

Climate Change Communication in Times of Uncertainty

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Presentation in the context of the
**COMMONWEALTH CLIMATE CHANGE
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OUTLINE

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5. Climate change uncertainty and complexity post COP 15 (Slide 5)
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Slide 1: Introduction

The stated purpose of Commonwealth Climate Change Communication Conference is to “allow in-depth discussions about education and communication approaches and methods to inform and raise awareness about climate change, and hence support the search for global and regional solutions for the impacts climate change will have on Commonwealth nations”. It aims to make a contribution to (1) changing perceptions, attitudes and behaviours through education and communication for climate change, (2) design and methodology for communicating awareness about climate change and adaptation and mitigation activity: potentials, challenges, problems, and barriers, (3) climate change communication initiatives and projects implemented across the Commonwealth by national and international stakeholders, (4) exchange of climate change information amongst government and non-government organisations within the Commonwealth, and (5) climate change, the Millennium Development Goals, and Environmental Sustainability.

In this presentation we focus mainly on aims (1), (2) and (4). We first examine the Port of Spain document for its climate change sentiment and action content (Slides 2 and 3) and find the identified sentiment and action consistent with widely accepted scientific explanations of anthropogenic climate change (Slide 4). We then examine climate change uncertainty and complexity post COP 15 (Slide 5) and its impact on Port of Spain sentiment and action (Slide 6). We continue in Slides 7 and 8 to discuss Port of Spain communication strategy post COP 15 and in Slide 9 we provide some specific insights from the climate change literature to complement the general interpretation of climate change communication issues provided prior to Slide 9. We find that climate change communication is essential but that as a new art it has yet to learn much of its own trade, and that whatever the state of its own art, it is likely to face challenging systemic and socio political blocks to communication.



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Slide 2: Port of Spain Sentiment

POS Sentiment	POS Item #
Climate change is the predominant global challenge and an undisputed threat to the security, prosperity, economic and social development of our people. For many it is deepening poverty and is affecting the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. For some of us, it is an existential threat.	1
The needs of the most vulnerable must be addressed. Their voice must be heard and capacity to engage strengthened. Many of us from small island states, low-lying coastal states and least developed countries face the greatest challenges, yet have contributed least to the problem of climate change. (3) A global climate change solution is central to the survival of peoples. (8)	3 and 8
Science, and our own experience, tells us that we only have a few short years to address this threat. The average global temperature has risen because of the increase in carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions. The latest scientific evidence indicates that in order to avoid dangerous climate change that is likely to have catastrophic impacts we must find solutions using all available avenues. We must act now. (6)	6
We believe an internationally legally binding agreement is essential (7) in which all countries will need to play their part, in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (10)	7 and 10
We acknowledge the potential role of the private sector and carbon markets. (12)	12
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Summary</u></p> <p>Anthropogenic climate change threatens general prosperity: for some it deepens poverty and for others it is a matter of life and death. An international legally binding agreement is urgently needed through which, together, and in accordance with common but differentiated responsibilities and capabilities, countries can address anthropogenic climate change. The voice of the most vulnerable should be heard and the private sector should examine the benefits that carbon trading might bring through social and responsible business behaviour.</p>	



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Slide 3: Port of Spain Climate Change Action

