



SUBMISSION TO THE OIREACTHAS JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND GAELTACHT ON THE HEADS OF BILL (CLIMATE ACTION AND LOW CARBON DEVELOPMENT BILL)

1. Introduction

The following submission has been prepared by Afri, a non-governmental organisation which seeks to promote debate and influence policy and practice in Ireland and internationally on human rights, peace, justice and sustainability. Afri exists to promote the vision of, and strive to bring into being, a more just, more equal, more peaceful and more sustainable world through research, debate, awareness raising and action in partnership with marginalised people in the global 'South'. Afri welcomes this opportunity to make a submission to the Environment Committee on the heads of Bill (Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Bill).

Afri was set up in 1975 with the objectives of creating awareness about the plight of the poor of the Global South and to fund projects overseas, but also to be involved with the issue of poverty in Ireland. Throughout the 1980s Afri shifted emphasis to making links between the local and the global. In recent years, Afri has become aware of the increasing threat of climate change and how this has a disproportionately detrimental impact on the Global South, which is least equipped to deal with the economic and social costs of tackling its effects. Afri has now begun to make sustainability a more central part of our work. As part of this we have recently initiated a partnership with the Kenya Pastoralist Journalist Network (KPJN) which aims to utilise sustainable resources and has recently rolled out a programme of providing solar powered lamps to midwives and school children in Kenya. Among the many benefits of this is a decreasing dependence on fossil fuels, such as kerosene, which are damaging to the environment and to people's health. Afri is also a member of the Stop Climate Chaos Coalition which is seeking to ensure that a strong climate bill is published in Ireland.

Global temperatures have been on the rise since mid 20th century which is attributable to the increase in emissions of greenhouse gases. Climate change impacts on developing countries most of all, and as the main emitter of green house gases, the onus is on the developed world to provide assistance. Furthermore, the effects of climate change will impact on biodiversity which is another cause for concern. Afri has long sought to raise awareness about the Great Famine in Ireland through our annual Famine Walk. Undoubtedly, one of the main contributing factors to that famine was the lack of biodiversity in the potato crop and an over-reliance on one potato variety. Biodiversity is key to a sustainable world and climate change severely limits biodiversity.

2. Executive Summary and Recommendations

Afri welcomes the introduction of the Heads of Bill (Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Bill), however, we feel that in order for it to be effective it is critical that the proposed bill should be significantly strengthened. Ireland has a proud history in supporting developing countries through overseas development assistance and through the many agencies and groups involved in promoting development and responding to emergencies. Afri calls on the Government to be a world leader on tackling the critical issue of climate change, which is perhaps the greatest contribution they could make to the welfare of people in developing countries. There is an urgent need for the Government to take



bold and courageous initiatives in face of this very real threat, if we are to avoid a calamity of even greater proportions than the current economic collapse. This Bill provides an opportunity for such initiatives and for showing real leadership on this issue.

Afri strongly urges the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Environment, Culture and Gaeltacht to take into consideration the following recommendations:-

A: Include legally binding emission reduction targets in the Bill – in particular a 2050 target of 80-95% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

B: Ensure that the low carbon roadmaps occur every five years and that they include carbon budgets to meet these targets.

C: Ensure that the Expert Advisory Body is afforded an independent role and is given the power to publish its own reports.

D: Include the principle of climate justice in the Bill.

E: Acknowledge the importance of biodiversity and ensure that the bill makes reference to protecting biodiversity in Ireland, and indirectly, in other countries, by ensuring that carbon targets are met domestically, without purchasing overseas carbon credits.

3. Submission

A: Legally binding Targets

Legally binding targets are essential in order to provide an impetus for businesses and homeowners to invest in low-carbon technology. It would also ensure that regardless of the government in situ at the time the targets would have to be achieved and thus would ensure continuity despite possible changes in policy.

While Afri would advocate a target of 80-95% carbon reductions for 2050 (in line with the stated EU objective of the European Council Heads of Government) it is also necessary that there should be interim targets for 2020, 2030 and 2040 to ensure that the 2050 target is achievable.

B: Low Carbon Roadmaps

Afri believe that the current formulation of 7 years for the Low Carbon Roadmap is too infrequent and should be reduced to 5 years to ensure that this issue is taken seriously within the lifetime of each Government. Furthermore, carbon budgets should be included in this roadmap.

C: Expert Advisory Body

In order for this body to be effective it is essential that it be allowed to publish its own reports (as opposed to reports being published at the Government's discretion, which is how it is formulated in the current Heads of Bill). It is crucial that the Expert Advisory Body is both independent and accountable.



D: Principle of Climate Justice

Through our partnership with the Kenya Pastoralist Journalist Network, supporting the work the KPJN does in tackling climate change, Afri is acutely aware that climate change is affecting the countries with the least ability to be able to deal with it. Abjata Khalif of the KPJN writes “As a pastoralist, camel herder and activist working in an area in Northern Kenya that is daily enduring the ravages of climate change, I urge the Irish government to introduce and enforce a strong climate change bill with clear targets that will address and tackle climate change and reduce the suffering of vulnerable people. The consequences of climate change, such as prolonged droughts, flash floods, harsh and hostile temperature, continues to ravage the arid land areas of northern Kenya leaving locals grappling with problems such as increased conflicts among pastoralist communities, disruption of livelihood, pastoralist communities fleeing remote villages due to hostile weather and flash floods leading in turn to refugee camps and major humanitarian upheaval. It’s the responsibility of all nations whether from North or South to come up with tangible, water tight policies and clear targets that will address climate change and alleviate the suffering of people in the global south who are hardest hit by climate change.”

Afri believes the bill should include recognition of the fact that Ireland has an obligation to mitigate the effects of climate change as well as supporting developing countries in adapting to climate change. Therefore we believe that the Bill must include reference to the principle of climate justice.

E: Protect Biodiversity

Loss of biodiversity which is an inevitable consequence of climate change is a threat to both Northern and Southern countries. Ireland has a unique experience of undergoing a famine that had over-reliance on one crop as one of the root causes, and thus is in a position to take a progressive approach in this area. Afri would recommend that the bill explicitly refer to the threat of loss of biodiversity as a result of climate change and a statement that appropriate measures will be taken in order to protect against such loss – including prohibiting the use of purchasing overseas carbon credits.