THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

Research Roundtable

Implementing the Paris Agreement and Building Ambition, with the Hon. Al Gore, 13 July 2017

Summary Information and Attendees

The Research Roundtable was hosted by the University of Melbourne (Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute, MSSI) in honour of a visit by the Honourable Al Gore, former US Vice President. It was held at the University of Melbourne on 13 July 2017, coinciding with the Ecocity World Summit 2017, and brought together representatives from Australian and foreign national, state and local governments and parliaments, Australian universities, international organisations, business and NGOs. This was the second such roundtable hosted by MSSI; the first, held 27 July 2015 on 'Paris and Beyond: Climate Change Policy Challenges and Priorities', was in the lead up to the Paris negotiations with the attendance of the Hon Al Gore.

Professor Robyn Eckersley, expert on international climate agreements from the University of Melbourne, chaired the roundtable, keeping the focus on implementing the Paris Agreement commitments and building ambition. She defined the purpose of the roundtable as 'unearthing big ideas', 'plugging gaps', and 'opening new activities' for implementing the Paris Agreement. Four themes were explored through specific discussion questions.

Attendees

Government

Prof Rachmat Witoelar, The Indonesian President's Special Envoy for Climate Change; **His Excellency Yogesh Punja,** High Commissioner of the Republic of Fiji to Australia; **Senator Ronan Dantec,** Senator for the Loire-Atlantique Region and Vice President of the Sustainable Development and Land Planning Commission, France; **Dr Kartini Sjahrir**, Senior Advisor on Climate Change for the Coordinating Minister of Maritime Affairs Indonesia; **Premier Jay Weatherill,** Premier, Government of South Australia; **Deputy Premier Jackie Trad**, Deputy Premier, Government of Queensland; **Ms Alexandria Rantino**, Sustainability and Climate Change Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs, Australia ; **Mr Chris Johnston,** Assistant Secretary Climate Change Policy Branch, Department of Environment and Energy, Australia; **Ms Kath Rowley,** Executive Director Climate Change, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Victoria.

Academia

Prof Glyn Davis AC, Vice Chancellor, University of Melbourne; **Prof Robyn Eckersley**, Chair of Roundtable; and Professor of Social and Political Science, UoM ; **Prof Don Henry**, Melbourne Enterprise Professor of Environmentalism, Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute, UoM; **A/Prof Malte Meinshausen**, Director, Australian-German Climate & Energy College, UoM; **Prof Peter Doherty AC**, Laureate Professor, Nobel Laureate in Physiology of Medicine 1996 UoM; **Prof Tim Flannery**, Professorial Fellow, Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute, UoM; **Prof Jim McCluskey,** Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, UoM; **Prof Lars Coenen**, City of Melbourne Chair of Resilient Cities, Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute, UoM ; **A/Prof Grant Blashki,** Australia Nossal Institute for Global Health; **Prof Jon Barnett,** Australian Research Council Future Fellow, UoM; **Dr Ben Neville**, Melbourne Business School, UoM; **Prof John Wiseman,** Deputy Director, Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute, UoM; **Dr Ben Parr**, Research Fellow, Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute, UoM; **Ms Anita Talberg,** PhD Student, Australian-German Climate & Energy College, UoM; **Yann Robiou du Pont**, PhD Student, Australian-German Climate & Energy College, UoM ; **Dr Debra Roberts**, Co-Chair of the IPCC Working Group II, Sixth Assessment Report; Special Adviser on Climate Change to Global Executive Committee, ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability.

Business and Civil Society

The Hon Al Gore, Former U.S. Vice President and Chairman of the Climate Reality Project; **Professor Shi Zhengrong**, The Founder of Suntech Power and Professor at UNSW); **Mr Christian Bennet**t, Vice President, Government Affairs & Policy for SE Asia, Australia, NZ & PNG, General Electric; **Mr James Ensor**, Executive Officer and President of the BHP Billiton Foundation, BHP; **Mr Aromar Revi**, Director of the Indian Institute for Human Settlements ; **Dr Kevin Austin**, Deputy Executive, C40; **Ms Milag San Jose- Ballesteros,** Regional Director for Southeast Asia and Oceania, C40; **Professor John Thwaites,** Chair of ClimateWorks & Monash Sustainability Institute; **Ms Catherine Brown**, CEO, Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation; **Mr Peter Castellas,** CEO, Carbon Market Institute; **Ms Kate Vinot,** Director Strategy and Place, Melbourne City Council; **Ms Marjolaine Edouard,** Director Climate Chance.

Advisors

Mr Brad Hall, Senior Advisor to Mr Gore; **Mrs Murni Titi Resdiana,** Assistant to the President's Special Envoy on Climate Change Indonesia; **Ms Lia Zakiyyah**, Deputy to Assistant to the President's Special Envoy on Climate Change Indonesia.