Row #	Action	POS Item #
1	Support transition to low-emission economies through capacity building and technology for developing countries in order to increase the climate resilience of vulnerable economies; development of cleaner, more affordable and renewable energy sources, and global mechanisms through which those renewable energy technologies can be disseminated as rapidly as possible.	9
2	Cap average global temperature increase and constrain it to below 1.5 degrees or to no more than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels with an early peaking year for global emissions. Developed countries should continue to lead on cutting their emissions, and developing countries, in line with their national circumstances, should also take action to achieve a substantial deviation from business-as-usual emissions with financial and technical support, and support for technology and capacity building.	11
3	Promotion, development and facilitation of a global transition to a low emission development path	(8)
4	Provide financing for adaptation, technology transfer, capacity building, incentives for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and for a forestation and sustainable management of forests.	8
5	Increase technological and technology support to developing countries to facilitate the deployment and diffusion of clean technologies	9
6	Predictable and adequate finance for adaptation and mitigation measures within any new multilateral approaches ; substantially increased public and private financial resources for developing countries by 2020. Adaptation finance in particular should be targeted towards the poorest and most vulnerable countries	12
7	Recognise the need for an early start to the provision for financial resources in general and fast start funding, constituting grant funding, should provide substantial support for adaptation, REDD Plus and clean technology	13
8	Fast start funding for adaptation focused on the most vulnerable countries with a dedicated stream for small island states, and associated low-lying coastal states of AOSIS of at least 10% of the fund	13
9	Establish an equitable governance structure to manage the financial and technological support - a governance structure that provides for states to monitor and comply with arrangements entered under a new Copenhagen agreement .	14
10	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Summary</u></p> <p>Necessary actions are specified: (1) cap average global temperature rise to $\leq 2^{\circ}$ C. with an early peaking year for global emissions, (2) establish governance procedures to manage financial and technical support provided under new (then Copenhagen) agreements , and monitor compliance, (3) provide 10% of funding for adaptation in most vulnerable countries (SIDS and low lying Oasis states), (4) increase public and private finance resources to developing countries by 2020, (5) kick start fast funding of REDD Plus and clean technology, (6) enshrine mitigation and adaptation measures within a multilateral approach, (7) diffuse and deploy clean technology in developing countries, (8) build capacity, provide and transfer technology, prevent forest degradation and deforestation and sustainably manage forests.</p>	



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Slide 4: Some Cause and Effect Climate Change Relationships Beliefs Consistent with Port of Spain Sentiment and Action

<u>Causes</u>		<u>Harmful Effects by Synergy</u>	
Natural	Anthropogenic	Some Harmful Natural/Anthropogenic Synergies	Socio-economic Consequences Developments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • earth's tilt, daily rotation and planetary and cycles • solar radiation • volcanoes • continental drift 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • humankind's modern and post modern work and leisure activity: organic and inorganic compounds released by that activity and their impacts on natural systems • humankind's more direct destruction of natural systems themselves, e.g. deforestation 	global warming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spread of disease vectors and failure of quarantine • crop failure, • loss of regional water supply • relocation/ migration,
		changed disease vector and crop locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quarantine failure • possible food shortage • disruption of transport
		sea level rise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dispossession • loss of habitat • food security issues • costly maintenance of built environment • failure of built systems • relocation/migration • loss of culture
		desertification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • loss of work opportunity • loss of habitat • food security issues
		loss of habitat, loss of biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • disease issues • food security issues • living place and space issues/war
		drought	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • starvation and suffering, loss of life • social unrest, loss of work opportunity, loss of identity
		polar ice loss and ocean current disruption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • loss of habitat and culture, food security issues • loss of biodiversity



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Slide 5: Climate Change Uncertainty and Complexity Post COP 15

The failure at Cop 15 (Copenhagen) to make the progress many had hoped for has left a legacy of increased uncertainty in climate change matters. Some elements contributing of this mix of uncertainty are listed below. While they significantly challenge Port of Spain sentiment and action they encourage no weakening of climate change communication resolve. If the science is correct, then governments that, individually or collectively, knowingly and wilfully obfuscate and deny, are simply wrong.

- The Kyoto Protocol (KP) now sits next to a Long Term Copenhagen Accord (LCA) which the Meeting of the Parties at Cop 15 agreed to take note of.
- The (LCA) is not legally binding: geopolitics and political hegemony remain troublesome amongst its originators - China, Brazil, India, South Africa (collectively the BASIC group) and the US - who cobbled the idea together in the last days of COP 15. Recognises $\leq 2^{\circ}$ C. With a review by 2015. Internal LCA opinion divisions within the G77 and the EU.
- Future of two track (KP/LCA) negotiations uncertain with low initial pledges and the next report (AR5) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) not due until 2013. Annex 1 KP countries in an “I won’t if you won’t” emissions target pledge stand-off. LCA pledge commitments more consistent with a 3.4°C. (range 2.9-4.4) (July 2010 climateactiontracker figures)
- Varied engagement with the LCA but overall engaging countries account for greater % of emissions than under KP.
- LCA attracted considerable fast start funding but the same “will it be delivered questions” remain. Transparency mechanism not yet in place. High Level Advisory Group review on climate finance not addressed in this slide presentation, likewise other possible IMF and Green Climate Fund developments.
- Business uncertainty about carbon level future, alternative energy still relatively marginalised, wavering public enthusiasm for climate action and erosion of trust in science following the climategate scandal
- Tianjin Climate Change Talks October 4-9 do little to allay pessimism: Japan announced its willingness to see the KP track ended by Cop 16 in Cancun and a negative dialectic was present in China-US discussions. Disagreement about what constitutes a balanced outcome and US calls for measuring, reporting and verification transparency by developed countries. Developing countries remain marginalised. Mixed bag of feelings (from little to something) about what negotiated UNFCCC text might be taken to COP 16 in Cancun.
- Failure of the UN mumblings; division within POS countries; marginalisation of climate change collapse to financial systems collapse



