

290410 MEDIA RELEASE - Irish EPA projections assume catastrophic failure for climate negotiations

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Irish EPA projections assume catastrophic failure for climate negotiations

In a statement issued in Dublin today following the release in Dublin of the EPA's latest set of emissions projections for Ireland (Note 1), Pat Finnegan, Co-ordinator of Irish climate group Grian said today that the projections are fundamentally based on an "unconscionably blasé assumption that international climate negotiations are already condemned to catastrophic failure". He added that given that the whole direction of Irish climate policy is underpinned by assumptions generated by the EPA, "it is quite simply scandalous that Ireland is now not only not discussing the minimal 30% reductions for 2020 demanded by scientists, NGO's and developing countries, but is already eagerly looking forward to greater use of sinks offsets in a much weaker target as a result of the current stalemate in the international negotiations." The projections issued by the EPA today claim (amongst other things, Note 2) that: 1. Latest greenhouse gas emissions projections show Ireland will comply with Kyoto Protocol without any more purchases; 2. Achieving "more stringent" 2020 targets (i.e. only -20% reductions) will require further reduction measures yet to be identified; 3. Carbon sinks, such as increased afforestation, are crucial for achieving the (only -20%) 2020 target. However, according to Grian today, a thorough reading of the projections reveals that: • Ireland will only comply with Kyoto Protocol targets without any more purchases purely as a result of unallocated emissions permits for new entrants being retired from the ETS sector---something Grian fought long and hard for in the course of consultations on the National Allocation Plan (and ultimately won) in the face of stiff arguments from industry for re-distribution to incumbents; • The "more stringent" 2020 target identified by the EPA is the -20% of 2005 emissions (100% of 1990 emissions) currently applicable under EU law. There is no analysis (and hardly any mention) in the projections of the -30% of 2005 (88% of 1990) target which the EU has put on the table for a successful international climate agreement. The fact that this target is not even considered leads to the inevitable conclusion that the EPA is not currently considering it either---essentially withdrawing (in the eyes of developing countries) Ireland's contribution to a successful international agreement.; • The EPA is already looking towards a provision in the current EU effort-sharing agreement that, absent a UN agreement, carbon sinks (such as increased afforestation) will be allowed in Ireland as a further reduction to the (already too low) -20% EU 2020 target. The EPA claims that the economic recession is largely responsible for Ireland now being able to meet its 2008-2012 Kyoto first Commitment Period target (113% of 1990 emissions) since reduced economic activity has reduced demand for fossil fuels. However groups in the Climate Action Network Europe (including Grian) have for some time been using precisely the same argument to make the case that achieving emissions targets is now much easier. NGO's argue that now is absolutely the time to increase the stringency of targets in order to reflect the basic reality that they are now more achievable and more affordable. (See: http://www.climnet.org/resources/position-papers/doc_details/1567-ngo-briefing-europe-to-30-percent-dec-2009.html also Notes 3,4) Pat Finnegan said this afternoon: "The EPA projections released today are fundamentally based on an unconscionably blasé assumption that international climate negotiations are already condemned to catastrophic failure. It is quite simply scandalous that Ireland is now not only not discussing the 30% reductions for 2020 demanded by scientists, NGO's and developing countries, but is already eagerly looking forward to further flexibility for sinks offsets as a result of the current stalemate in the international negotiations."----- ENDS -----

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Note 1: See: <http://www.epa.ie/downloads/pubs/air/airemissions/name,25768,en.html>

Note 2: See: <http://www.epa.ie/news/pr/2010/name,28091,en.html>

Note 3: See: CAN-Europe's letter to Members of European Council (Mar. 2010) at: http://www.climnet.org/resources/position-papers/doc_details/1554-can-e-letter-to-members-of-european-council-mar-2010.html

Note 4: Sandbag briefing: "Copenhagen: not done yet - Why the EU must renew its leadership on climate change" at http://www.sandbag.org.uk/files/sandbag.org.uk/SandbagBriefing_EUNotDoneYet_0.pdf
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