

Practice 2(b): Finding flaws in the argument (continued)

Sample essay 4: 'Global Warming Requires a Global Solution'. Discuss.

- 1 Global warming is affecting all of us. We are constantly bombarded with worrying media items about environmental degradation, melting ice-caps, rising sea levels and forest fires. Everyone is trying to play their part, whether recycling clothes, reducing their carbon footprint or planting trees. Veganism is on the rise to help reduce animal emissions. Some people ration the holidays they take or the amount of time they spend on social media and recharging their device. The Paris Agreement was agreed in 2015 as a means of limiting long-term climate change or 'global warming' by asking countries to sign up to reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. It seeks to limit overall increase in global temperature to below two degrees Celsius over the next few years, following its official ratification in 2021. Although many countries have now signed up, actions taken by High-, Medium- and Low-Income Countries (HICS, MICS and LICs) have fallen short.
- 2 The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report suggests that we have probably left it too late to make the changes suggested by the Paris Agreement. Even if all carbon dioxide emissions ceased today, there would be ongoing climatic changes and global warming leading to effects such as rising sea levels and subsequent contamination of drinking water. It argues that effects will be disruptive and at worst catastrophic. We must act now and make it a crime to deny climate change.
- 3 Given the consequences of climate change, it is madness for any nation not to set ambitious targets for action. Those countries not setting ambitious targets have generally failed to invest in sustainable energy projects. Indeed, many LICs are actually increasing their use of dangerous fossil fuels. Most HICS have invested in large and costly projects to reduce harmful carbon emissions and are now making a positive difference to climate change, but most LICs have not. This shows that some countries are in denial about the cause and impact of climate change. After years of struggle to get High-Income Countries (HICs) to reduce emissions we now face a situation where many ignorant politicians in Low-Income Countries (LICs) are refusing to take action and are boosting the rate of emissions. LICs are using the threats created by climate change as political leverage on the global stage. The world needs to hold these LICs to account for behaviour that amounts, in effect, to criminal negligence, and penalise them if they refuse to set ambitious targets to reduce emissions.
- 4 This behaviour must really stick in the throats of HICs. Having worked hard to reduce emissions and ratify the Paris Agreement, the very countries they have been seeking to protect and support, LICs, suddenly decide that they could and should have got a better deal. Having complained about the impact of HICs' burning fossil fuel through industry, LICs seem to think

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it is reasonable for them to now increase their own emissions through industrialisation. Although Wangdi says every nation has a role to play, he complains that HICs have not done enough to provide the promised financial support to LICs – the \$100 billion a year they promised. In effect, Wangdi is saying LICs have a moral right not to reduce emissions. This suggests Wangdi doesn't trust HICs and their commitment to funding LICs to take action against climate change, even though considerable funding has been provided. The position of LICs is rather like children refusing to eat a perfectly good meal put in front of them because it's not exactly what they wanted to eat. Ultimately, refusing to eat only hurts them in the end.

- 5 This sense of a hollow argument is increased when one looks at the real reasons LICs are jumpy about taking action – using cheap fossil fuels gives them cheap industry costs, which enables them to take business away from HICs who use costlier but cleaner energy. Even though there is clear evidence of the damage this is causing to the planet, politicians in LICs are absolutely ridiculous, believing that the most important consideration is that they are allowed to pollute their way towards full industrialisation!
- 6 LICs have suggested that it is not fair of HICs to expect them to set and implement action plans as it would mean taking actions and introducing restrictions that HICs have been reluctant to introduce themselves. In many cases, LICs are only burning more fossil fuels now because HICs have ceased some of their polluting activities but still want to buy products or services cheaply from developing nations that have a heavy use of fossil fuels. Whilst complaining about HICs not doing enough to support renewable forms of energy, some LICs are very keen to preserve the economic advantage that burning fossil fuels is now giving them. They have a vested interest in seeing the Agreement fail.
- 7 Ultimately, these countries' failures to address rising global temperatures means that they are laying the seeds of their own future misfortunes. Long-term global warming is anticipated to cause significant climate changes, so they will have to deal with flooding in their cities and tourist areas and drought in agricultural areas. However, as these do not have an impact on them now, LICs feel justified in this short-term strategy of making money and protecting their own interests first. This leads to them claiming that it is only fair that LICs get their chance to do what HICs got rich on doing for years. They are making an economic argument rather than a humanitarian one. They think that economic advantage is more important than people's lives. Obviously, the actions of LICs are unacceptable. Everybody knows people can't opt out of taking action just because it doesn't suit them. We all have to be part of the global solution to global warming.

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References

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