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Slide 6: Port of Spain Sentiment and Action Complexity Post COP 15

Row #	Action Specified in the POS Document	Outcome at Copenhagen (COP 15)
1	Cap average global temperature rise to $\leq 2^\circ\text{C}$. with an early peaking year for global emissions	not agreed
2	Establish governance procedures to manage financial and technical support provided under new (then Copenhagen) agreements, and monitor compliance	not achieved
3	Provide 10% of funding for adaptation in most vulnerable countries (SIDS and low lying Oasis states mentioned)	recognition of need with some progress
4	Increase public and private finance resources to developing countries by 2020	recognition of need with some progress
5	Kick start fast funding of REDD Plus and clean technology	some funding success and post COP 15 action
6	Enshrine mitigation and adaptation measures within a multilateral approach	not achieved but ongoing to the extent of current state of KP/LCA art
7	Diffuse and deploy clean technology in developing countries	recognition of need with ongoing KP/LCA provisions
8	Build capacity, provide and transfer technology, prevent forest degradation and deforestation and sustainably manage forests.	recognition of need and ongoing within UNFCCC programs

Comment

Post COP 15 uncertainty and complexity is very challenging to Port of Spain sentiment and action and the shortfall in target emissions reduction pledged under the LCA does not presently auger will for acceptance of 1.5°C.-with-an-early-emissions-peaking-year proposals. But more to the point, the COP 15 failure to reach general unified agreement for $\leq 2^\circ\text{C}$ and a governance and monitoring procedure (Rows 1 and 2) compromises to various extents, the action content of rows 3 to 8. The difficulty is that if Port of Spain sentiment is to be achieved then it will need to be achieved through two tiers of action, first an establishment tier consisting of agreed ratified binding KP/LCA text and targets and an attendant agreed management and monitoring protocol, and second through an implementation tier of actual performance of actions of the kind specified in Rows 3 to 8. The rows 3 to 8 actions once performed “in house”, that is agreed upon and commissioned by ratifying signatories, must then be performed “out of house” by a multitude of government, business, NGO and private sector value chain stakeholders. The audiences differ between establishment and implementation tiers and within tiers themselves so that likewise climate change communication method, style and strategy will differ across and within tiers



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Slide 8: Port of Spain Communication Strategy (Actions 3 through 8 Post COP 15)

