

CLIMATE CHANGE

# Not Contradictory

Low-carbon, high-growth trajectory possible, says UK's Miliband

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**O**n a recent visit to Johannesburg, UK Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change **Ed Miliband** said that “a low-carbon high-growth trajectory is possible”, adding that it was “consistent to tackle poverty today and climate change into the future”.

This was in response to questions posed at an editors' forum as to why climate change should be given priority in developing countries, where millions suffered from malnutrition and had more pressing concerns.

“It is far better to adopt a precautionary stance. Future generations will hold us in extremely low regard if we do nothing,” said Miliband.

Miliband also said that climate change sceptics should not be vilified, but argued with, and presented with scientific answers to their questions.

“We live in a narrow climatic window, and intervention earlier is better than intervention later, even in the face of uncertainty,” said Council for Scientific and Industrial Research systems

ecologist **Bob Scholes**.

Scholes served as a lead author for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change assessment report, which dealt with the science of climate change.

Scholes noted that key climate change challenges for Southern Africa were: adapting to a hotter, drier and stormier future; persuading the world to take unified action to keep global warming tolerable; to protect coastal cities from flooding; and to stay competitive in a low-carbon economy.

## Accepting Responsibility

Miliband accepted the argument that the developed world was responsible for the bulk of historic greenhouse-gas emissions, which have led to global warming, and noted that about 30% of the cumulative historical emissions were from Europe, while some 30% were from the US.

While accepting past responsibility, he also highlighted that some 75% of the growth in future emissions would come from developing countries, and this too needed to be tackled.

The global negotiations on



**ED MILIBAND**  
Climate change highlights interdependence

climate change would take place in Copenhagen in December this year, and it was hoped that a fair international agreement could be reached.

The main desired outcomes at the conference were for developed nations to take on legally binding mitigation targets, and for developing nations to commit to low-carbon development plans.

Because the poorer developing nations were more likely to be ravaged by the effects of climate change, such as drought, floods and intense storms, these nations also sought funds for adaptation to the effects of climate change. These funds would need to be provided by developed nations, and this was a major sticking point of the global negotiations.

A number of different financial proposals were being tabled, including one which suggested that 1% of global gross domestic product would be required – this amounted to about \$1-trillion, and was felt by some to be excessive. The UK had proposed a \$100-billion fund, with contributions from developed nations, which would be used for adaptation in developing countries.

Miliband conceded that in the current global economic crisis it was a “tough sell” for developed countries to say that they needed to help finance change in developing countries.

“Climate change highlights our global interdependence, and we have to explain why it is right that we help finance projects in developing countries,” he added.

The UK has legally binding emissions reduction targets and has committed to a 34% reduction in greenhouse-gas emissions, below 1990 levels, by 2020. Every government department has a ‘carbon budget’, along with a financial budget, and will face penalties if the emissions cap is exceeded.

## Clean Coal

On his visit to Johannesburg, Miliband also visited the South African Centre for Carbon Capture and Storage, and said that he saw coal playing a role in the energy mix in the future, with the assistance of carbon capture and storage (CCS), because the coal of the future must be clean.

“We know that there is no solution to the problem of climate change, in either developed or developing countries, without a solution to the problem of coal, and turning it from a dirty fuel of the past into a clean fuel of the future,” stated Miliband.

However, he added that there was a lot of scientific, test and demonstration work that needed to be done in order to convince the public of the safety of CCS technology, as well as its economic feasibility.

It was also important that public acceptability of CCS be gained through rigorous and convincing scientific work.

“It is also important in the building of new coal-fired power stations, and in the geological and technological processes, that we have the right standards in place, and that’s another thing that the Carbon Sequestration Leadership Forum will be looking at – how we can coordinate the standards that exist, so that we can have a coherent view about how CCS can be taken forward,” Miliband explained.