

Response to Comments: Brendan Mackey and Song Li

We have received a number excellent comments on the inaugural paper for this web dialogue on Ethics and Climate Change. Authors Brendan Mackey and Song Li have written the following response to the comments received so far.

- Editors

We would like to express our deep appreciation to all those who have posted comments on the Earth Charter website in response to our article [Winning the Struggle Against Global Warming](#). We are very pleased to see that our concern and proposals for stronger actions to address climate change are largely shared and supported by individuals from all over the world. We are also very touched by the sense of responsibility you have shown by taking the time to **voice your** opinion on climate change action; we note that a number of you sent comments very early or late in the morning or evening!

The comments we received as of end of April can be grouped into three categories...

(a) Support for stronger action on climate change, including bringing the ethical dimensions into climate change dialogue and action. You also shared your initiatives and activities related to climate change.

(b) Suggesting regarding other options for addressing the climate change problem, for example, Kyoto2 proposals.

(c) Raising issues for further consideration and improving the proposed approach.

As clearly stated by Alan AtKisson, the ECI Executive Director in his [introduction](#) of this web page, we intend to use this Earth Charter forum as a platform to start a dialogue on climate change and related ethical issues among peoples all over the world since climate change concerns every one of us on Earth. Therefore, our response here will focus on issues raised under (b) and (c) with the aim of stimulating further thinking and suggestions for ethically based climate change action.

We acknowledge the excellent and pertinent comments made by Ruud Lubbers, one of the founders of the Earth Charter initiative. Yes, we should have made it clearer in our article that the [UNFCCC](#) and [Kyoto Protocol](#) have made significant contribution for the world to address climate change by setting up an international legal framework with ethical guiding principles. We do strongly support the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol and their fundamental principles that include *common but differentiated* responsibilities, and the *precautionary* approach. Our suggested approach is deeply based on this UNFCCC legal framework and our intention is simply to suggest parameters for the protocol that will follow the Kyoto Protocol; as the Kyoto Protocol expires in 2012. We are also willing to learn more about Kyoto2 and other

recommendations for what this post-Kyoto protocol should look like.

We believe the nations of the world should ratify the protocol immediately. However, the Kyoto Protocol has limitations that should be addressed in the next protocol. For example, we believe that an important condition for a post Kyoto protocol is to involve all country in arrangements to avoid further climate change. As climate change is truly a world disaster, this will be more effective than addressing the countries of the OECD only. The biophysical processes underpinning the greenhouse affect are morally blind; and a unit carbon from developing countries has the identical radiative forcing to a unit of carbon from industrialized countries. C&C endeavours to correct the asymmetric history of this by significantly shifting purchasing power to the developing countries. While this will raise the price of consumption in developed countries, the net benefit of strategically guiding the cure for climate change with C&C is universal and has the potential to significantly accelerate the cure.

The Kyoto Protocol only requires the OECD nations take 'baby steps' in face of the scope of climate change disaster. This is because certain powerful nations would not commit to targets and timetables that would more substantially address the problem. Therefore, the international community must go beyond the current Kyoto Protocol and take broader, effective C&C-based measures to fight against climate change. Citizens should support their national governments in advancing such progressive views at the post-Kyoto negotiations.

If the C&C parameters were adopted for framing a post-Kyoto protocol, then negotiations could begin on earnest on the other vital issues that must be resolved including: protecting the world's forests is recognized as a necessary part of the mitigation response; and ensuring that investment in adaptation helps compensate for the harm already caused and lessen and avoid further harm from being caused. Proceeding in this way is ethically desirable as it demonstrates a commitment to solving the problem faster than we create it.

One intention of our article is to flag the need to explicitly introduce the ethic of universal responsibility into the post Kyoto legal discussions and indeed into the document itself as a foundational legal principle. This principle will be needed to help change the mentality of certain national governments who still resist meeting the international challenge global warming presents.

In the absence of a C&C approach, negotiations in the lead up to the post Kyoto protocol risk becoming bogged down in arguments about fairness. In our opinion, there is no absolute equity. Whatever approach is taken someone will surely complain because the world is diverse and people differ so much in terms of culture, level of development, geographic and weather conditions. Even using a per capita allocation proposed by C&C, Chinese could say it is not fair because they export a lot and the pollution stays in China; yet other people enjoy the fruits of their production and therefore they could argue for a bigger allocation given the special nature of their economy. Thus, we risk become entangled in a debate

without end. Therefore, the Earth Charter inspired universal responsibility should be a fundamental principle to guide the negotiation for the next legal document for climate change action.

Meanwhile, the problem continues to escalate with the impact of global warming falling most fully on the world's poor. For a while the rich will be able to afford to adapt. The poor will not. There is no doubt that given the impact on Africa alone our failure to solve the global warming problem will constitute crimes against humanity. We have an overriding moral responsibility to solve the global warming problem now. The longer we delay the greater the harm caused to Africa, poor people in other places, and to nature. This is the main reason why many development nation advocacy groups are now supporting C&C as the best framework for actually solving the problem, such as the African Network for a Climate Community (ANCC) for the West and Central Africa.

A C&C framed post-Kyoto protocol could and should result in a green investment boom for developing countries like Uganda. With rates of C&C that meet the UNFCCC principles of precaution and equity (e.g. stabilising atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases at 450 ppmv-e with full convergence by 2030), the international convergence can be scheduled to complete well in advance of the global contraction needed to avoid uncontrollable rates of climate change. This way, developing nations such as Uganda will retain the option of more decades of conventional economic development if that is their wish, plus having the option of selling the

excess of emissions permits created this way, to slightly relax the stringent contraction requirements C&C immediately places on Developed Countries. If this C&C exchange of cash for accelerated state-of-the-art green development all binds nations to the objective of the UNFCCC together, this has to be preferable.

Comments were also posted about the role of individuals, communities, organisations, and other levels of governments. We agree that many people in all sectors are already making a difference and showing the necessary leadership. As noted, the 'trick' is to connect with them, build these individuals initiatives into a community, and bring this force to bear on the people making the policies. The Earth Charter and this web site is one contribution to this challenge of connecting people and build an Earth community committed to winning the struggle against global warming.

Brendan Mackey

Song L