POS Action	Action Domain	Audiences	Some Communication Strategies
<p><u>The Winning</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Provide 10% of funding for adaptation in most vulnerable countries (SIDS and low lying Oasis states mentioned) Increase public and private finance resources to developing countries by 2020 Kick start fast funding of REDD Plus and clean technology Enshrine mitigation and adaptation measures within a multilateral approach Diffuse and deploy clean technology in developing countries Build capacity, provide and transfer technology, prevent forest degradation and deforestation and sustainably manage forests. 	<p><u>First</u></p> <p>Meeting of the Parties to the UNFCCC, its official committee and working party groups, its associated Prepcom events, the ongoing (between meetings) brackets removal government negotiation process, the UN intergovernmental organisations committee systems and the extended “non-voting” delegate dialogue networks allowed input; unilateral geopolitical alliances outside the arenas</p>	<p><u>Internal</u></p> <p>Negotiating parties to the UNFCCC process and the various official working committees thereto. UN intergovernmental agencies; unilateral fora outside the UNFCCC</p> <p><u>External</u></p> <p>(a) Governments and their political parties and constituent lobby groups “back home” (b) “Non-voting” COP delegates and their NGO, religious, business and safe and civil society affiliations (c) Formal education networks (d) Publics particularly youth and the voting undecided</p>	<p>The comments made in Side ** in respect to Action s 1 and 2 ($\leq 2^{\circ}\text{C}$ and a matching management monitoring scheme) apply equally in the case of Actions 3 through 8)</p> <p>The comments made in Side ** in respect to Action s 1 and 2 ($\leq 2^{\circ}\text{C}$ and a matching management monitoring scheme) apply equally in the case of Actions 3 through 8)</p>
<p><u>The Doing</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Provide 10% of funding for adaptation in most vulnerable countries (SIDS and low lying Oasis states mentioned) Increase public and private finance resources to developing countries by 2020 Kick start fast funding of REDD Plus and clean technology Enshrine mitigation and adaptation measures within a multilateral approach Diffuse and deploy clean technology in developing countries Build capacity, provide and transfer technology, prevent forest degradation and deforestation and sustainably manage forests. 	<p><u>Then</u></p> <p>National governments, and the whole network of value chain stakeholder e.g. business providers, formal education providers, safe and civil society, religious organisations, and the like</p>	<p>Governments and their departments, industry leaders, church leaders, professional bodies, volunteer organisations</p> <p>Professionals: scientists, educators, engineers, architects, town planners, bankers, venture capitalists, designers, inventors,</p>	<p>Communicate need, cost efficiency, comparative advantage, skills and green jobs futures, alternative energy profitability; food and water security, intergenerational equity; engage undecided voting public and soon to vote youth, debate sceptics, remind governments of the urgency and their responsibilities to prevent harm to their citizens. The wicked or intractable issues barriers earlier mentioned remain</p> <p>Champion skills and attitudes that will synergise value chain ethics and profitability through a just transition to a $n \leq 2^{\circ}\text{C}$ carbon future. An all channels, all styles, all inclusive approach.</p>



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Slide 9: Some Insights from the Climate Change Communication Literature

1. The situation is critical and time is right for constructive communication with business, the public, the NGOs and public policy makers at all levels of government. Learning how to communicate with vulnerable groups is at a premium. Communicators should engage both regulators and public human behaviour to create a public demand for carbon regulation. Leveraging from opinion leaders may be an effective strategy. Engaging the public is critical. The fear dimension should be handled carefully as it may lead to fatalist disengagement. There is no one magic media communications bullet. Multifaceted multi channel multi audience approaches are required. Further development of science communication itself is needed so that its efficacy might be improved. In relative terms there is a shortfall in climate change communication skills (Maibach & Priest, 2009, *passim*, commenting on the work of a number of named authors).
2. Koteyko and Thelwall in discussing lexical combination in online climate change discourse reveal Ungar's belief that effective communication is essential if the global warming threat is to be placed on the public agenda (Keteyko & Thelwall, 2010, p. 48; Ungar, 2007, p. 87).
3. Ihlen suggests that the time is right for climate change communicators to engage with business: Ihlen argues that the world's 30 largest corporations hold beliefs that the situation is grave, the science consensus and international political process is valid, that corporations must take measures to reduce their own emissions, and that climate phenomenon presents a business opportunity yet in spite of these beliefs they are not yet ready for the radical rethinking through which they might profitably realise such beliefs (Ihlen, 2010, p. 244).
4. Schneider (2009) reports the benefits made possible through professional workshops in which scientists and journalists worked together on climate change communication issues. He also raised the question of what is to be done when journalists (presumably well informed through such workshops) are lost to the job market during cyclical downturns (p. 173). The need for metacommunication (communication about communication) in the context of climate change is also raised.
5. A convincing argument about the potential for, and efficacy of, skilful audience-aware climate change communication has been presented in the identification of "six Americas", six climate change audiences extant in the USA. These audiences, the alarmed at 18% of total, the concerned (33%), the cautious (19%) the disengaged (12%) the doubtful (11%) and the dismissive (7%) each call for tailor made climate change communication exchanges. There is active and opposite engagement between the alarmed and dismissive audiences and skilful engagement by either of these audiences with the in-between audiences may win converts to their respective views. Careful thought must inform communication strategy. The disengaged group are particularly open to a change of mind on global warming (Maibach, Roser-Renouf, & Leiserowitz, 2009, pp. 1-4).
6. Akerlof et al reveal that citizens in the USA, Canada and Malta share common concerns about the harmful health effects of climate change yet simultaneously holding climate change induced health disamenity not to be the most pressing of concerns (Akerlof et al., 2010, pp. 2559-2560).



