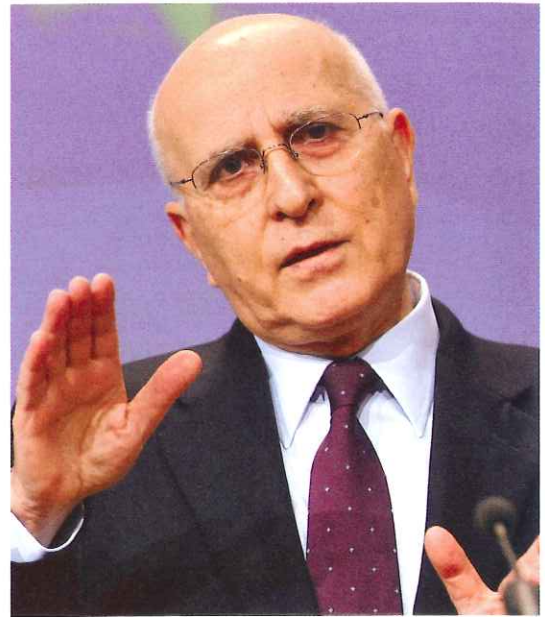


# Turning down the heat

Stavros Dimas is European commissioner for the environment. Here he talks about the need for global action to combat climate change and how the EU is taking the lead.



## Why is action against climate change needed now?

With global emissions continuing to rise, if the world postpones action the risks will be very high that it will be too late to prevent climate change from reaching dangerous levels. This will endanger the lives of millions of people in Asia and around the world.

## What is the EU's position?

The bottom line is that the world must bring global warming under control before it reaches dangerous levels. The scientific consensus is that the danger threshold is at two degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial temperature, or around 1.2 degrees warmer than today. Staying within two degrees is still possible if the world pulls together in a global and shared effort. Worldwide emissions will need to peak by 2020 at the latest and then be cut by at least half of 1990 levels by 2050. Industrialised countries must lead this effort by making emission cuts in the order of 30% below 1990 levels by 2020. The EU is committed to a reduction of this size provided other developed countries agree to comparable efforts and other major emitters also do their fair share.

## How about the developing countries?

Deep cuts by industrialised countries alone will not stop climate change because most

of the future emissions growth will come from developing nations. We need developing countries, and particularly the big emerging economies, to limit their emissions growth to some 15% to 30% below where it will otherwise be by 2020. Of course, the industrialised world has a duty to support developing countries, particularly the poorest among them, with finance and technology so they can tackle their emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

## Is it fair to impose costly emission reductions on developing economies?

China has overtaken the US as the biggest emitter, and developing countries together emit more greenhouse gas than the industrialised world if you count emissions from deforestation. That is why a truly global effort involving all major emitters is needed now.

## Has the global economic crisis undermined momentum to combat climate change?

This was obviously a big concern when the crisis broke a year ago but the impact has been less than feared. Within the EU we managed last December, at the beginning of the recession, to reach agreement on an ambitious package of measures which will enable us to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20% of 1990 levels by 2020. And Europe,

the US, China, South Korea and other countries have turned the need for economic stimulus into an opportunity to step up the fight against climate change by accelerating investment in low-carbon technologies under economic recovery plans.

## Is it now time to consider a global carbon tax?

No, a carbon tax is politically a non-starter for many countries and I doubt its effectiveness. It could raise money but it would provide no guarantee as to the environmental result. It is much better to build on Kyoto's market-based mechanisms which have succeeded in creating an international carbon market connected to clear emission reduction commitments or caps.

## What about those who claim climate change concerns are overblown?

The fact is there is a very strong international scientific consensus that climate change is largely man-made, that it is well under way and that it will reach dangerous levels during the course of this century unless we bring greenhouse gas emissions under control. Is someone seriously suggesting that these experts are all wrong?