

Hi JSGS students,

It was great to meet you at the workshop last night. Thanks for staying late to attend!

As promised, I've included here some model briefing notes. Here are links to the BC briefing notes we discussed last night. The links are also in the slides.

http://docs.openinfo.gov.bc.ca/D52841714A_Response_Package_FIN-2014-00111.PDF

http://docs.openinfo.gov.bc.ca/D9749515A_Response_Package_EAO-2014-00077.PDF

http://docs.openinfo.gov.bc.ca/D27498914A_Response_Package_FNR-2014-00127.PDF

Here is another model of a response briefing note:

<http://www.publicsectorwriting.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/EXAMPLE-Briefing-Note-for-Information.pdf>

Finally, below is a response briefing note written by a student in one of my courses last year. I thought he did a good job. This was the assignment he wrote the briefing note for:

For this assignment you are an analyst in the Government of Norway's Ministry of Climate and the Environment. A new minister – Ms. Inger Bensen – was appointed last week. She was formerly the minister of Children, Equity and Social Inclusion. Minister Bensen will be attending the 2015 United Nations Climate Change conference in Paris this November. You have been asked to brief her on Norway's recent divestment from coal. Of course, as a member of the government, Ms. Bensen knows about the divestment. However, she is not familiar with all the details, nor with the responses of other European countries and officials to Norway's decision. Prepare a briefing note of one to two pages informing Minister Bensen of the issues surrounding the divestment, especially those that are likely to be raised at the meeting in Brussels and by the Norwegian and world press.

Briefing Note Assignment

To: Inger Bensen, Minister of Climate and Environment

From, Runar Larsen, Analyst

Date: November 1, 2015

COP21: Responses to Expected Questions on Norway's Divestment from Coal

Issue

Norway is divesting its sovereign wealth fund from coal, with the goal of cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Whether the divestment will affect emissions is disputed, and criticism may be directed at Norway at the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris (COP21). This note will explain the divestment scheme and offer advice on response strategies to potential criticism.

Background

Basic facts and general development of the Government Pension Fund Global (GPFG).

- GPFG manages state revenues from Norway's oil and gas industry.

- GPF, worth 7 321 billion NOK, is the world's largest sovereign wealth fund. The fund owns 1,3 % of the world's listed companies through its assets in over 9000 companies.
- Norges Bank Investment Management (NBIM) manages GPF.
- Norwegians are demanding ethical governance of the country's wealth.
- Ethical guidelines for companies to be included in GPF were carried in 2004. A council on Ethics advises NBIM whether investments are from companies in violation of the guidelines.
- The NBIM excludes companies from the GPF that violate human rights or expose the public to health risks. Violators include the tobacco and arms industries.
- The environmental movement in Norway is pressuring Parliament to include environmental ethics in the guidelines. It has called for all fossil fuel industries to be banned from investment in the fund.
- In April 2014, a panel was formed to determine if divestment from coal and petroleum companies is more effective than ownership strategies in addressing climate change.
- In December 2014, the panel delivered its recommendations. It concluded that the GPF is effective when using the weight of the Fund to negotiate with companies to become green.
- The panel also recommended new conduct-based criteria that would allow for the exclusion of companies with unacceptable levels of greenhouse gas emissions.

Current Status

On June 5th 2015, after lengthy negotiations, all political parties agreed on a set of recommendations on how to follow up on the panel's report:

- The parties reaffirmed the political consensus that GPF's goal is to secure long-term investments and stressed that a requirement for this is sustainable development.
- Parliament asked the Government to create a conduct-based and a product-based criterion for exclusion from the fund. Divestment should occur if a company bases 30 % or more of its activities on coal or derives 30 % or more of its revenues from coal,
- The recommendation leaves a window for companies who can show GPF that they have plans to reduce their use of coal. This window will be ensured through a policy mechanism chain that will reward companies who wish to take green steps.

Critical Reactions to the Divestment Policy

- The EU welcomes the divestment policy, but spokesperson Miles Sykes said it is hypocritical of Norway to only point fingers at coal producers because Norway is Europe's biggest producer of fossil fuels such as oil and gas. He calls for Norway to do more.
- Director of Norwegian Coal Bjorn Arne argues that it is hypocritical of Norway to itself extract coal in the northern archipelago of Svalbard while continuing to allow mining waste to be dumped into its fjords.
- Don Drummond, spokesperson for the World Coal Association, claims that the coal industry is committed to reducing emissions and that Norway's divestments from the coal industry will not impact the industry. He maintains that there are plenty of investors because growing economies are increasingly relying on coal.
- Other predictions from the coal industry show that coal will soon surpass oil as the biggest single source of energy.
- A 2014 United Nations report concluded that divestment movements have limited effect as companies can easily attract new investors.

Positive Reactions to the Divestment

- Director of the IMF Christine Lagarde applauds Norway's move. The IMF claims that divestments do create unease in the market, as shown by a fall in coal prizes.

- Head of the Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change (IPCC), Joseph Lambert says that the GPFG divestment strategy is an important step in building momentum. He claims that the strategy is one of “moral shaming,” and that long term, the coal industry will lose investors.
- Rosalie Penetta, Director of United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), claims that divestment from coal is morally right. She views the divestment as a good departure point for the eventual international rejection of coal.

Suggested response strategy

Response to claims of hypocrisy:

1. Focus on all the other issues that Norway is working for in the Paris agreement.
2. Maintain that Norway has started to prepare for a green shift domestically, and that the coal production in Svalbard will be phased out.
3. Remind the critics that coal remains the single biggest source of greenhouse gases.

Response to claims that divestment does not work:

1. Urge other nations to follow Norway’s example to reduce the attractiveness of coal.
2. Call for a global agreement to commit resources to reduce coal dependency through research and technology development.