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PRESS RELEASE

G20 still lagging far behind emission reductions needed to hit climate targets

Some countries tracking reasonably well, but Earth Index analysis underscores crises being created by failure of G20 as a whole to match actions with words.

Toronto, April 19, 2023 – There’s little comfort to be taken in the ambitious climate pledges made by most members of the G20 group of leading global economies, given the overall weakness in following through. Analysis of 2020 and 2021 data – incorporated into an updated and newly released version of the Corporate Knights Earth Index (CKEI) – show that overall greenhouse emissions across the G20 have in fact continued to increase.

The CKEI is designed to spotlight the “say-do gap”, by measuring whether G20 countries are achieving emission reductions that are consistent with the downward trajectory needed to achieve their national pledges – which typically entail net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Cumulative achievement of these pledges would bring the G20’s total emissions to 25.3 gigatonnes in 2030, down from 38.1 gigatonnes in 2019. However, emissions increased over the 2020-2021 period, with only a slight and temporary slowdown due to the pandemic.

The resulting Earth Index score for the G20 as a whole is **-23 per cent** – meaning emissions *increased* during this period by an amount equal to 23 per cent of the *reduction* needed to remain on track to meet commitments.

There is a sharp distinction in results as between the roughly equal number of G20 economies classified as high-income and those classified as middle-income. Taken together the high-income countries reduced their emissions in 2020-2021, but only at 44 per cent of the required level to meet their commitments. Middle-income countries in contrast saw an emissions increase equal to 80 per cent of the size of the reduction needed to meet their commitments.

Some high-income countries performed relatively well, with Canada achieving emissions reductions in 2020-2021 at 93 per cent of the levels needed to reach their targets (assuming they can maintain that pace for the rest of the decade).

The CKEI includes sector-specific analysis across the G7 and for each individual economy. Results were most encouraging for transportation, particularly for the high-income countries. Transportation was the only sector where there was a G20-wide emissions reduction in 2021 relative to 2019, and where half of the G20 economies are tracking above the emission reduction levels needed to meet their commitments.

However, sustaining recent performance will depend on acceleration of renewable electricity generation, electric vehicle adoption, and decarbonization in industry and agriculture.

The CKEI is being released concurrent with the reporting of national emissions data to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change of the part of G7 countries. The CKEI analysis is based on the Emissions Database for Global Atmospheric Research – a data set which tracks closely to the data reported into the UNFCCC.

Separate info-graphics are available for each G7 country, quantifying their CKEI score (and sector-specific breakdowns) calculated using the national data reported to the UNFCCC. Trends and comparators do not differ materially from those set out above and in the full CKEI report.

Quotes

“If the G20 fully delivers on its commitments the world would have a two-thirds chance of keeping the global annual temperature increase within a two-degree threshold. Those aren’t odds any of us should feel great about, and this year’s Earth Index suggests we’re squandering the opportunity to reduce risk down to even that margin.” – Corporate Knights CEO Toby Heaps

“Investments in the post-pandemic recovery were a missed opportunity to ‘build back better’, and we continue to see half-measures and new commitments to pipelines and other fossil fuel infrastructure. Time is running out to mount a true emergency response to climate change that would close the gap between what we know and say needs to be done, and the effort we have so far been able to muster.” – Corporate Knight Research Director Ralph Torrie.

Earth Index Scores

G20 High Income Economies		G20 Low Income Economies	
Australia	25%	Argentina	-17%
Canada	93%	Brazil	-47%
European Union	47%	China	-117%
France	84%	India	-80%
Germany	64%	Indonesia	-57%
Italy	5%	Mexico	184%
Japan	71%	Russian Federation	-73%
Korea, Republic of	45%	South Africa	113%
Saudi Arabia	-29%	Turkey	-114%
United Kingdom	53%	Middle Income Collectively	-80%
United States	42%	G20 Overall	-23%
High Income Collectively	44%		

Emissions increased in 2020-2021 from 2019 (increase shown as % of the decrease needed to achieve targeted performance) – Emissions decreased in 2020-2021 from 2019, but not by as much as needed (decrease shown as % of full decrease needed to achieve targeted performance) – Emissions decreased in 2020-21, and by more than needed (decrease shown as % of full decrease needed to achieve targeted performance). NB Scores are influenced by the level of ambition of national targets.

A digital version of the Corporate Knights Earth Index and further contextual and methodological information is available at corporateknights.com/rankings/earth-index/.

About the Earth Index

The Earth Index measures the speed at which countries (by sector) are reducing greenhouse gas emissions relative to the speed required to deliver on their commitments, providing a real-time window on the sufficiency of current momentum. It focuses on G20 countries, which account for about 75% of global greenhouse emissions. The Earth Index has been developed and refined with the input of many collaborators and stakeholders, including Corporate Knights' research division, an advisory network of eminent experts in related fields, and ongoing contributions from CEOs of the [Global 100 Most Sustainable Corporations in the World](#).

About Corporate Knights

Corporate Knights Inc. is an independent media and research B Corp. Its media division publishes the award-winning sustainable-economy magazine *Corporate Knights*, circulated in *The Globe and Mail*, *The Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal*. Its research division produces sustainability rankings, research reports and financial product ratings based on corporate sustainability performance. Learn more at corporateknights.com.