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Are Corporations Doing Enough to Combat Climate Change, or Is Government Intervention Necessary?

Over the past years, there has been a proliferation of corporate climate promises, there has been a rising academic literature and reports on how these voluntary actions are often inadequate to what climate science needs. The emissions-reduction targets set by many companies, though seemingly impressive on paper, do not have quite the credibility, transparency, or scope that would be part of the goal that the Paris Agreement has determined of limiting warming to 1.5°C. Examples include the fact that scientists have highlighted that using voluntary corporate targets, without alternative actions is not sufficient to ensure meaningful emissions reductions and may even postpone tougher regulation and innovation that would lead to a faster decarbonization of the world (Imperial College London, 2024). In the meantime, it can be evaluated that there are widespread deficits in corporate accountability and uncertain results of proclaimed objectives, which point to disjunctures between the promises and outcomes (Jiang et al., 2025). The effects of climate change among corporations can be mitigated by eco-innovation and pertinent climate governance, largely, but only voluntary strategies and greenwashing are not enough to address the perspectives of the government and enforce binding rules to hold corporations responsible and aligned in their practices with global climate objectives.

Regardless of these positive signs, critics have pointed out that corporate climate action has not been ambitious enough to prevent catastrophic warming, which contributes to the claim that a lot of corporations are not doing their fair share. For example, studies of corporate emissions reduction goals reveal that even large international companies often intend to make reductions far less than science suggests is necessary to hold global warming to less than 1.5°C and often fund much of their efforts with carbon reductions instead of actual ones (Simon Jessop, 2024). This implies that even though corporations can declare obligations publicly, the actual instances are inadequate to correspond with the set aims agreed internationally.

Behind these failures lies the continuing presence of the phenomenon of greenwashing and the lack of effective corporate governance responsibility, which further suppresses the credibility of corporate climate. The evidence on corporate governance confirms that well-established governance mechanisms, including environmental committees and climate disclosure transparency, enhance a higher chance of real emissions reduction, i.e., when corporations have poorly established governance structures, chances of real improvements are low (AlHares, 2025). This implies that in the absence of internal regulations and incentives that enable the aligning of corporate interests to climate performance, companies are likely to carry on with symbolic or cosmetic initiatives that do not have significant effects on reducing the levels of emission.

The role of the government is therefore vital so that corporations can be constrained to scientifically based climate standards instead of voluntary targets that range in their ambition. Corporations tend to shift their strategy toward outcome measures when policy-imposed stricter-form emissions requirements, such as carbon taxing, emissions intensity limits, or obligatory reporting of climate risks, come into effect (Chi & Yang, 2024). In fact, the legal and economic framework in which corporate climate action is feasible and responsible can be established through public policy.

It is argued that corporations will become more efficient in innovating without being constrained by government, as more incentive structures in the market are more likely to drive faster changes in technology rather than regulation (Stern, 2022). Nevertheless, the magnitude and the urgency of climate change complicate this assumption; the market is frequently not interested in the long-term health of the planet, but in immediate profits. A global and systemic way to combat climate change, including the elimination of fossil fuels, the massive adoption of renewable energy sources, etc., demands concerted policy actions.

In conclusion, it is possible to state that business can have a significant contribution to the elimination of climate change, but the current voluntary measures cannot be evaluated according to the interests of science due to the poor system of governance and reliance on a high number of offsets. As such, the governments ought to step in through regulations, where they compel corporations to report as well as to commit themselves to contribute to good faith, responsibly, and timely to the global climate goals.

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