

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

April 19, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Gina McCarthy
National Climate Advisor
National Climate Task Force
725 17th St. NW
Washington, DC 20503

The Honorable John Kerry
Special Presidential Envoy for Climate
Department of State
2201 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden, National Climate Advisor McCarthy, and Special Presidential Envoy for Climate Kerry:

With the approach of the April 22-23 Leaders' Summit on Climate, we urge you to produce the most ambitious and equitable U.S. Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) possible under the Paris Agreement. The NDC should address the enormity of the climate emergency and make a fair U.S. contribution to the global effort to keep temperature rise under 1.5 degrees Celsius. The U.S. NDC must also include measures to swiftly end the fossil fuel era, launch a just transition to 100% renewable energy, ensure climate resilience throughout the economy, and provide significant finance to address mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage in developing countries.

To that end, we call your attention to the "Fair Shares NDC," a model NDC presented by U.S. climate justice organizations.¹ The Fair Shares NDC, based on a widely accepted analysis of the U.S. responsibility and capacity to contribute our "fair share" of global climate action to meet the 1.5 degree goal, indicates that the United States should commit to the equivalent of 195% emissions reductions from 2005 levels by 2030, or 14 gigatonnes (billion metric tons) of greenhouse gas emissions.

The United States can achieve this by cutting domestic emissions 70% by 2030 (5 gigatonnes), and providing international finance to enable the equivalent of an additional 125% reductions in developing countries (9 gigatonnes). Additional funds will also be needed to support adaptation and respond to loss and damage in poorer countries. We emphasize the crucial importance of this finance: focusing on domestic emissions reductions alone, without significantly ramping up international support, would see the United States fall well short of its fair share and put the 1.5 degree goal out of reach.

¹ "United States of America Fair Shares Nationally Determined Contribution: A civil society model document for the US climate action pledge submission to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change under the Paris Agreement," April 2021. <https://foe.org/usa-fair-shares-ndc>

We acknowledge the daunting size of these targets, but we also recognize that this level of ambition is necessary to meet the 1.5 degree goal and prevent global climate catastrophe. Given our status as the wealthiest nation on earth, and the largest historical carbon polluter in the world (responsible for almost 20% of global greenhouse gas emissions since 1950², with only 4% of the world's population), the United States has a unique responsibility to take urgent climate action at a massive scale. Nothing less would be acceptable to our international partners, or to our constituents here at home, for whom the shift to a new economy is a matter of life and death.

Beyond setting the top-line target of 195% reductions below 2005 levels by 2030, split between domestic action and international support, the Fair Shares NDC includes a number of additional measures, summarized as follows:

- “Regulatory measures to stop fossil fuel expansion and phase down production, including limiting emissions from power plants and electrifying motor vehicles, planes, ships, trains and pipelines; and supporting a just and equitable transition away from fossil fuel use consistent with the 1.5°C climate goal;
- “International climate finance contributions of at least \$800 billion between 2021-2030, as a good-faith down payment toward our fair share, equally split among finance for mitigation, adaptation, and for the loss and damage caused by irreversible climate change (\$267 billion each);
- “An international debt relief and green recovery package, including U.S. support for the issuance of up to \$3 trillion in Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) to help developing countries implement SDGs and Paris Agreement goals;
- “Substantial investment in climate-resilient infrastructure in the U.S., including a \$40 billion resilience fund, alongside the reformulation of disaster recovery programs to better support the most vulnerable communities and protect ecosystems and imperiled species; and
- “Interagency, participatory planning processes to ensure that transitioning away from fossil-fuel-based economies and building climate resilience ultimately combat systemic, structural, and institutional racism and guarantee respect for human rights and the rights of Indigenous Peoples, gender equality, a just transition, intergenerational equity, food security and sovereignty, and poverty eradication.”

Overall, the Fair Shares NDC captures the ambition level and the holistic approach required to achieve climate justice, though it should not be assumed that we endorse every single component.

² Calculation from Climate Equity Reference Project, based on the following data: Gütschow, J.; Günther, A.; Jeffery, L.; Gieseke, R. (2021): The PRIMAP-hist national historical emissions time series (1850-2018). v2.2 (February 2021). <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4479172>

Finally, we would note that the 50% reduction by 2030 target that is being floated by some is insufficient to meet the 1.5 degree goal. It would also place an unfair burden on other countries, including developing countries that have neither emitted as much greenhouse gases as the United States nor benefited from the “cheaper,” fossil fuel-intensive development that has fueled the wealth of so many countries in the global North. The studies cited to justify the 50% target indicate that much greater levels of domestic reductions are possible.³ In crafting the revised U.S. NDC, we urge your administration not to arbitrarily limit our ambition and in turn keep the world on a trajectory toward an unlivable future.

A Fair Shares NDC would send the essential signal that the United States recognizes our special responsibility to lead on climate action, and is willing to work in solidarity with the global community to solve this crisis together. We hope that your administration will announce a revised U.S. NDC that is on the scale and in the spirit of the Fair Shares NDC. We look forward to working with you to make it a reality and implement it in law.

Sincerely,



Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
Member of Congress

Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

/s/
Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

/s/
Cori Bush
Member of Congress

/s/
André Carson
Member of Congress

/s/
Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

/s/
Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

/s/
Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

/s/
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/
Mondaire Jones
Member of Congress

/s/
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

/s/
Andy Levin
Member of Congress

/s/
Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

/s/
Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress

³ See, for example, the relatively limited federal policy options considered in: “Working Paper: An All-In climate strategy can cut U.S. emissions by 50% by 2030,” April 2021.
<https://www.americaspledgeonclimate.com/reports/>

/s/

Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

/s/

Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress

/s/

Marie Newman
Member of Congress

/s/

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

/s/

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

/s/

Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress

/s/

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

/s/

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

/s/

Dina Titus
Member of Congress

/s/

Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

/s/

Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress

/s/

Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

/s/

Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress