

The Blessing of Climate Change Is Not a Blessing for Our Generation: Reasons Why We Should Support the Establishment of National Commission for Climate Change (Nccc)

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Introduction

The article by Jeff Jacoby titled “*The Blessings of Climate Change*” posted online, December, 7th 2017 is already going viral, raising debate especially among many students of Climate Change & the Environment. Jacoby for example argued that with the warming of our globe, countries or states that fall within the Tundra will or is already benefiting especially in the area of telecommunication, etc. **The danger of this kind of unguided articles that lack holistic objectivity is that it undermines efforts made at restoring our degrading environment, and for sustainable living.** Take for example, the move by the National Assembly for the establishment of the National Commission for Climate Change (NCCC). This article is not only aimed at clarifying this write-up but to also justify and draw support for why the NCCC should be established against those who say such a commission is not necessary but a mere duplication. As tutors, permit us to clarify these issues using question and answer.

What is Climate Change?

Climate change is a **shift** from an existing climatic (weather) pattern. When there is a shift from what is considered **normal** to **abnormal**, other things rarely remain the same. Of course in life, things will not always remain the same; our concern has been on the frequency and inconsistency of the change. How do we manage this change so that our generation, and that of the future, lives a quality life at a very minimal cost?

Weather is an outcome of the complex interactions between the sun and the land, water bodies, air and living things. As a system, a significant change in any of the component will affect the operation of others. The immediate effects are expressed in weather (the outcome), which in turn affects the environmental processes, human, their activities and developments.

When the condition of the atmosphere becomes wet, dry, cold, hot, calm or windy; it is these interactions that made it so, and this is what we call weather. The weather in turn affects these operations and the activities of man. Over time a climatic pattern adapted in by human evolves. It is this pattern, used to us that form the basis for planning our activities and especially physical developments; as we can find the broad global natural regions, such as the Tropics, Temperate and the Tundra. Note that, it took nature years to evolve these regions, if there is a sudden shift therefore, like being too hot or cold; dry or wet; and calm or stormy at a time and place not normal to the inhabitants of such a place or region; **this is climate change!**

How does the Shift in Climate Change Operates?

This is the problem. The shift is so confusing that it is difficult to map and predict. A farmer in the Tropical Hinterland for example, is expecting the first rain of the year by March or latest April, only for the rain to skip May and to come-up by June ending. Do you expect his farm inputs like seedlings to remain the same? That year is gone with a lot of losses. The farmer then prepares his mind for next year, targeting June, only for the first rain to come on December or January.

Another example is on what we use to know as August break. For farmers used to take advantage of double maxima marked by August break to carry out two periodic farming activities within the season (a year). But, it is no longer so because of the shift in seasonal pattern. The shift is so confusing that last year we experienced a break in July, and that of this year in September; and some places formerly known for double maxima now alternates single peak.

We may then suggest irrigation. Oh! The stream courses are disappearing, lakes are shrinking, and underground water table is lowered due to insufficient recharge. Even though sea water is rising, its salinity and

pollution is not healthy. What about cloud seeding? **We keep on suggesting alternatives, not considering the farmers**

Capacity and vulnerability.

Generally, warmer periods than colds are now common place globally. This has altered the environmental processes, and has given rise to occurrence of rampant stormy weather, even in region that were considered calm like the anticyclone belts. Just like in an electronic system, if there is a higher voltage (or current) more than required, the system blows off. What keeps life going is the energy balance between the equator and the poles. Through atmospheric circulation the energy surplus in equatorial region is exchange for the deficit in the poles, likewise the surplus cold in the poles circulates towards the equator to exchange for the heat. Apart from this latitudinal exchange of energy, this system also operates on diurnal and seasonal basis, thereby bringing about global energy balance. In the vertical, the outgoing (long wave) radiation is supposed to balance up with the incoming (short wave) radiation; but, why? The accumulation of greenhouse gases creates greenhouse effects i.e. allowing the short wave to pass through and then prevents the long wave; leading to global warming. This is in addition to the ozone layer depletion which is permitting the penetration of ultra violet rays. If temperatures continuous to rise, the system will certainly reacts.

Recently, many parts of the world have recorded too many at a time, devastating catastrophe ranging from volcanism, earthquakes, tsunamis, to hurricanes and mudslides. Most of the rains experienced this year maybe thunderous, heavy and most often short live, only for such characteristics to change in the coming year. This will mean if you map the weather pattern for this year, you have a different one for next year, meaning 35 contrasting map for 35years, **how would you reconcile this?**

What is Responsible for this Climate Change?

The large scale environmental unfriendly human activities and developments are responsible for the climate change we face in our time. The activities of man ranging from exponential population growth, to poor land management for agriculture, mining, deforestation, industry, transport, housing/urban expansion, and poor waste management practices; not to forget emissions from domestic and industrial machines, and gas flaring. The rate and manner these human activities are set in motion during exploitations, processing, utilization and the wastages accruing from overstressing nature's ability to regenerate, has brought about negative outcomes which is now expressed as climate change.

Why Climate Change is NOT a Blessing

Contrary to Jeff Jacoby's position, **climate change carries no blessing**. The blessings may only come after these instabilities in weather, evolve a new form of environment. That may only happen when our generation is exterminated as a result of our inability to adapt to such weather extremes. **What Jeff considered as a blessing is temporary and one sided**. We would like to address all his claimed blessings of climate change one after the other:

First, Jeff specifically mentioned that our warming climate is a blessing as Point Hope in Alaska is already benefiting. In his own words:

"...Point Hope's luck is changing. High-speed internet is coming, and with it the benefits of ties to the world: Improved education and health care, more options for consumers, new customers for local artists, and a chance to attract tourists. All thanks to global warming..."

Necessity they say is the mother of invention. It is because of the need to live comfortably in the Tropics that led to the invention of refrigerators and air conditioners. This, inhabitants of Temperate and Tundra would not need. In our technological driven world high-speed internet services should not depend on global warming. That Quintillion Company took advantage of thawing ice cap to lay their cable so to connect Point Hope and the rest of the world does not make it a blessing. We had narrow wave band before, today broad band with higher capabilities are invented. Before it used to be copper wire connection, we now have fiber-optic communication system. How come wireless systems? All these are technological advancement that took further researches to discover. This we recommend (provided the systems are enviro-friendly) **rather than relying on climatic**

Barriers or opportunities.

Jeff cited section of the New York Times to buttress his position leaving the fears expressed by some of the inhabitants on the further dangers this developments will cause their culture and environment. In the news some of the fears which are more of curses than blessings are paraphrased below:

".... we see the waters rising and worry about sea mammals disappearing. We rely on the sea for food, and our year is built around festivals for berry picking and whaling."

“Inupiaq people are taught to be patient,” said Steve Oomittuk, a leading local whale hunter whose family has lived in Point Hope for many generations. “We wait for animals to come to us for our food, our shelter, our medicine, our clothing. The internet makes people impatient for everything. This is not our way of life.”

“Austin Ahmasuk, a marine environmentalist who lives along the coast of Nome, is concerned that the change will dilute some of the local culture and result in harm to the environment. The very thing that kept most global development away from the north — ice — is disappearing in all its formats,” Mr. Ahmasuk said. “History shows that outside people don’t have the same interest in our culture and environment.”
“Early on a weekday evening, Bryan and Maggie Muktoyuk organized more than a dozen people at the Lutheran Church on Bering Street for a weekly rehearsal of native dance and drums. Seated in a row, men and teenage boys pounded on round drums made of stretched walrus stomach. Women with mittens and ornate mukluk boots swayed their hips to the beat.”

When Jeff stated in a phrase “... the inconvenient truth, — is that while climate change brings negatives, it brings positives too”, we laugh. What is the economic opportunity for High-Latitude residents who have lost their unique cultural and economic base? If the people of Point Hope loses their cultural and economic resource base and now depend on importation from other parts of the world, how is that a blessing? How about the environmental health challenge that would arise from over exploitation as a result of the weakening carrying capacity of these natural resource, on their source region?

We know you would want to respond by saying that the melting ice will open up new land for agriculture and mineral exploration. You forget quickly that it will take years for the required ecological succession and climax community to be attained, and of course the soil profile needed to support agriculture, to develop. Again, we do not necessarily need to wait for global warming and melting of ice before mining exploration. Tundra regions of Russia and even Alaska have been subjected to mining of minerals even before global warming issues became pronounced.

Except on the ground that your supposed tourist are visiting Point Hope to see for themselves the harm that global warming has done (or is doing) to the Tundra landscape, and/or those to do their research on how biodiversity of the region can be conserved; anything other than this is of no tourist blessing. Since, a changing environment would lose its original natural resource; we see no unique local craft for customers from the outside. Well, for your performance artists, they may end up more as **people attempting to reconstruct their**

past destroyed by global warming.