This report is a thematic rather than a chronological record of proceedings. Three key terms recurred consistently throughout discussions: gaps, opportunities and ideas. These terms anchor the report. As the Roundtable operated under Chatham House Rules, the report does not disclose information that may point to the identity of any speaker.

To begin the conversation, attention was drawn to the gap between the physical reality of required emissions reduction according to the goals of the Paris Agreement and the current level of commitments contained in the Nationally Determined Commitments (NDCs). Four recent developments were described as providing the means to drive increased climate action and gave timeliness to the

Roundtable deliberations

1. The Paris Agreement's periodic review mechanism, including the 2018 Facilitative Dialogue, the IPCC review of 1.5 degrees and ongoing IPCC assessment reports
2. The Paris Agreement's transparency framework for monitoring, reporting and verification,
3. The strong level of public support for climate action and renewable energy in many countries, and
4. The continuing downward trend in the cost of renewable energy.

Theme One

Achieving the Paris goals—Monitoring, Reporting and Verification

The Paris Agreement includes specific provisions on measurement, reporting and verification (in Article 13 and Articles 4, 6, 9 and 11). Although many elements of this system are still being determined, the roundtable discussion focussed on the opportunities provided by the Paris Agreement's increased focus on transparency.

Discussion questions

- How can the UNFCCC Facilitative Dialogue on the review of national commitments build ambition to start closing the gap between current commitments and the goals of the Paris Agreement?
- What are the opportunities to make the monitoring and verification of emissions more transparent for governments and the public?

Opportunities

- The transparency mechanisms provide a vehicle for countries to showcase their efforts, share knowledge, and provide support for further progress towards achieving the Paris Agreement outcomes.
- The renewed focus on reporting is an opportunity to shift the discussion from a punitive framing to a positive framing to emphasise best-practice and highlight successes.

Gaps

- Research and thinking is needed around how and what to measure and report on so that the mechanism is policy reflective, informs on what is effective, and drives further progress.

Ideas

- Live Emissions Tracking: At the time of the Paris negotiations, 55 nations had official emissions data that pre-dated 2000. China and Indonesia, major emissions contributors, have provided the UN with official data to 2012 only. In Australia emissions data can be six to 12 months old. The means and methods for open-source, open-data live emissions tracking exist and could help to drive awareness and public support. However, this must reflect a concerted and collaborative effort.

Theme Two

Accelerating the Action of Cities and States/Provinces

Commitments put forward to the UNFCCC by nations fall short of what is required for a reasonable chance of staying within 2°C (and 1.5°C). Current country pledges are likely to result in a world that is 2.7°C warmer than pre-industrial levels. Sub-national entities are identified in the Paris Agreement as important for implementation of the Agreement.

Discussion question

- What are some of gaps in research and engagement that if filled could help accelerate the efforts of cities and states/provinces to implement the Paris Agreement?

Opportunities

- The Paris negotiations emphasised the opportunities of climate action over the burdens, and the need to identify economically and socially viable solutions. Generally, people are unlikely to change their behaviour unless a personal and direct benefit is evident. Politicians at the subnational level are closer to their constituents and can motivate citizens by demonstrating the benefits of climate action to this generation. The rapid reduction in cost of renewable energy provides significant economic, employment and social opportunities.

Gaps

- There is a need perhaps to focus on impacts and adaptations measures for temperatures above 1.5°C.
- The role of negative emissions technologies was raised and was a contested point.
- There is a research gap around the capacity of non-state actors to make a difference.
- Policy scenarios that frame the debate underestimate subnational policy options, and there is an urgent need to spread knowledge of successful practices. While important networks have built up around cities, there are no comparable networks for provincial/state governments.
- Subnational actors (states and provinces) have jurisdiction over decisions with long-lasting implications; more attention is needed on 'climate-friendly' investment in infrastructure.
- Cities can 'bend the curve' in emissions but there are many research gaps to be filled. For example, the growth and implications of informal settlements while projected to be substantial is understudied. A proactive global research agenda on cities and climate change is needed, starting with a focus in the next IPCC assessment report.
- Research is needed on the enduring barriers to behavioural change in cities despite increases in wealth and access to information.
- To accelerate change in developing countries, empowerment of women is needed within the renewable energy sector.
- In Australia, further investment is needed into the research and early development of negative emissions.
- The Cities and Climate Science Conference , co-sponsored by the IPCC, to be held in Edmonton in March 2018 promises to be a pivotal milestone in developing the global understanding of how climate change will impact cities and the role of cities in tackling climate change.

