Globethics Repository



A new website In response to recent report on the urgency of seeing climate change as a moral concern.

This page was generated automatically upon download from the Globethics Repository. More information on Globethics see https://www.globethics.net. Data and content policy of Globethics Repository see https://repository.globethics.net/pages/policy.

Item Type	Preprint
Authors	Brown, Donald A.
Publisher	Rock Ethics Institute, The Pennsylvania State University
Rights	With permission of the license/copyright holder
Download date	2026-11-14 16:44:58
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/175497

A New Website In Response to Recent Report On the Urgency of Seeing Climate Change as a Moral Concern.

By DONALD A BROWN on January 3, 2007 11:36 AM| 0 Comments | 0 TrackBacks

In his movie, An Inconvenient Truth, Al Gore insists that climate change is and must be seen as a moral problem. However, he does not elaborate upon why the citizens of the US and of other countries should see climate change as entailing ethical issues, nor the specific nature of the ethical prescriptions or dilemmas raised by this growing threat.

More than 180 nations at the UN Climate Change Conference agreed last week on the next procedural steps toward negotiating deeper cuts in future green-house gas emissions, although little progress was made on concrete commitments to reverse the growing danger of climate change. Future meetings will review the workings of the Kyoto Protocol with an eye toward setting new quotas on carbon dioxide and other emissions after Kyoto expires in 2012.

But an effective global response to climate change will not occur until nations address the ethical questions inherent in the development of a global solution to climate change. Although there is a growing scientific and economic literature about climate change, most discussions among governments, organizations, and individuals ignore many obvious ethical issues that will remain hurtles to a global consensus such as: Do all people have an equal right to use the atmosphere to dump greenhouse gas emissions? Who will be responsible for damages caused by climate change? How do we best insure that the voices and concerns of those most vulnerable to climate change are fairly represented in climate negotiations?

A new report prepared by ethicists around the world has looked at the absence of ethical analysis in climate change negotiations thus far and concluded that if ethics were taken seriously by nations participating in climate change negotiations, they would:

- Immediately acknowledge that they have a duty to reduce their emissions as quickly as possible to their fair share of safe global emissions;
- Immediately agree that an international greenhouse gas atmospheric stabilization target should be set as low as possible unless those who are most vulnerable to climate change impacts have consented to be put at risk from higher levels;
- No longer use scientific uncertainty or cost to their economies alone as justification for refusing to reduce GHG emissions;
- No longer refuse to reduce GHG emissions now on the basis that new less-costly technologies will be available in the future or that not all other nations have agreed to reduce their GHG emissions;
- Accept national targets for assuring that atmospheric concentrations of GHG are protective of human health and the environment that are based upon ethically supportable allocation criteria;
- Acknowledge that nations commit human rights violations that refuse to reduce their GHG emissions to their fair share of global emissions needed to protect those most vulnerable from climate change to loss of life, health, and well-being;
- Accept that those who are responsible for climate change have a duty to pay for costs of adaptation to and unavoidable damages from climate change.

These are the conclusions of the White Paper on the Ethical Dimensions of Climate Change, a document released at UN meetings in November at the Nairobi Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. http://rockethics.psu.edu/climate/whitepaper-intro.htm (In this report ethicists, scientists, economists, legal experts, philosophers and negotiators from Asia, Europe, South America, and the U.S. provide an ethical analysis of issues that policy-makers must examine to ensure a just and equitable response to climate change. The authors of this report underscore Gore's entreaty to view climate change as a moral problem by calling attention to the fact that climate change is already compromising basic human rights to life, liberty, and personal security of people's across the globe, a threat that could

TIME Top 15 Green Websites IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CNN

