced to that extent, then the CO<sub>2</sub> budget available to energy and land use emissions is substantially reduced. Simply put, reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions rapidly to zero is the most critical climate action to limit future warming, but reducing methane steadily from now (albeit at lower required rates than for CO<sub>2</sub>) is also critical to Paris-aligned climate action.

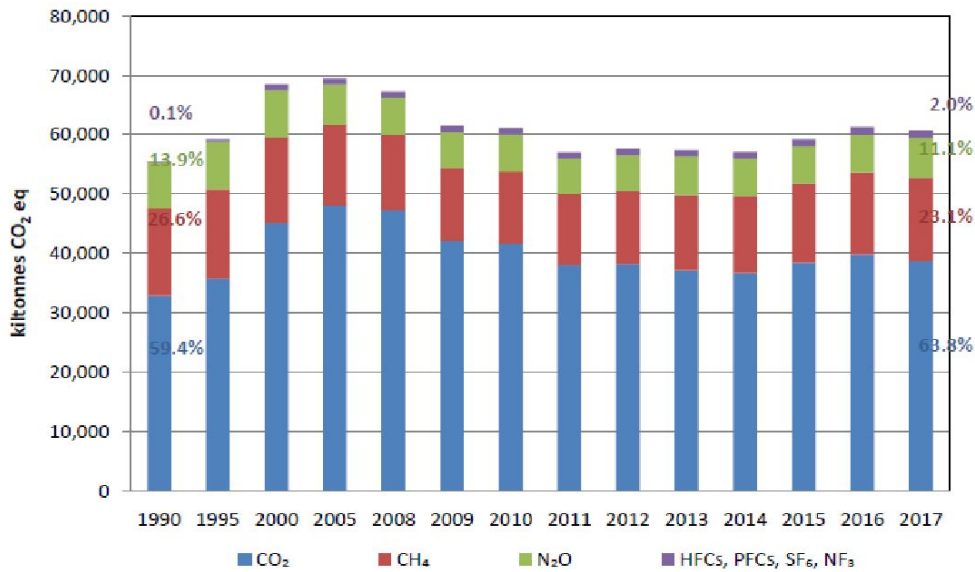


Figure 2.3 Greenhouse Gas emissions-by Gas (excluding LULUCF) 1990-2017

Source: EPA 2019, National Inventory Report to UNFCCC.

[https://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/air/airemissions/ghg/nir2019/Ireland%20NIR%202019\\_Final.pdf](https://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/air/airemissions/ghg/nir2019/Ireland%20NIR%202019_Final.pdf)

The two non-CO<sub>2</sub> GHGs, methane and nitrous oxide, are particularly important in Ireland's climate action policy because they are strongly related to the use of synthetic nitrogen fertilisers in agriculture that are used to increase dairy and beef production. Ireland has high non-CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (i.e. methane and nitrous oxide) compared to other EU nations – emissions of both pollutants are three times the EU nation average in per capita terms. Since 2011, agricultural nitrous oxide has increased by 18% and methane emissions have increased by 15%. This rising trend has reversed the falling non-CO<sub>2</sub> trend in the period 1998 to 2010.

As a result, Ireland is undoing the very significant mitigation achieved previously. This is doing the exact opposite of the IPCC recommendation of methane reduction from 2010. By increasing agricultural methane flow, a very rapid increase in Ireland's global warming contribution is occurring. Effectively the large additional warming effect of agricultural methane from increasing dairy and beef production substantially reduces the share of Ireland's 'fair share' carbon budget for energy CO<sub>2</sub> from transportation, heating and electricity. In Ireland's case, due to the amount of methane emitted, the potential mitigation effect is very large: even small percent annual reductions would contribute significantly to near-term climate action. For Ireland, new research is suggesting that a -2% per year drop in

methane emissions would approximately correlate to an -8% per year CO<sub>2</sub> emissions pathway; but -4% per year in methane would enable far more achievable -4% overall emissions reduction per year. If rising or no methane reduction is achieved in Ireland (as is projected under current policies) the corresponding CO<sub>2</sub> reduction rates would approach -20% per year. In short, reductions in methane are essential to achieving Paris-aligned climate action.