Ideas

- Uber electricity: With increased battery storage technology and availability, plus the decreasing cost of renewable energy, a peer-to-peer sharing platform for electricity could be envisaged.
- Build the networks and capabilities among provincial/ state governments around the world to share knowledge and successful practices.

Theme Three

Strengthening Paris Implementation of Nations, Cities and States/Provinces by Rapid Policy Sharing

As an example, in Australia and many southeast Asian nations there are large gaps between the climate action commitments and the plans or policies for achieving them. These gaps need to be closed through accelerated and shared learning. Practitioners could be brought together around knowledge-sharing platforms. The roundtable discussion focussed on information and knowledge sharing on climate change impacts and actions. It identified the need for climate change to be mainstreamed and for discussions to take place across and between all levels of government and sectors of society.

Discussion question

How do we accelerate the sharing of learnings and best practice climate policies between countries, states and cities to enable commitments to be met and exceeded more easily?

Opportunities

- In many developing countries, peer-to-peer information transfer is the most relevant and effective form of education and way to ensure continuity and solidarity. It creates ownership over the problems and solutions, producing outcomes that are collective rather than individualistic.
- In the wake of Australia's carbon pricing experience, there is a wealth of underexploited Australian expertise relating to the technical, legal, economic and social aspects of carbon markets. Working closely the private sector, the Australian Government could look to align these skills and competencies with trade and export priorities.
- Developing countries can leapfrog straight to cutting-edge, zero emissions energy supply technologies. These countries need the right regulatory environments to provide foreign investment certainty. There is an opportunity for the Australian Government to provide leadership, working with the private sector, to help establish those policy regimes.
- Most policy practitioners under-estimate the range of policy levers that can be utilised to maximise the potential for countries to leap forward in climate and energy policy.

Gaps

- Policy gap analyses are needed to identify how and where governments can provide value in advising on the needed regulatory regimes in developing countries to promote climate-friendly foreign investment.
- There is a need for research into the requirements of a just and equitable transition away from coal in countries like Australia. Such research, which would be critical to accelerating the political agenda, would focus on affected workers and communities.

Ideas

- Develop and strengthen national and subnational climate policy knowledge networks.

Theme Four

Achieving and Financing a Global Zero Carbon Energy System Post 2050

Finance for climate action has traditionally been a problematic issue of negotiations between developed and developing nations. Flows of public funding have never met expectations or commitments. Avenues for accelerating private financing are being more closely explored.

Discussion questions

- What are some of gaps in research and engagement that if filled could assist transition energy sectors to achieve a future zero carbon global economy?
- How do we build and share knowledge about catalysing private sector climate finance?

Opportunities

- Many of the technical solutions to decarbonisation—such as photovoltaics, wind power and lithium batteries—exist and are affordable. These technologies need to be scaled up and out at a commercial level, so that research can focus on developing high energy density solutions for more challenging applications (i.e. transport). This requires commitments from governments in the form of visionary policies, the likes of which are being seen in China.
- Governments committing to simple ambitious targets such as '100% renewable' can create 'insurmountable opportunities'; the details and funding streams can be addressed later [the quote 'insurmountable opportunities' is sometimes attributed to baseball player Yogi Berra, and refers to the fact that all problems are also opportunities].

Gaps

- There needs to be more consideration given to innovative financial instruments to stimulate new forms of capital.
- More research is needed, particularly in Australia, on reducing industrial emissions to ensure continued finance from the industrial sector.
- The transition needs to be a broad economic transition. To break the path dependency of carbon lock-in, business and academia need to demonstrate that there are jobs and economic growth opportunities in navigating away from fossil fuel investments.
- There needs to be more research on how to transfer learning from the share-economy and the circular economy to the low-carbon economy.
- Further research is needed on the role of corruption in sustaining emissions in developing and developed countries. The institutions that have profited from a history of carbon intensity have strong influences over the political systems in many countries.

Ideas

- Strengthen private climate finance knowledge sharing networks.
- Strengthen transition knowledge sharing networks.

Summary of Big Ideas

- Live Emissions Tracking: At the time of the Paris negotiations, 55 nations had official emissions data that pre-dated 2000. China and Indonesia, major emissions contributors, have provided the UN with official data to 2012 only. In Australia emissions data can be six to 12 months old. The means and methods for open-source, open-data live emissions tracking exist and could help to drive awareness and public support. However, this must reflect a concerted and collaborative effort.
- Uber electricity: With increased battery storage technology and availability, plus the decreasing cost of renewable energy, a peer-to-peer sharing platform for electricity could be envisaged.
- Build the networks and capabilities among provincial/ state governments around the world to share knowledge and successful practices.
- Develop and strengthen national and subnational climate policy knowledge networks.
- Strengthen private climate finance knowledge sharing networks.
- Strengthen transition knowledge sharing networks.

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