

Chapter 7

Israeli Actions

According to the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol, Israel is a Non Annex 1 Country (See chapter 4Ci), thus, it is not required to reduce GHG emissions. However, Israel's economic development level is as high as that of a developed country, and a future international agreement may very well change its status to commit to emissions cuts, as already stated in this folder (See introduction to chapter 6).

It is highly recommended that Israel adopt more proactive policies, and promote a vigorous climate policy before it is required to do so by an international agreement. This tremendous climate crisis requires efforts and commitment by Israel and its neighbors. It is logical to get a head start, especially during the conditions of the current economic crisis. A climate policy can be an incentive for economic growth and technological innovation.



Picture of prototype of Shai Agassi's Better Place Electric Car
Source: http://www.betterplace.com/images/photos/HAD_25051.jpg

Though an effective climate policy is increasingly recognized as important in international processes and national advancements made by developed countries, the issue remains marginal in public Israeli discourse and in governmental approach.

In December 2007, the Prime Minister referred to the Bali UN Convention in Indonesia, saying that “all government offices are required to adjust their policies to environment protection needs, and be aware of environmental considerations throughout their actions.”¹ In April 2008, the government held a special assembly in the countryside to celebrate Earth Day. The assembly noted that “Israel aspires to be one of the world’s developed countries, and will commit to cope with the climate crisis by using its knowledge and technology.”² Nevertheless, in contrast to these statements, no targets have been set to reduce emissions, the considerations have not been implemented, and thus, no climate policy has been added to the government agenda.

This chapter will summarize the first steps made by the government to face the climate crisis. With an absence of governmental initiative, parliament and local authorities must also promote certain actions. The Jewish National Fund (KKL) has also begun to develop plans for afforestation and desert “pushing.” NGOs are also making important headway to promote a climate policy in Israel.

1 Governmental secretary’s closing announcement at the December 9th government meeting, 2007.

<http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMO/Archive/mazkir/2007/12/govmes091207.htm>

2 Governmental secretary’s closing announcement at the April 13th government meeting, 2008.

<http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMO/Secretarial/Govmes/2008/04/govmes130408.htm>

a. The Ministry of Environmental Protection: Israel's Preparations for Global Climate Changes

The Ministry of Environmental Protection in Israel is one of the smaller offices in government with an extremely limited budget. Though progress has been made and environmental issues are now considered more important, it is still a “niche issue” not sufficiently addressed in government offices. The Ministry of Environmental Protection is responsible for coping with climate change, and a poor budget may severely affect how well it addresses all areas of life: the state of the water economy, energy economy, agriculture, public health, sea, beaches and infrastructure.

The Chief Scientist Bureau of the Ministry prepared a document stating Israel's preparation to address global climate change as a first step in the Israeli climate policy.³ This document summarizes climate change impacts on Israel, and offers recommendations for intermediate action. The document will present a future second stage that will include steps taken by countries in the region, but its completion may take several years.

In the meantime, the ministry continues to consult Israeli and international authorities about how to formulize a climate policy and reduce future emissions in Israel. However, NGOs fear this to be an insufficient approach. Instead of setting targets for GHG emission cuts and proposing a sector-wide plan to achieve them (the “top-down” approach), the ministry examines individual projects (the “bottom-up” approach). This cost-benefit examination does not allow the Israeli economy to prepare for the various risks and opportunities hidden in the changing economic and political surroundings.

The ministry of Environmental Protection also coordinates the Israeli delegations to UN climate change conventions.

³ Golan-Angleco, I. and Brawer, Y. “Israel's Preparations for Global Climate Changes” *The Chief Scientist Bureau of the Ministry of Environmental Protection* 2008, Jerusalem

http://www.sviva.gov.il/Environment/Static/Binaries/ModulKvatzim/po475_1.pdf

http://www.sviva.gov.il/Environment/Static/Binaries/ModulKvatzim/climat_change_0808_1.ppt

b. Energy Efficiency Program

The energy generation sector contributes to most of the GHG emissions in Israel. Every future climate program will have to begin with the energy economy. Israel's electricity consumption continues to rise (See chapter 2b), and the country has no strategic plan to run the energy economy and moderate rising demands.

A government decision was made in September 2008 to reduce electricity consumption and become energy efficient.⁴ According to the Ministry of National Infrastructure, the expected rise in electricity demand by 2020 (compared to 2006) will be reduced by 20%, and an intermediate efficiency target was set at 10% by the end of 2012.