Adaptation is what has enabled human to survive their respective native environments. It took some time for us to adjust to the environment, but that was in environments where their development was gradual leading to a state of dynamic-equilibrium. For climate change, it is not so. The changes here are harsh, inconsistent, and confusing. Education and health wise, this is not good as several researches have shown that heat stress affects people’s health and academic performance (Major, 2006; 2011).

Human and other living organisms operate within their tolerance range to each abiotic factor. When temperatures is too high or too low (i.e. extremes, beyond their ability to cope), we face physiological discomfort. In other words, outside the comfortable range of human tolerance, as temperature increases or decreases discomfort; physiological stress; ill-health and even death may set in (Afangideh and Njoku, 2001). A temperature of -75⁰C is as bad as a temperature of +100⁰C to all humans. It is unfounded for Jeff to cite that cold kills 20 times as many people as heat. In fact there has been casualties recorded from summer heat waves in Britain and other temperate countries. In 1995, a summer heat wave at Chicago killed over 500 people. A record breaking heat wave in June 1998 in central Russia caused more than 1000 deaths (WMO, 2000). In Nigeria, outbreaks of cerebrospinal meningitis has led to fatalities, during the hot dry season (Adefolalu, 2003; Inobeme and Ayanwole, 2008; Sule and Nathaniel, 2010). This incident, according to Ministry of Health (2017) has been on the rise since then.

Another argument raised by Jeff is that *awarming planet will also be a greener planet*. Then we asked where? When buildings and other human activities (like in urban sprawl) are fast taking over geographic spaces, clearing and sealing of the natural land cover of soil and vegetation; we guess your greening is taking place on roof tops, road or other concretized pavements. **Anything in excess of its normal requirement constitutes a**

pollutant and would yield negative outcome! There is increasing carbon emission creating greenhouse effects. This is because plants that would have otherwise absorbed them for photosynthesis and carbohydrate formation are being depleted. Therefore, as humans especially, carbon pollution is simply what it is.

For your information the Lake Chad is located within the Sahel region of Africa where you claim *climate change has been of a particular blessing*. According to you *“Sahel greening” has significantly reduced famine*. This is not true. Rather the people here have adapted to intensive irrigation agriculture augmenting for the insufficient rain fed. As a matter of fact, streams like Hadejia, Jamare, and Gana that recharges the Lake

Chad are already losing their courses; the lake is seriously shrinking in size; all due to climate change. This region has recorded (apart from the recent Boko Haram insurgency) one of the largest climatic refugees, world over. There has been forced migration into the middle-belts and southern parts of the country from draught and desert encroachment. As an effect, it is now common place to find inter-ethnic clashes especially between the indigenous crop farmers and the pastoral herdsmen, in the quest of the later for greener pastures for their cattle. However, all thanks to the effort of the International community for implementing the Great Green Wall Project across the Sahel/desert margins which will sooner or later cushion the effects of climate change, in the region.

Finally, a shift in climate **CANNOT** be likened to a shift in economy as you otherwise stated, Jeff. A shift in climate does not spell any good news to whomever. Your statement on this is selfish, and does not spell any good for the globe we owe a divine duty to tend and care for, in as much as we are commanded to subdue and have dominion. A shift in climate can only be likened to a shift in economy, if we agree to restore our degrading environment. With this our economy will begin to shift towards greening, manufacturing, sale and utilization of green products, energy efficient technologies, switching to clean energy sources, enviro-friendly architectural and engineering designs, land use planning, agroforestry, waste recycling /reuse; products made from biodegradable materials, among others.

Why is it then Necessary to have NCCC?

The effects of climate change as experienced today calls for emergency. Most of the socio-economic, health and security challenges facing us can be directly or indirectly linked to climate change. In an attempt to get United States support for Nigeria, the U.S ambassador, John Campbell on July 13, 2017 made this submission:

“Nigeria’s present security challenges are related, directly and indirectly, to the consequences of climate change. Two major manifestations of climate change in Nigeria are desertification and rising sea levels. Both are the context for, and contribute to, the security challenges that undermine the Nigerian state and thereby challenge U.S. security interests in Africa.... Less arable land, less water, and more people is a recipe for a cycle of violence.

Already in 2012, there was devastating river and coastal flooding, ultimately affecting 32 of Nigeria’s 36 states. Flooding killed at least 432, directly affected some 7 million, and resulted in 2.1 million internally displaced persons. The high level of casualties and property damage overwhelmed the official relief agencies, undermining popular confidence in the institutions of the Nigerian state.

The flooding in 2012 also had a serious economic impact. It disrupted petroleum production in the Niger Delta by about 500,000 barrels per day, causing a substantial loss in government revenue just when it was most needed for humanitarian relief.

