

# Climate Change

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## **Our target**

*Climate 2020: We wish to prevent dangerous climate change*

Steps must be taken to prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. This poses a particular challenge in terms of global solidarity and fairness. For Germany, this means maintaining and expanding its international forerunner role in the area of climate protection, while at the same time living up to its responsibility as an industrialized country by setting itself particularly high targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

We are therefore committed to reducing the human-caused emissions of greenhouse gases included in the Kyoto Protocol in Germany by 40 percent by 2020 and by at least 80 percent by 2050, measured against the 1990 levels.

## **Thematic background and relevance**

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing humankind. Man-made global warming is a fact that has now been acknowledged by scientists, politicians and society alike. Its consequences are already visible today in many regions of the world, ranging from melting glaciers and ocean ice

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masses to droughts, torrential rain and flooding, with the accompanying dramatic effects on regional populations. It is thought that more than 200 million people each year are already directly affected by climate change consequences. If global warming continues at its current pace, the impact on the world's entire population will be enormous.

Although it is true that the global climate system also changes as a result of natural factors, the major part of the long-term warming trend is nonetheless attributable to human activity and to the anthropogenic emission of greenhouse gases. The sole factor we can influence in order to slow down the rise in the earth's mean global temperature and to prevent an irreversible change to our complex climate system is thus to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This is all the more pressing given that the warming process would initially continue, even if emissions stopped immediately, on account of the longevity of some greenhouse gases and the inertia of the climate system. Because a shift towards establishing a sustainable economy with low use of greenhouse gases – a “great transformation” – would involve making far-reaching changes to our current, largely fossil fuel-based economic system, we must begin this process right now. The longer we wait, the more serious the effects will be on our ecosystems and on human life on earth. We must be in no doubt about the fact that the decisions we take in the next two decades

will have significant consequences for the living conditions of our children and grandchildren.

If we consistently pursue this transformation, numerous opportunities will arise, and the extent to which we will have to adapt to those climate change consequences that can no longer be avoided will be less dramatic in the long term. This is why we at Stiftung Mercator will concentrate our work and support on reducing greenhouse gas emissions in order to prevent unabated global warming.

### Methods

In our climate change cluster, our activities will be geared towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Germany by 40 percent by 2020 and by at least 80 percent by 2050, measured against the 1990 levels. We are fully aware of the fact that our commitment alone will not suffice to achieve these targets; it must rather be seen as a – not easily quantifiable – contribution on the part of Stiftung Mercator. We follow a systemic approach in our work, and are committed to finding lasting and sustainable solution strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We select our projects according to how much they contribute towards achieving this goal. We will monitor scientific,

political and social trends at all times and if necessary adjust our activities in order to attain the maximum impact in each case.

Measures to protect the climate must be implemented both on the level of politics and state regulation and on the level of the individual consumer. In view of the urgency of the problem and the scale of the tasks ahead of us, however, we believe that the most important step at present is to bring about a change of tack at the political level. After all, it is only here that the necessary far-reaching decisions can be taken, pointing the way forward. In turn, politicians cannot take these decisions in such a highly complex field as climate protection without the help of scientists, as it is they who generate the necessary knowledge and make it useable for decision-makers. Scientists cannot take the decisions for politicians, however – they can only offer options and information.

In order to achieve the target set for our climate change cluster, we will make the most of our strengths as a private foundation. One of our central strengths is our convening power. Being independent actors, we can take risks and use our reputation to take up positions and raise issues, win over majorities and bring different stakeholders together to talk to one another.

This is how we intend to employ our resources and our approach – that is entrepreneurial, professional and international – to achieve the greatest possible effect for our targets. As far as climate change is concerned, we will therefore start by focusing above all on the interface between politics and science. We intend to make available scientifically founded concepts to achieve a rapid policy shift towards a low carbon world and to communicate these to specific political decision-makers. Together with our partners in science and academia, we will identify knowledge gaps relating to forthcoming political and social discourse and initiate projects aimed at filling these gaps. The results of these projects will provide advisers and decision-makers with information, instruments and mechanisms with which to implement appropriate policies and strategies. In addition, we are working to create intersectoral networks and to bring together decision-makers, experts and information disseminators – not only from politics and science but also from business, non-profit organizations and other third sector institutions – in order to search jointly for solutions and implement them.

We also involve international partners, scholars and colleagues in our projects. Our target places the central focus on reducing greenhouse gases in Germany because, as a German foundation, we can achieve the greatest impact in our own country. Climate change is a global problem, however, and cannot be solved solely on a national level. An internationally coordinated approach is therefore a prerequisite to prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. Germany's voice will carry all the more weight internationally the more action we take nationally and the more we set a good example within the framework of the European Union. Germany's own climate policy will thus have effects that are felt far beyond the country's own boundaries. Climate research is also to a large extent an international field of endeavour. Scientific findings generated nationally have an international impact, and vice versa. Given these interrelationships, projects that strengthen international cooperation in the area of climate protection and aim to bring about a common understanding of the action that is possible and necessary will contribute directly to the achievement of our target.

### Fields of action

From the various emission sources, we have selected three fields of action on which we intend to focus particularly over the next few years: energy, transport and land use.

// Energy: Transforming the energy system to make it low emission and low carbon is a central factor in the achievement of our target. The energy sector is one of those with the greatest potential for reduction. In addition, any success in this area will have direct positive effects on other emission sources that are currently largely dependent on fossil fuels (especially transport and industry)..

// Transport: The transport sector not only offers high reduction potential in Germany, but can also be used to leverage emission reductions at European and international level due to the fact that emerging automotive markets follow the lead of the European market. Strong EU policies, with respect to fuel consumption for example, will thus have global impacts.

// Land use: This field of action encompasses not only agricultural issues but any form of land use by humans. With their massive consumption, not only of energy but also particularly of land, cities are hot spots of climate change (80 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions are generated in cities), and will continue to grow. We will therefore focus among other things on the area of urban and infrastructure development.