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LONDON—In 1961, when the United States was faced with the threat of falling behind the Soviet Union in the space race, President John F. Kennedy called for a program—eventually known as Project Apollo—to put a man on the moon before the end of the decade. The program's clearly articulated vision—and the resources and effort mustered in its service—ensured its success. Just eight years after Kennedy's announcement, astronaut Neil Armstrong pressed his footprint into the lunar dust.

As representatives from 196 countries prepare to gather in Paris at the end of the year to craft an agreement to tackle global warming, it is becoming clear that we need a similar project. In early June, I joined David King, a former chief scientific adviser to the British government, former BP CEO John Browne, and several other coauthors in a call for a Global Apollo Program.

Until now, the diplomatic effort to prevent dangerous climate change has focused on coordinating national cuts in greenhouse-gas emissions. But what is needed is more spending, not just more coordination.

The decade-long effort we propose would require the whole planet to work together to make a breakthrough in the fight against climate change. It would seek to reduce the cost of electricity from sources that do not emit greenhouse gases below that of coal power by 2025. In order to achieve this, countries joining the program would pledge to devote at least 0.02 percent of their GDP toward the effort.

David Attenborough, the British naturalist and broadcaster, has said of the proposal: "At last, we have an authoritative, practical, and comprehensive plan that could avert the catastrophe that is threatening our planet." Bjorn Lomborg, known for his skepticism toward traditional approaches to fighting climate change, has described this idea as "a much smarter approach and more likely to actually succeed."

Indeed, the most frequently floated proposals leave much to be desired. Many in Paris will argue in favor of putting a price on carbon, which most economists believe would channel consumption away from carbon-intensive fuels. But there are doubts about whether such a policy would be politically feasible. John Watson, CEO of Chevron, recently rejected carbon pricing as unworkable. "It's not a policy that is going to be effective, because customers want affordable energy," he said. "They want low energy prices, not high energy prices."

Similarly, national leaders in the developing world—where some three billion people do not have access to affordable energy—are under immense pressure to deliver standard-of-living improvements. They are likely to shy from policies that raise the cost of energy. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, for example, has called for global public investment in clean energy. "We are more likely to succeed if we offer affordable solutions, not simply impose choices," he argues. "This requires access to more resources and better technology."

A Global Apollo Program would help the world reduce its carbon-dioxide emissions and cut its energy bills. The price of solar energy is already plummeting: The National Bank of Abu Dhabi has

noted that a large solar installation in Dubai could produce energy at a price that would be competitive with oil at \$10 per barrel. But there are significant obstacles to the widespread use of solar energy and other sources of renewable electricity, including a desperate need for cheaper, more efficient means of energy storage and transmission.

Currently, only 2 percent of the world's investment in research and development is allocated to clean energy; at this rate, solutions to these problems are unlikely to be found anytime soon. The Global Apollo Program would double these investments and coordinate the effort to bridge the technological gaps, bringing forward the day when we can eliminate coal and other carbon-intensive fuels.

Following the recent G-7 summit in Germany, the leaders of the world's largest economies issued a pledge to "work together and with other interested countries to raise the overall coordination and transparency of clean energy research, development, and demonstration, highlighting the importance of renewable energy and other low-carbon technologies." But an initiative like the Global Apollo program will succeed only if the world's emerging powers, such as China and India, throw their weight behind it. They will have a chance to do so at the G-20 summit in Turkey in November.

The 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris must produce an agreement to introduce a price on carbon worldwide. But that approach will not work without a coordinated strategy to reduce the cost of carbon-free energy. If countries sign up to the Global Apollo Program as part of the agreement in Paris, the meeting might just mark one giant leap for humankind in the fight against climate change. Project Syndicate

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