## 5. What is Ireland's share of the global carbon budget?

Ireland contributes disproportionately to climate change, having the third highest emissions per capita in the EU at 13.3 tCO<sub>2</sub>e, or twice the levels of Sweden. Ireland as a country emits around 60 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e per annum. However, the [EPA's 2019](#) emissions projections show that Ireland's actual emissions between 1990 and 2020 will have *increased* (and will increase again by 6% by 2030).<sup>11</sup> These increases are expected in part due to economic growth, population growth, road transport, inefficient buildings, the continued expansion of the dairy herd, and overall, unambitious climate policies with a high dependence on fossil fuels. EU regulations require Ireland to reduce non-ETS emissions by 30% compared with 2005 levels by 2030. The latest projections indicate that Ireland will exceed this target over the period 2021-2030 by 52-67 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e.

However, neither Ireland's 2030 targets, and the 2019 Climate Action Plan are consistent with the Paris Agreement goals of stabilising the global temperature or pursuing efforts to keep global warming below 1.5°C in a manner that is consistent with sustainable development and global equity. Researchers in UCC and DCU have used a range of methodologies to calculate a Paris-aligned *fair share* quota for the Republic of Ireland. According to McMullin et al.<sup>12</sup>, for a national climate strategy to be *Paris-aligned*, it would require policies and a cumulative emissions quota or budget that is consistent with the commitments in Article 2 of the Paris Agreement. This article obligates parties to the Agreement to approach the stabilisation of atmospheric temperatures in a way that reflects

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<sup>11</sup> EPA 2018 Emission projections to 2040.  
[https://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/air/airemissions/ghgprojections2018-2040/Greenhouse\\_Gas\\_Projections.pdf](https://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/air/airemissions/ghgprojections2018-2040/Greenhouse_Gas_Projections.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> McMullin, B., Price, P., Jones, M.B. and McGeever, A.H., 2019. Assessing negative carbon dioxide emissions from the perspective of a national "fair share" of the remaining global carbon budget. *Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies for Global Change*, pp.1-24 available at <http://www.eeng.dcu.ie/~mcmullin/etc/MASGC-McMullin-2019-AAM/MASGC-McMullin-2019-AAM.pdf>.



equity and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances. Article 2 can thus be read as an obligation on developed countries such as Ireland and other EU member states to make greater efforts at mitigation on the grounds of their current high emissions per capita, historical emissions, higher incomes, and capacities.<sup>13</sup> Given that cumulative carbon emissions are a strong linear indicator of temperature increase, a country's historical cumulative emissions can be utilised as a measure of proportional responsibility for anthropogenic temperature increase, both past and future. While the Paris Agreement did not as such quantify the global carbon budget, or specify country level mitigation emission quotas, it is possible to devise a country-specific emission budget that is consistent with the 1.5°C or 2°C temperature goals on the basis of equity and the increased ambition that would apply to developed countries.

McMullin et al. calculate Ireland's fair share quota as a maximum of c. 391 million tonnes of carbon dioxide (MtCO<sub>2</sub>), equal to a total of 83 tonnes of carbon dioxide (tCO<sub>2</sub>) per capita, from 2015, based on a precautionary estimate of the Global Carbon Budget (GCB) and a specific interpretation of global equity. Given Ireland's high current CO<sub>2</sub> per capita emissions rate, the DCU researchers estimate that this would correspond to sustained year-on-year reductions in nett annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of over -11% per year (beginning in 2016). Given that these emission reductions did not take place, the pathway to a 1.5°-aligned carbon budget will need to become more stringent from 2020 onwards in order to avoid reliance on speculative and unproven negative emission technologies.

An Taisce, the National Trust for Ireland, made a [submission](#) to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action in 2019 pointing out that current policies were not commensurate with Ireland's obligations under the Paris Agreement. The NGO recommended that national policy for the electricity generation, buildings and transport sectors should deliver reductions of at least 28% by 2023, relative to the level in 2018 (projected at c. 41MtCO<sub>2</sub>). This implies successive year-on-year reductions of c. 6-7% each year for those sectors, and reductions of least 24% by 2023 for the agriculture, land-use and

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<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that the EU's 2030 mitigation commitments are not consistent with the recommendations in the IPCC AR4 (2007) report, or the most temperature goals of the Paris Agreement. In addition, a 95% reduction by 2050 is not in line with this limit for many interpretations of the long-term temperature limit of the Paris Agreement, nor is it considered ambitious enough to be a fair contribution of the EU to the Paris Agreement. See Höhne, N. et al., 2019. A possible 2050 climate target for the EU. *New Climate* report. <https://newclimate.org/2019/09/23/a-possible-2050-climate-target-for-the-eu/>

forestry sectors, relative to the level in 2018 (projected at c. 23 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e). This would require successive year-on-year reductions of c. 5-6% each year.