Home As A System: Increase Your Energy Efficiency In The Following Areas

1. Wind Turbines
2. Skylight Covers
3. Insulation (Blown & Foam)
4. Radiant Barrier
5. Caulking
6. Thermal Windows
7. Soffit Vents
8. Solar Screens & Tint
9. Weather Stripping
10. A/C & Ducts
11. Attic Tents
12. Knee Wall Insulation



Source: Kangaroo Building Services, available at:
<http://kangaroobuilding.com>

Government offices will appoint responsible administrators for energy efficiency to conduct energy surveys. Tenders to hire professional counseling services were advertised in order to reach these targets. These professional counselors will conduct electricity consumption surveys and help public systems cut back on electricity.

This program does not actually cope with current electricity cuts, but more with reducing the rate of the growing demand. The program does not set targets to reduce GHG emissions either. On the contrary, the electric company continues its plans to set up a new carbon power station that will raise GHG emissions in Israel by 10.5%.⁵

⁴ Steps for Energy Efficiency – electric consumption cuts decision no. 150 in the ministers' society and economic committee from 01.09.2008, which was added to government decision protocol and was put into force on 18.09.2008, no. 4095.

<http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMO/vadot/so-econo/des4095.htm>

⁵ Teva V' din, Adam. "On the stupidity of building another carbon power station (Project D) in Ashkelon."

http://www.adamteva.org/il/_Uploads/dbsAttachedFiles/AshkelonPower_08.pdf

c. Private Law Proposal and Parliament Actions

In the absence of a government policy, legislated or otherwise, the Knesset promoted a private proposal that aims to “set targets to considerably reduce GHG emissions aims to prevent climate changes, decrease air pollution, sustain public health, and protect the environment.”⁶ Formulated by Adam Teva V’din, the bill was signed by 70 members of the Knesset, and was promoted in the Internal and Environmental Protection Committee which was led by one of its initiators, Ofir Pines. The bill set a target of reducing 25% of GHG emissions by 2020, and 50% by 2050, compared to the year 2000.



Green rooftops simulation in Jerusalem (courtesy of Heschel center)

The bill passed a preliminary discussion, and was approved by the committee for a first vote. However, government offices headed by the Ministry of Environmental Protection objected to the bill and it was not voted on in the 17th Knesset. It is necessary to restart the whole legislation process once the next parliament convenes, since only the bills approved by a first vote receive ‘consecutive law.’

Representatives from the Ministry of Environmental Protection claimed that setting targets was premature, and that “the ministry prefers working to reduce emissions without having quantitative targets and deadlines forced on them.”⁷ Parliament member Ofir Pines presented a

⁶ Law proposal to reduce GHG emissions, 2008 <http://www.knesset.gov.il/privatelaw/data/17/3353.rtf>

⁷ Want less GHG but afraid to commit, Ynet article. <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3613717,00.html>

compromise proposal to leave targets open for discussion during the legislation process towards the second and third votes, but this proposal was also denied.

Before discussions about the bill advanced, the Knesset assembly asked to adopt a national program to cope with climate change. The assembly was part of a special discussion initiated by parliament member Dov Hanin, chairman of the environmental–social lobby, in November 2007. Hanin presented president Shimon Peres with a report drawn from academic figures and a group of NGOs, called “Local Response to the Global Crisis.”⁸ The report includes recommendations to Israeli policy makers on how to cope with climate change. Among other things, the report recommends adopting an alternative energy policy, revolutionizing public transportation, promoting water policies, building green communities, and also discusses “environmental economy” issues.

Members of parliament were also involved with climate change in Knesset committees, and relevant documents were drawn up in the research center at their request. Parliament member, Ofir Pines, asked for the contribution of “Green Roofs” to help counteract global warming,”⁹ and the presentation of the “global warming and its impacts on Israel” document before a science and technology committee discussion. The committee stated “alongside inter-offices committees and research funding, practical policy steps must be taken right now, for a systematic action facing the global warming issue and its impacts on Israel.”¹⁰

⁸ Local Response to the Global Crisis <http://www.sviva.net/filesystem/local.doc>

⁹ Tal. “‘Green roofs’ Contribution to Reducing Global Warming.” *The Knesset Research and Data Center*, 2007
<http://www.knesset.gov.il/mmm/data/docs/m01841.doc>

¹⁰ Goldsmid “Global Warming and its Impacts on Israel” *The Knesset Research and Data Center*, 2007
<http://www.knesset.gov.il/mmm/data/docs/m01920.doc>

d. Cities for Reducing Air Pollution and Climate Protection Campaign

Whilst the central government in Israel is taking its first steps to build a climate policy, and has yet to develop a solid plan to reduce emissions, the local government began promoting considerable actions to protect the climate. The “Forum 15”¹¹ consists of 15 major cities that came together on February 13 2008 under the Cities for Climate Protection program (ICLEI), to commit to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. The forum began implementing a project to reduce GHG emissions in cities, acknowledging the strength and significance major cities have in leading actions for change.

