

# Taiwan Should Halt Global Warming with the Consciousness of True Global Citizenship

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**M**ost major media outlets have reported recently that the United States, a main contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, had proposed its carbon reduction targets before President Barack Obama went to the United Nations Climate Change Conference Copenhagen of 2009. However, here in Taiwan, what we need urgently is more insightful analysis and reflection on the global warming scenario.

Global warming not only causes rising temperatures, but also various deteriorating environmental impacts, such as extreme climates, disturbed eco-system, rising sea levels, ocean dead zones, destructed water resources, crop failures, etc. Human health is also threatened, including injuries and deaths caused by extreme climate events such as floods, typhoons, cyclones, droughts, extremely high temperatures, poisonous food and drinking water related to thriving microorganisms, as well as novel and re-emerging infectious disease pandemic resulting from variations in relations among host, vector and pathogeny such as Dengue fever, H1N1 swine flu, Schistosomiasis, and malaria; increased allergies due to budding allergens; respiratory and heart diseases resulting from air pollution, and malnutrition, diseases, and hunger caused by reduced food production, etc.

Global warming is primarily caused by humans' huge consumption of fossil fuels and destruction of forests, done mainly to produce enormous quantities of commodities; hence mass production of commodities and the following excessive buying and consumption are the roots of global warming. But why do people have such behavior? I will analyze this from three dimensions: that of the public, the industry, and the state.

In terms of the public, the living standard of the general public has been rising rapidly ever since the industrial revolution. People splurge not only to satisfy basic living needs, but also to indulge in luxuries. From the industry perspective, companies employ ubiquitous advertisements to seduce people into buying excessive and unnecessary goods. Finally, to stimulate economic growth, the state also encourages such behavior and helps businesses to produce more goods, resulting in more greenhouse gas emissions and global warming.



Hence to curb global warming once and for all, we must reflect on and reform the capitalist ideology under which industries pursue profits, people indulge in luxuries, and the state seeks booming economic growth. First of all, how consumerism is driving people's behavior should be made aware to them, the truth that fossil fuel consumption is a part of the production of goods and will lead to more greenhouse





gas emissions should be brought to light. In addition, the government's ideology of valuing economic growth and consumerism should be criticized, and we should

ensure that the government modifies the current economic growth policy which encourages mass production in the business sector.

The question now is: is Taiwan ready to face the challenges of global warming? The honest answer is "no." Compared to other countries, facing global warming, Taiwan does not appear to be more reflective or decisive. Most people are still controlled by materialism and enslaved by consumerism, while the government's policy apparently focuses on economic growth and, to "catalyze economic growth," they even distribute consumption vouchers to encourage more consumption. Driven by the export-oriented economic policy, the Taiwanese industries produce an astronomical quantity of commodities and sell them to other countries, making Taiwan an eco-killer island producing huge pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Consequently, for the past 20 to 30 years, the carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emission in Taiwan is increasing rapidly and in 2007, Taiwan's average CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per person is ranked the 2<sup>nd</sup> in East Asia and South Asia, and the 18<sup>th</sup> globally!

Unless the capitalist societies around the world decisively alter their mainstream values evolving around commodity, profit, consumption, and economic growth, global warming will simply get worse and worse. It is obvious that Taiwan would have to engage in the "anti-global warming movement" which is already flourishing in many countries. But before that, our society urgently needs to be enlightened and educated on global warming. The Taiwanese people, industries, and government should cultivate a "global citizenship" consciousness in which blind consumerism and the economic growth fallacy are expelled by love for the planet and environmental protection awareness.

*Translated by Helen Chang*

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