Consideration of the social and political consequences of climate change is often based on future projections. In the case of Nigeria, however, the effects of climate change are already visible. It is an important contributing factor in ethnic and religious conflict, quarrels over land use, and the disaffection of at least some Nigerians from their government...”

Nigeria is already a party to the Paris Agreement on climate change. In September, 2016 President Muhammadu Buhari, signed the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, saying this demonstrated Nigeria’s commitment to a global effort to reverse the effects of the negative trend. According to him **“Nigeria is committed to reducing “Green House Gas Emissions unconditionally by 20 per cent and conditionally by 45 per cent” in line with Nigeria’s Nationally Determined Contributions.**” On March 28th 2017 the president signed the instrument of ratification of the agreement. The national assembly on their part is already proposing a bill for an annual budget of not less than 0.5% allocation for this. For there to be effective implementation and for the actualization of the goals of the agreement there must be a commission backed up by law to handle this.

Would NCCC not amount to Duplication of already existing Agencies?

Not really! **As a council, YES; but as a commission, NO!** A council will be more like a committee set up to deliberate or discuss issues without real powers to execute. And because agencies, departments and parastatals dealing with climate and climate change issues are scattered in the various ministries, it will be difficult to actualize the goals of the Paris Agreement as promised. In fact, if it is a council, the activities will not be different from sit, discuss and share the sitting allowance. Even when allocations are made to these agencies, it will only amount to complains of inadequate funds to wastages of resources due to duplications.

A commission on the other hand is more or less an independent entity with real executive mandates. They are set-up during emergencies or to handle urgent needs considered critical to National health and development. And that is what the effects of climate change call for.

What we knew since 2009 when the move was first made by the 6th National assembly was a National Climate Change Commission. The reason why the bill has change to National Council for Climate Change, calls for investigation. But as we have always maintained we have had several of such **“talking bodies”** on climate

change issues, what we need now is real action. This we feel a commission rather than a council will give us. At least, we will have a commission to be held responsible if lapses arise.

We can borrow the idea of the Republic of Philippines who had since 2009 established a climate change commission, and are already benefiting. According to their legal provision “*The Commission shall be an independent and autonomous body and shall have the same status as that of a national government agency. It shall be attached to the Office of the President. The Commission shall be the sole policy-making body of the government which shall be tasked to coordinate, monitor and evaluate the programs and action plans of the government relating to climate change...*”.

Therefore the following agencies, departments, parastatals and units from their various ministries should be mainstreamed into the commission:

Ministry	Agency/Department/Parastatal and Unit
Ministry of Environment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) 2. National Environmental Standards & Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) 3. Department of climate change 4. National Adaptation Strategy and Plan of Action on Climate Change for Nigeria (NASPA-CCN) 5. Department of Forestry
Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fresh and Brackish Water Station Unit 2. National Programme on Agriculture and Food Security
Ministry of Health	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Epidemiological Service Unit 2. Neglected Tropical Diseases Unit 3. Climate Change unit
Ministry of Aviation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NIMET)
Ministry of Transport	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nigerian Maritime Administration and Security Agency (NIMASA) 2. Nigerian Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA)

There should be a close tie between the commission and the Ministries of Water Resources; Science and Technology; Budget and National Planning; Industry, Trade & Investment; and then ministry of information and culture. Data sharing between them will be highly necessary. Since climate change directly affects water resources, information from the NCCC will be needed in the ministry of water resources in the management of the River Basin Development Areas. The relationship between the commission and the Ministry of Science and technology will be symbiotic. Agencies such as National Space Research and Development Agency (NARSDA) will provide satellite imageries for the commission which will enable them identify areas at risk and vulnerable to the effects of climate change, while information from the commission will be employed in the design of enviro-friendly technologies. Likewise, the Ministry of Industry, Trade & Investment will take advantage of this information on what to invest on. Whereas; the need for a re-orientation as it concerns climate change should be taken seriously by the National Orientation Agency, climate change unit. **Whether, we like it or not, climate change is changing the global economy**, the Ministry of Budget and National Planning as a matter of urgency must begin to direct their attention towards this by making it a priority, if Nigeria must compete favorably within comity of nations in future.

We must not forget the place of private and international agencies concern with climate change issues. Individuals and companies into Environmental Impacts Assessment (EIA), Environmental Auditing; manufacturing and promotion of green products must be encouraged and supervised by NCCC. Also, the local people must not be left out. Through creating the necessary awareness and instilling the consciousness, because as they adopt enviro-friendly practices, restoring our degraded environment will be actualized in no distant time.

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