



The Impact of Low Oil Prices
and
The Role of the G20 in Global Energy Governance
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**Some Recommendation for Global Energy Governance and the
G20**

**“Listen to the Voices of the Uninvited:
The Poor of the Earth and the Earth Itself”**

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The time for rational effective incremental action to prevent abrupt climate change is probably past.¹⁾ Even if all GHG emissions were stopped now, ocean heat will continue to rise for 1 or 2 thousand years, resulting in sea level rise, powerfully destructive storms, and the probably loss of the oceans as a source of food for hundreds of millions of people. The clear warnings from scientists were clearly stated 30 years ago with continuous, increasingly dire warnings over the intervening years. The major oil and gas companies recognized the truth of the science and responded by creating disinformation and denial campaigns through purchased think tanks, scientists, and politicians.²⁾ While much is of course hoped from Paris, is it highly probable that the numbers will not add up to what is required, in other words, what may be politically feasible—even if very hopeful and forward-looking in an ideal world with more time—will not be enough scientifically. The result is, even if we have not already passed the threshold into an abrupt climate change regime, we almost certainly will in the very near future.

Numerous events already unfolding around the globe (the Syrian civil war, the California drought) give us clear warning about what this type of climate regime entails for all of the earth, and this at relatively low levels of warming. It is highly likely that whatever is planned for the two upcoming G20 conferences will be overshadowed by climate change driven events: deaths from heat and flood, conflict and spreading conflict regions in which climate change is already playing a significant element, and increased governmental and economic instability and volatility as a result of climate change-induced destabilization. As such it can be anticipated that the G20, as a rational set of actors ostensibly devoted to the well-being of all, will play an important role in coordinating a range of climate change emergency actions designed to make the best of a long-term horrible situation, so that human societies do not devolve into warfare, famine and chaos, and civilizational collapse can be prevented. What follows is a sober list of some of what must be done.

1. Institution of a “Real” Economy

The current dominant economic systems are delusional in the extreme. When real costs are factored in (negative externalities including but not limited to climate change impacts, direct and indirect subsidies, and human and social costs) none of the world’s leading corporations are really profitable.³⁾ Given that we are destroying our life support systems in favor of the illusion of abundance, we must radically correct our economic evaluations of “profit” to incorporate natural system sustainability and repair, and human happiness as opposed to human greed.

2. Seizure and Internationalization of the Assets of Oil and Gas Companies That Committed Criminal Acts of Deception

Although it can be expected that U.S. courts will eventually find the major oil and gas companies culpable of practicing criminal deceit resulting in massive loss of life and property, given that the preponderance of damage is in the global south it would be preferable for these trials to be handled by an international tribunal so that assets are better assured of reaching the majority of the victims.

3. Emergency Build-up of Food Emergency Infrastructure

As food security is already one of the earliest victims of climate change, and local regional and global food supply networks can also be expected to quickly shatter in a non-linear fashion, a global focus on new climate change-resistant food security infrastructure is of the essence. Vertical farming at every scale from the mega-scale ringed mega-cities, to the quickly installable “food security life raft” version for small remote communities must be put in place if societal break-down is to be avoided.

4. Rational Staged Withdrawal from the Coasts

Although there may be some high value coastal cities where a cost-benefit analysis suggests that expensive coastal defenses may be a viable alternative, in many cases plans must be put in place now to begin shifting hundreds of millions of people inland to avoid inundation. Models that incorporate real-world fast and slow feedbacks predict multi-meter sea level rise by the end of the century, and moreover, paleo-climatic data from eras that had our current level of CO₂ in the atmosphere reveal we have a 200-300 foot deficit between where sea levels are now and where we can expect them to reach.⁴⁾

5. Degrowth and “Other-growth” in the so-called developed world. Green growth still allowable in the developing world.

6. A Massive “New Hydrology” Effort to Protect, and Expand the Carbon Sequestration Ability of Terrestrial Land Masses

7. An agreement on shifting to a complete, global, climate change war footing including rationing, until such time as the crisis is past.

It may be argued of course that the above recommendations are at best ahead of their time, and at worse will be forever politically unrealistic. It must be said though that if there is any clear conclusion to be drawn from the evidences of civilizational collapse over the millennia it is this: when the reigning acceptable mind-set of a group of leaders or society at large is at odds with physical reality, it is physical reality which will triumph, and that particular society -based as it is on unrealistic illusions divorced from what is really happening- will collapse. These recommendations are neither idealistic, nor unrealistic, they are the minimum required now to avoid centuries of hell.

1. “State of the Climate 2014” Special Supplement to the Bulletin of the American meteorological Society, Vol 96, No 7, July 2015

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2. “The Climate Deception Dossiers” Union of Concerned Scientists Report

<http://www.ucsusa.org/global-warming/fight-misinformation/climate-deception-dossiers-fossil-fuel-industry-memos#.VapoflvR-ug> July 2015

3. “The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity, Ecological and Economic Foundation”

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4. “Sea-level rise due to polar ice-sheet mass loss during past warm periods” A. Dutton, A. E. Carlson, A. J. Long, G. A. Milne⁴, P. U. Clark, R. DeConto⁵, B. P. Horton, S. Rahmstorf, M. E. Raymo; Science 10 July 2015: Vol. 349 no. 6244