

## 10 Green Commitments for a more Sustainable World

*Let us focus on climate change not a frivolous flag change*



Aoraki Mt Cook, Aotearoa New Zealand

Source: dreamstime.com

Our world is in meltdown due to climate change. CO<sup>2</sup> in the atmosphere is now some 400 parts per million; in 1950 it was 310 ppm. The Arctic ice volume has reduced by 3% per decade from 1948 to 1999; the Tasman glacier in NZ has retreated by an accelerating rate currently 500 to 800 metres per year, causing a lake to form which was not there in 1973; 2013 was the 37th year in a row with higher than average global temperatures. With climate change, weather becomes more unstable: witness the damaging effects of hurricanes Katrina (2005) and Sandy (2012) in the US, typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines (2013) and recently cyclone Pam (2015) that devastated Vanuatu.

How much evidence do we need before we awake? We have to accept that our addiction to fossil fuels, excessive consumption, population growth, environmentally unsustainable growth and ecologically damaging development are the major reasons for climate change. The key is to accept this, to reflect on how we can alleviate these causes and to commit to positive changes where we can in our lives:

**1 Celebrate nature:** Be inspired by her beauty. Wonder at the artwork on a butterfly and the symmetry of a snowflake; sense the aura of a tree; marvel at the diversity of wildlife, the breathtaking cosmos.

**2 Educate our young to love the earth:** Our cities have separated us from the earth. We need to educate our young to know where our food comes from; to walk barefoot and to understand our footprint on the earth.

**3 Protect nature:** Natural habitat is under threat from development. Many animals face the threat of extinction. Hunt and fish responsibly; stop deforestation and start replanting.

New Zealand has lost 67% of its forests and 90% of her wetlands. The largest animal on the planet, the blue whale, has numbers down to 1% of the original 300 000.

**4 Buy green:** Our purchasing decisions are powerful. Consuming less meat is better for the environment and rather not buy fish species that face extinction. Choose organic goods if you can

afford them. Select products that are certified to provide some protection for people and the environment such as those endorsed by Fairtrade and the Forest Stewardship Council. All goods should be rated on their compliance with environmental standards. Give preference to ethical companies.

**5 Live simply; conduct business ethically:** In this world there is enough for everyone's need but not enough for everyone's greed. Do not be bullied into unnecessary consumption by unscrupulous advertising. Shop less and live more. Companies should make fair profits and pay fair wages. Economic growth is only possible in a finite world if it is environmentally sustainable.

**6 Use energy with consideration:** especially if the source produces carbon dioxide and other noxious gases. Switch off power when not required. Choose cleaner power options such as solar or photovoltaic if you can afford it. Stop investing in fossil fuels.

**7 Travel wisely:** Walk or cycle or take a bus or a train rather than drive. Think of buying a smaller car (to reduce emissions) or an electric one. Make flying the exception rather than the rule.

An average 1.6L car produces around 140kg of CO<sup>2</sup> per 1000km using only 60kg of fuel. The extra mass coming from the oxygen converted in the process. Multiply 140kg by the estimated one billion cars in the world and the impact is staggering.

**8 Watch our waste:** Reduce, recycle, reuse, repair. Polluters should pay for the damage they cause. Composting reduces waste (30-50%) and feeds our gardens.

**9 Tread gently on the earth:** Resources such as water are to be used with care. World population growth has a large footprint. Mining companies should remediate sites once mining has ceased and their materials should be rated in terms of their environmental impact. Try to keep the footprint of buildings and roads to a minimum.

The world's population is currently 7.1 billion - it took just 13 years to add one billion!

**10 Support green endeavours and associations.**

The problems causing climate change are deeply entrenched yet solvable. Governments have to show greater foresight and leadership in promoting a more environmentally sustainable economy. There are positive signs such as Germany managing to reduce her CO<sup>2</sup> emissions by 20% since Kyoto. Education is fundamental to making our youth aware that protecting nature means sustaining life, to reducing poverty and making the affluent aware of their impact on the environment. ***The change starts with us!***

NB. The complete document is available at <http://smlincoln99.wix.com/10greencommitments>

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My understanding of the issues:

1. We currently have gross carbon emissions at 20% above 1990 levels
2. But net carbon emissions now (i.e. with carbon from 'Kyoto' forests planted since 1989 deducted) are approximately at 1990 gross carbon emission levels.
3. The current proposed 5% reduction is NZ's unconditional target for net emissions. (If it was for 5% below 1990 gross carbon levels that would be a substantial cut).
4. An mfe web site claims Trade Minister Tim Groser as saying we are on track to reach the target plus a projected surplus of 23.1m T of carbon by 2020.
5. Problem: stocked areas of trees : 1.8 m hectares in 2003, has fallen every year up to 2012 i.e. by 0.107m hectares or 6%.
6. Problem: after 2020 Kyoto forests can be harvested and will be a carbon source rather than a sink. But that is in the future and no concern to the current govt.

Therefore I recommend:

1. A 5% reduction in net carbon emissions by 2020; followed by a further 5% drop to 10% overall by 2025 from 1990 levels; followed by a further 5% drop to 15% overall by 2030; and 5% drops every 5 years to 2050 i.e. 35% by 2050. There have to be targets after 2020 to prevent the problem highlighted in 6 above occurring i.e. meet the target in 2020 but lose the reduction thereafter.
2. We need net reforestation at a rate of 0.01m hectares per annum. The expansion and densification of the dairy industry must stop.
3. We need an Emission Trading Scheme with a reasonable price for carbon: say \$12.50 per Ton now; increasing by \$2.50 per year to \$25 by 2020; not the ridiculous current 30c per Ton.
4. We need a target for methane emission reduction: to 1990 levels by 2020 and reducing by 5% every 5 years thereafter giving n overall reduction of 30% by 2050.
5. We need a drive to promote public transport and build this infrastructure. Tax cars on their CO2 emissions. Promote domestic solar panels and solar heating to take pressure off the grid.

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