Research by Glynn et al. at UCC published in 2019<sup>14</sup> also found that immediate and increased decarbonisation ambition over the next 3–5 years will be critical to achieve the Paris Agreement goals and prevent dangerous climate change. The researchers acknowledge that the 80–95% reduction target set out in the [2014 National Policy Position on Climate Change](#) (which has been the basis for national climate policy and supported by the 2015 Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act), is not consistent with temperature goals of ‘well below’ 2°C and pursuing 1.5°C. Glynn et al. take Ireland’s 0.064% share of global population to estimate a fair share of a range of carbon budgets from 758 Mt to 128 Mt by 2070. This rubric results in Ireland having already exceeded a fair share of the 1.5°C per capita global carbon budget, though not the 2°C budgets.<sup>15</sup> They also note that Irish per capita territorial CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are now at 13.3 tCO<sub>2</sub>e per person – nearly twice the global average – and are growing. In addition, relatively high per capita income implies Ireland has significant mitigation capacity.

The UCC research is primarily concerned with the energy system, as opposed to the land-use and forestry sectors. In addition, the methodology used in the Glynn et al.’s research deploys econometric analysis to estimate the least-cost pathways for achieving climate policy goals which may not adequately capture risks, tipping points and different forms of climate injustice across time and space. As Li and Strachan<sup>16</sup> put it, conventional equilibrium and optimisation models tend to radically simplify the effects of certain variables and often underestimate the impact of institutional and political agents and leverage points in public policy. This can make such models less helpful in understanding how to implement specific energy and climate policies in the near term and aligning these with long term targets.

Notwithstanding these reservations about equilibrium models, the UCC researchers estimate that the effect of delayed action between 2015 and 2020 results in even more stringent

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<sup>14</sup> Glynn, J., Gargiulo, M., Chiodi, A., Deane, P., Rogan, F. and Ó Gallachóir, B., 2019. Zero carbon energy system pathways for Ireland consistent with the Paris Agreement. *Climate Policy*, 19(1), pp.30-42.

<sup>15</sup> It is important to state that the UCC paper models the impact of a range of 38 scenarios consistent with the temperature goals using different underlying assumptions about policy interventions and energy system responses.

<sup>16</sup> Li, F.G. and Strachan, N., 2019. Take me to your leader: Using socio-technical energy transitions (STET) modelling to explore the role of actors in decarbonisation pathways. *Energy Research & Social Science*, 51, pp.67-81.

emissions reductions from 2021, and an 81–105% emissions reduction by 2050 on 1990 levels. Delayed action between 2015 and 2020 has considerable impacts on the rates of decarbonization required for a 2°C consistent mitigation pathway in the UCC study. Since action was, in fact ‘delayed’, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will need to be reduced by 1.6–3 MtCO<sub>2</sub>/year by 2030 if energy system emissions do not peak until 2020. Note that the effect of data centres in the energy system, which could consume up to 35% of total electricity demand by 2027, was not considered in the UCC study. For a 1.5°C target, the authors of this research estimate that emissions reductions need to be immediate and in the range of 3.5–3.9 MtCO<sub>2</sub>/year (or by about 5-6% per year).

## **6. The UNEP Emissions GAP report 2019<sup>17</sup> and the response of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action**

In December 2019 the annual Conference of the Parties to the UN Climate Change Convention met in Madrid, Spain. For the past 10 years at each successive COP, the UN Environment Programme has published an emissions gap report analysing the effect of country pledges, including the unconditional and conditional commitments made by parties to the Paris Agreement in the form of NDCs. The 2019 report notes that the ratchet mechanism of the Paris Agreement foresees strengthening of the NDCs every five years, and 2020 will be a critical step in this process. The Paris Agreement NDCs come into effect in 2020, and the ratchet mechanism will require NDC updates before the next COP26 in Glasgow originally scheduled for November 2020. It is imperative therefore that Ireland and the EU now commit to increased ambition for 2030. UNEP states that the required cuts in global emissions are now 2.7% per year on average for the 2°C goal, and 7.6% per year on average for the 1.5°C goal. In the view of Stop Climate Chaos, governments cannot afford to assume that 2°C of warming will be tolerable and there is some recent evidence to suggest that on the basis of current historical emissions, important tipping points in the Earth’s climate system might have already been triggered.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> United Nations, 2019, *UN Emissions Gap Report*. Available at:

<https://www.unep-wcmc.org/news/2019-emissions-gap-report>

<sup>18</sup> Lenton, T.M., Rockström, J., Gaffney, O., Rahmstorf, S., Richardson, K., Steffen, W. and Schellnhuber, H.J., 2019. Climate tipping points—too risky to bet against. *Nature* vol. 575, pp.592-595. Available at:

<https://www.nature.com/magazine-assets/d41586-019-03595-0/d41586-019-03595-0.pdf>.