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Slide 9 (continued): Some Insights from the Climate Change Communication Literature

7. The now classic paper that initiated “hard to reach” audience thinking reminds that climate change communicators might yet win gains by including discussions about fatalism, poverty information processing skills, limited access to communication channels and distrust of dominant institutions in both their professional metacommunication exchanges and their day to day working communication activities (Freimuth & Mettger, 1990, pp. 234-235).
8. Science change communicators should employ synecdoche (a figure of speech which a word to express a whole e.g. wheels to express car, climategate to express science fraud scandal) in such a way as to not evoke uncertainty through irony but rather to promote alternative trophes (figures of speech in which a word or phrase are used for rhetorical effect), (Moore, 2010, p. 191).
9. Figures released by Leiserowitz, Maibeth and Roser-Renouf which report on energy conservation, waste reduction and limiting global warming present a challenge for climate change communicators. They reveal that, depending on the activity (car pooling, switch of electronics, etc.) under discussion, some 6 to 62 percent of people can believe that the action is important but not practice it (Leiserowitz, E, & Roser-Renouf, 2010).
10. Wray-Lake and Flanagan argue on the basis of analysis of a sample cohort of adolescent Americans that potential gains might be won through a communications focus on environmental attitudes and beliefs held by adolescents, and a call for better environmental education and government leadership (Wray-Lake, Flanagan, & Osgood, 2010, pp. 82-83).
11. The Australian Government in Chapter 9 of its fifth national communication on climate change report talks up climate change education and communication. Described there is a multifaceted approach to climate change engagement involving the formal education sector, the NGOs, the public, and industry. Knowledge sharing and capacity building regionally and internationally are mentioned. So the climate change communication scatter is appropriate: it remains to be seen whether the Australian government can talk itself (and for that matter its near neighbours) into more effective target emissions numbers (Australia, 2010pp. 169-178).
12. Leiserowitz, Maibach, Roser-Renouf, Smith and Dawson report, inter alia, that in spite of climategate, Americans still generally trust scientific information and prefer it above other information sources. (Leiserowitz, Maibach, Roser-Renouf, Smith, & Dawson, 2010, p. 1.)



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Slide 10: Conclusion

Climate change communicators who share the Port of Spain sentiment for binding monitored targets at $\leq 2^{\circ}\text{C}$ with an early peaking year, which sentiment realised does not marginalise the most vulnerable, and who also hold that the specified Port of Spain actions are good and necessary actions, have little alternative, in spite of the post Cop 15 difficulties, to get to their desks, and easels, and musical instruments, and cameras, and blogs, and billboards, and classrooms, and microphones, and the remaining multitude of channels, and communicate-on, bravely, honestly, and with resolve and confidence, meeting obstacles as best they can. Conditions are not favourable and so called wicked and intractable communications issues emerging from geopolitics and immaturity and brutality of governments persist not to mention the technical, professional and human factors present in complex communications transactions themselves. Climate change educators and communicators should convince the undecided, enlist their support and provide stakeholders with knowledge and know how demanded by adaptation and mitigation



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Slide 12: Some Guiding Questions

Question 1: What climate change communication options might countervail against government censorship and rough treatment of communicators who venture to offer independently expressed fact and opinion?

Question 2: In democratic countries, under conditions of low levels of climate change engagement, what climate change communication styles and channels might most effectively reach the psyches of politicians and decision makers?

Question 3: Given the relative marginalisation of the most vulnerable publics post COP 15, and the relative poverty of some of those publics, what climate change communication strategies might best restore their voices?

Question 4: Concerning the metacommunication dimension of climate change communication itself: what predominant knowledge gaps, skills shortages, and audience complexities most limit the efficacy of climate change communication?

Question 5: What is the climate change communication remedy against politicians who profess climate change resources responsibility on the one hand and proselytise, and action, growth on the other. Likewise what is the climate change communication remedy against post modern publics which knowingly continue to conspicuously consume at rates harmful to their own habitats?



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