Spot on facts

COMPREHENSION

1 Compare your results from Task 1 on the introduction page to the items . . .

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- **Introduction:** waste and waste disposal, loss of habitats and extinction of species, inadequate fishing methods, deforestation and cutting down of tropical rainforests, droughts, water scarcity and climate change
- **Spot on facts:** overpopulation, increasing demand for food production and transportation, increasing demand for energy, greenhouse gas emissions, megafloods, exploitation of natural resources, air pollution and water pollution, global warming, the depletion of the ozone layer, increasing land use, land degradation, loss of biodiversity
- **Additional ideas:** land grabbing, tourism and travel, individual transport, overfishing, urbanisation, desertification etc.

VISUALS

2 Look at the diagram and comment on the distribution of CO_2 emissions.

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The first pie chart shows that in absolute terms, China (with 8,081 million tons) was the chief producer of CO_2 emissions in the world in 2011, followed closely by the US (with 5,994 million tons). The chart clearly shows that all attempts to reduce CO_2 emissions will have little impact without involving China and the US. The two states are responsible for about two-thirds of the emissions of seven large countries shown in the chart.

The second chart paints a slightly different picture: The countries with the highest per capita emissions of CO_2 are the US (18.0 tons) and Canada (16.1 tons). In China average CO_2 emissions are substantially lower than in the US; they are also lower than in Germany. What the second chart demonstrates very clearly is that the distribution of CO_2 emissions is very uneven: for example, in India average CO_2 emissions comprise of less than a tenth of those in the US.

If the carbon footprint of people all over the world were as large as that of people in the US, that would have catastrophic consequences for environment, the atmosphere and life on earth in general. A fair reduction of emissions should take the unequal distribution of CO_2 emissions into account, meaning that pressure should be put on those countries that have high per capita emissions, and not on the countries with high absolute numbers, since those numbers are due to their large populations.

EVALUATION

3 Explain why or why not the information in this table is convincing. → S27

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The information is convincing:
- Both absolute and relative numbers are given, and they complement each other. Giving only absolute numbers would have been misleading.
- The focus is on important countries only, which adds to the clarity of the information given.

The information is not convincing;
- The chart on absolute numbers is irrelevant and unconvincing – it makes people think that China should be the chief addressee of demands for a reduction in CO_2 emissions.
- The information provided on CO_2 emissions is very incomplete since only seven out of over 200 countries in the world are represented. Both pie charts are misleading since a superficial look at them might make readers think that the countries mentioned are responsible for 100 per cent of CO_2 emissions.
- What is missing is information on the emission of other greenhouse gases, such as methane, a gas which is known to be more harmful and noxious than CO_2.

Green Line
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