According to UNEP, ‘evidently, greater cuts will be required the longer that action is delayed.’ The Emissions Gap Report states unequivocally that enhanced ambition by G20 members, including the EU, will be essential for the global mitigation effort. This includes phasing out fossil fuel subsidies, ending deforestation, and deep and rapid decarbonisation processes that imply ‘fundamental structural changes’ within economic sectors, firms, labour markets and trade patterns.

Current levels of domestic ambition as set out in Ireland’s draft National Energy and Climate Plan and Long-Term Climate Strategy fall far short of what is needed to deliver on the temperature limits set by the Paris Agreement. Ireland must be willing to ratchet up immediate near-term mitigation in the next decade to align with a revised national policy position of net zero annual emissions by 2040 by the very latest. It is SCC’s assessment, based on the most recent science and the requirements of global and intergenerational equity that the overall carbon budget for Ireland must fix a minimum reduction of nett annual emissions of 54% by 2030 (relative to 1990), nett zero no later than 2040, and significant, verified, and secure, nett negative emissions by 2050.

In the context of continuing higher than Eurozone average economic growth to 2024, growth in employment and FDI, including data centres, will be key drivers in Irish energy-related greenhouse gas emissions, which will at best decline by approximately 2% per annum as a result of measures set out in the 2019 Climate Action Plan. If Ireland was doing its fair share, and based on the data provided above, SCC asserts that *at least* an 8% average annual reduction in all greenhouse gases from 2020 over the five-year period 2021-2025 is essential to avoid climate chaos.

This need for accelerated ambition was recognised by the report<sup>19</sup> of the special all-party Oireachtas committee on climate action in 2019, which noted that to be consistent with the Paris Agreement, Ireland’s GHG emissions should reduce by 5-10% per year, compared to the 4% growth that was witnessed in 2016, in order to achieve net zero GHG emissions by 2030-2050. In its submission to the National Energy and Climate Plan in January 2020, the Committee unanimously acknowledged that the 2% annual reduction set out in the Climate Action Plan will be insufficient to achieve net zero emissions by mid-century. The

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<sup>19</sup> Climate Change: A Cross Party Consensus for Action. Report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action, March 2019.  
[https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/32/joint\\_committee\\_on\\_climate\\_action/reports/2019/2019-03-28\\_report-climate-change-a-cross-party-consensus-for-action\\_en.pdf](https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/32/joint_committee_on_climate_action/reports/2019/2019-03-28_report-climate-change-a-cross-party-consensus-for-action_en.pdf)

Committee recommended that the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment respond to the need for immediate and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions by revising the NECP and Climate Action Plan to include immediate year-on-year reductions to 2030, as well as a pathway to 2050, that are quantitatively consistent with the achievement of article 2 of the Paris Agreement, a global 1.5°C target and the UNEP Global Emissions Gap report. It is also worth noting that the 2% reductions in the Climate Action Plan between 2021-2030 are envisaged as a linear pathway characterised by successive annual reductions of 0.86 MtCO<sub>2</sub> per year, each year, instead of compounding the 2% reduction year on year.<sup>20</sup>

The new European Commission has committed the EU to work towards carbon-neutrality by 2050. The European Commission's Green New Deal published in late 2019 includes a proposal for a legally binding 50-55% emissions reduction target for 2030. However, Ireland has thus far failed to support even the least ambitious proposals of the Commission, or to back the Member States that are calling for an increase in the EU's 2030 reduction target to 55%. Stop Climate Chaos believes that the Irish government should now offer clear support to an increase of the 2030 EU target to at least 55%. There is compelling and urgent scientific evidence that much more needs to be done at both national and EU level to bend the emissions curve downwards, fast. Furthermore, Ireland should support the adoption of an EU climate law that includes binding sectoral targets that are in line with the Paris Agreement. This must be done well in advance of the next UN climate change conference.

## **ENDS**

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<sup>20</sup> See McMullin, 2019, 'Is the new Irish "Climate Action Plan 2019" Paris-aligned?' IENETS Blogpost, available at: <http://ienets.eeng.dcu.ie/all-blogs/Is-CAP-2019-paris-aligned>