Forum 15 incorporates cities with independent financial resources, all of which do not receive government balancing grants. Naturally, these are major cities from which most of the country’s GHG emissions originate. City residents suffer from air pollution and are exposed to diseases because of close proximity to emission sources. The cities in the forum actually supply services to 80% of the country’s population, and where close to 3 million people (40% of Israeli’s population) reside.

The forum, together with other cities in Israel, works to implement the ICLEI climate campaign (See chapter 6Fi) and the Clinton Initiative (See chapter 6Fii) to reduce GHG emissions, promote efficiency in energy use, transportation and fuels in city zones. In February 2008, city mayors signed a joint agreement to reduce air pollution and protect the climate.¹² The agreement committed them to cut at least 20% of GHG emissions in the cities between 2000 and 2020, and to prepare a municipal action plan.

According to instructions, the municipal action plan will refer to four main issues: transportation and fuels, energy conservation and green construction, waste and recycling, and green areas. The plan will be structured according to five steps defined by ICLEI:

1. Determine a basic inventory and forecast major sources of inner city air pollution and GHG emissions.
2. Set quantitative targets to reduce air pollution and GHG emissions in the cities by 2020.
3. Adopt the long and short term ‘Local Action Plan,’ which will operate to reduce air pollution and cut GHG emission according to the prescribed quantitative targets.
4. Implement the ‘Local Action Plan,’ including all means and actions it connotes.
5. Monitor and control air pollution and GHG emission levels, and consistently report all actions and means taken to implement the ‘Local Action Plan.’

¹¹ Forum 15, independent cities forum <http://www.forum15.org.il>

¹² Forum 15 agreement to reduce air pollution and protect the climate 13.2.08
http://www.forum15.org.il/art_images/files/72/hoveretmitve.pdf

The Center for Local Sustainability assists and guides the forum.¹³

A website was launched in addition to relevant information presented on the Forum 15's website. The site presents the practical intents of the agreement, including action disciplines, professional commitment, and planned and practiced programs and initiatives.¹⁴ The site also presents examples of projects implemented in Israel and around the world, as well as activities run by commercial businesses with unique services and products for reducing air pollution and protecting the climate.

Some of the projects promoted in Israeli cities are: intelligent treatment of waste in Petach Tikva, developing bicycle lanes in Tel Aviv, electronic mopeds in Jerusalem and air quality monitoring in Haifa.

¹³The Center for Local Sustainability <http://www.kayamut.org.il>

¹⁴ Making green, the treaty to reduce air pollution in Israel's major cities <http://yerukim.kahuna.co.il>

e. Environmental Organizations Activity

Producing this folder is one of the many types of activities initiated by non-government environmental organizations. NGOs draw the attention of policy makers towards the importance of coping with climate change and developing a proactive climate policy in Israel.

Friends of the Earth Middle East (FoEME), in particular, participates in joint activities with Israeli environmental organizations and attends international climate change conventions. During the UNFCCC COP13, FoEME published a document stating the expected impacts of climate change on human societies and economies. The report presents security implications on political stability in the region, which is not very stable to begin with.¹⁵ (Document principals depicted in chapter 3c).

Many organizations in Israel respond to climate change with a range of activities to promote sustainable environment development. One of the most prominent activities is the struggle against the construction of a new carbon power station in Ashkelon (Project D). Activating this station will considerably increase GHG emissions. Another notable activity is promoting the development of sustainable, non-motorized transportation and mass transportation instead of depending on private passenger vehicles. Organizations also work to promote local municipal sustainability, preservation of open areas, the enhancement of recycling and waste management systems, “green” construction, and more.

In 2002, prior to the Earth Summit held in Johannesburg, South Africa, environmental NGOs gathered together to produce a “Shadow Report” parallel to the report Israel produced on sustainable development. FoEME was a main delegate of this gathering, which became a coalition for active organizations named “Paths to Sustainability”¹⁶ with the goal of promoting sustainable development in Israel and examining government actions. The coalition works with policy makers, publishes reports and participates in sustainable development and climate change forums in Israel and around the world.

¹⁵ FoEME, “Climate Change: A New Threat to Middle East Security.” December 2007.
http://www.foeme.org/index_images/dinamicas/publications/publ78_1.pdf.

¹⁶ “Paths to Sustainability” Coalition http://www.sviva.net/Info.php?docId=coaliton_main