

## World congress on CLIMATE CHANGE AND ECOSYSTEM

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**Grounds for enhanced national greenhouse-gas commitments****Robin Attfield***Department of philosophy at Cardiff University, Wales*

The national greenhouse-gas mitigation commitments made at the Paris 2015 Conference on Climate Change would collectively fail to deliver the agreed goal of a ceiling of 1.5 degrees (Celsius) to the increase of average temperatures since the pre-industrial period. This goal was agreed at the same conference. The aggregated national commitments have been estimated as leading to an average increase of approximately 3 degrees, an increase that could prove disastrous.

Successive IPCC reports indicate that if greenhouse-gas emissions are unchecked there will be serious sea-level rises, and that coastal and island communities will be placed at risk. There will also be increases in the seriousness and the frequency of extreme weather events such as floods, storms, heat-waves, wildfires, and droughts. The impacts of these changes are likely to be massive movements of climate refugees leaving impacted areas and seeking new homes. There will be movements of the vectors of diseases such as malaria and dengue-fever to higher altitudes and latitudes, and migrations of land species, again to higher altitudes and higher latitudes, many becoming extinct, and losses to the biodiversity of coral reefs. These impacts are beginning to be experienced, as wildfires affect Australia, a heat-dome affects west Canada, and torrential storms cause flooding in Europe from Switzerland to the Netherlands.

The perceived inadequacy of the 2015 national commitments has led to hopes that at further Climate Change CoP Conferences they would be ratcheted up. Some have been revised, but much remains to be done, particularly at CoP-26, planned for Glasgow in November 2021.

Grounds for 'ratcheting-up' include the self-interest of the countries already undergoing coastal flooding or extreme climate events. Grounds also include obligations to assist developing countries whose people's human rights are at risk, and whose citizens are suffering from extreme weather events, human migration, the spread of tropical diseases, and biodiversity-loss. These problems are also likely to affect future generations severely, and grounds for urgent action include the need to take action before the prospects for future generations become intolerable.

**Biography**

Professor Robin Attfield taught and researched in philosophy at Cardiff University from 1968 to 2009. He composed some 15 books, including *The Ethics of Environmental Concern* (1983; 1991) and *Environmental Ethics: A Very Short Introduction* (2018), and some 250 articles or chapters. He also taught in Nigeria from 1972-3 and in Kenya for part of 1975. He has addressed several World Congresses of Philosophy, and has written in recent years about the ethics of climate change.

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