SUBSCRIBE
Entries
Comments
Delicious
iTunes U
Share

SEARCH THIS BLOG
Full Text Tag
Search

CATEGORIES
Adaptation and Responsibility for Damages (12)
Allocation Issues (4)
Atmospheric Targets (13)
Civil Disobediance and Climate Change
Contraction and Convergence (2)
Copenhagen (12)
Distributive and International Justice (13)
Economics and Climate Change (4)
Economics and Cost (11)
General Climate Ethics (17)
Human Rights-Universal Rights (3)
Independent Responsibility to Act (6)
Media Coverage of Climate Change (3)
Mitigation (2)
New Technologies (1)
Procedural Justice and Fair Process (7)
Scientific Uncertainty and Risk (4)
Trading Issues (1)
Uncategorized
cap and trade (1)
climate change and markets (1)
climate change governence (1)
climate change policy-making (1)

MONTHLY ARCHIVES
August 2010 (1)
July 2010 (1)
June 2010 (2)

increase dramatically unless nations, corporations, and peoples respond immediately and effectively. The Paper also notes that issues of distributive justice are also central to the development of climate policy since many of those who will be most harmed by climate change have contributed least to the problem and are often least able to pay for adaptation measures needed to protect them from climate impacts. Issues of intergenerational justice are also key to any ethical response to climate change since the decisions we make today will impact future generations.

Express ethical reflection on the climate change ethical issues is urgent for three reasons, First, climate change raises the most profound types of ethical concerns, literally issues of life and death. Second, unless people see that climate change creates moral duties, they will not likely be motivated to do what is needed to protect those most vulnerable to climate change. Third, unless nations believe that an international approach to climate change is just, they are not likely to join a global regime urgently needed to solve the problem.

Countries like the United States, which have high emissions, must adopt a position of ethical leadership to ensure that all peoples work together to ensure a fair solution to climate change's immense threat. Although the scientific and economic facts about climate change must be considered in formulating any nation's climate change policy, only express ethical reflection about climate change policy options can lead to just global responses.

To provide policy makers with ethical analysis of developing climate change policy issues, the Collaborative Program on the Ethical Dimensions on Climate Change, a cooperative program of 17 ethics institutions around the world with a secretariat at Rock Ethics Institute at Penn State University, has launched a new web site at ClimateEthics.org.

The site is intended for policymakers, interested public, and journalists. The site aims to provide a quick response in the form of ethical comments on issues in contention in climate change policy formation around the world. Working with scientists and economists when appropriate, the site will follow developing climate change policy issues and stories and provide ethical comments about these issues. The site's responses will consist of ethical comments on climate change policy matters in the form of either identification of ethical issues or ethical analyses. The site will also identify issues about which deeper ethical analyses needs to be done. In developing its ethical comments for this site, the site will also work with others who are developing more detailed ethical analyses of climate change issues and occasionally summarize these longer ethical analyses when such work is particularly relevant to climate change policy formation.

This site is a project of the Collaborative Program on the Ethical Dimensions of Climate Change that will maintain a climate change ethics bibliography http://rockethics.psu.edu/climate/index.htm, The Secretariat of this Program is the Rock Ethics Institute at Penn State University. Comments on the site should be made to Don Brown at climateethics@comcast.net or Dr. Nancy Tuana at Ntuana@psu.edu.

Categories: General Climate Ethics

NO TRACKBACKS

TrackBack URL: https://blogs.psu.edu/mt4/mt-tb.cgi/112943

LEAVE A COMMENT

Sign in to comment, or comment anonymously.

Name

Email Address

URL

Remember personal info?

Comments (You may use HTML tags for style)

Preview Submit

February 2010 (2)
January 2010 (1)
December 2009 (3)
November 2009 (1)
October 2009 (8)
September 2009 (2)
August 2009 (4)
June 2009 (1)
May 2009 (1)
April 2009 (2)
February 2009 (1)
January 2009 (5)
December 2008 (2)
October 2008 (1)
August 2008 (1)
July 2008 (3)
June 2008 (3)
May 2008 (1)
April 2008 (1)
March 2008 (2)
February 2008 (1)
January 2008 (1)
December 2007 (2)
November 2007 (3)
October 2007 (2)
July 2007 (2)
April 2007 (1)
January 2007 (2)

JOIN US ON

Home