

# CLIMATE COPENHAGEN CHANGE AND BEYOND



The 'Accord' that emerged out of the Copenhagen Conference is a slim document - it is only two and half pages long. What is more significant is that it did not come out of the two weeks of multilateral negotiation process of the Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC (COP 15 as the Copenhagen Conference is known) but from a backroom parley between the US and the BASIC bloc of countries.

Though the chairman of the COP tried to push it through the conference, the majority of the delegates refused to be cowed down. Decisions at the COP are made by consensus, and objections from several developing countries first to the undemocratic process and second to the content of the Accord, meant that the COP only "took note" of the document, and did not "adopt" it. In UN terms, taking note of a document gives it a low status. It means that the meeting did not approve or pass it, and did not view it either positively or negatively.

This is a sad reflection of the Copenhagen conference and the 17 years of negotiations since the Rio Summit in 1992 that this fraudulent document is being held up as its main achievement - an agreement that was not acceptable to the majority of the UNFCCC's membership.

## The Accord

Copenhagen climate talks were indeed historic. For their failure. In Bali in 2007, negotiators laid out the roadmap for a deal and gave themselves two years. The formula was simple and ethical: rich countries would cut emissions by 40 per cent below 1990 levels, by 2020, and put new money on the table. In exchange, emerging economies would join the effort, reducing emissions growth at home enabled by finance and technology from industrialized countries.

At Copenhagen, unfortunately, industrialized countries sabotaged all possibilities of progress. They had something else in mind..

But failure was not an option. One hundred and ten heads of state were flying to Copenhagen to sign a declaration; they could not all return with their pens unused. More than that, the Nobel prize-winning US president had to emerge as a deal maker. So in the final 48 hours, negotiators-who had laboured for years for a comprehensive deal- were brushed aside as heads of state, ministers and their top advisers took over.



Leaders started making deals in secret, in the middle of the night, in backrooms, on the fly. Carrots were offered; sticks were wielded. In the end, industrialized countries, with the last-minute complicity of India and China, penned an alarmingly weak deal-the so-called Copenhagen Accord-that appears designed to undermine the negotiations to date. Certain basic rules seem to have been changed forever. Under the captaincy of the US,

historical responsibility of the developed world in creating the climate crisis has been erased. The differentiation between rich and poor countries is gone. The rich world does not want to reduce emissions.

**Copenhagen According to USA**  
by Jaisel Vadagama (et.al), Down to Earth, 15 Jan 2010.  
[www.downtoearth.org.in](http://www.downtoearth.org.in)

## What was agreed-and what wasn't

*The main points of the Copenhagen Accord are easy to summarize:*

- Industrial countries must list their individual emissions reductions targets, and less-industrialized countries must list the actions they will take to cut emissions by specific amounts.
- All countries must accept a transparent system for monitoring their emissions.
- Poor countries will be paid to prevent deforestation.
- Wealthy nations will establish a fund (growing from 30 billion dollars per year to \$100 billion per year by 2020) to help poor and vulnerable nations adapt to climate change.
- Signatory nations accept a goal of limiting global warming to 2 degrees Celsius by 2050.
- The Accord creates a Technology Mechanism to accelerate development of low-carbon technology, but supplies no details.
- Criticisms of the Accord's substance (leaving aside complaints about the exclusion of most nations from negotiations, its abandonment of the U.N. framework, and so on) include the following:
  - The limit of 2 degrees C is too high. A limit of 1.5 degrees was already supported by over 100 countries and is necessary to avert catastrophic climate impacts.

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- The Accord offers no cap for CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations. The scientific consensus a few years ago was that an atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> level of 450 parts per million would translate to a temperature increase of 2 degrees over pre-industrial levels. By setting a limit of 2 degrees temperature increase without specifying a CO<sub>2</sub> cap, the Accord may implicitly be adhering to the older scientific consensus, which would mean a 450 ppm cap and 3 degrees or more of real temperature increase. Any scientific assessment of temperature and CO<sub>2</sub> targets is delayed until 2015.
- There is no target date for peaking of emissions mentioned in the Accord, just a vague suggestion that emissions should "peak as soon as possible."
- There are no global emissions targets for 2020 or 2050. Instead, the Accord merely proposes listing the voluntary targets of developed and developing countries. Based on current assessments of country promises, these 2020 targets will put the world on a track toward 3.5 to 4 degrees of warming.
- The Accord makes general statements about need for adaptation and an end to deforestation, but there is no concrete deal on reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation
- The promised finances for poor nations are too small. For example, African countries had sought \$400 billion in short-term financing for climate change adaptation, with an immediate amount of \$150 billion needed. Not only were much smaller amounts offered, but U.S. negotiators including Hillary Clinton implied that poor nations needed to "associate" themselves with the Ac-

cord in order to be eligible for funds.

While it was negotiated effectively in secret by five countries, many other nations have now signed on to it, and the signing countries together account for over 80 percent of total global emissions. Some countries, including the island nation of Tuvalu, have strongly repudiated the document

*The Meaning Of Copenhagen, Richard Heinberg, 9 January, 2010, Postcarbon.org*

*by Richard Heinberg, 09 January, 2010, counter currents org. <http://www.countercurrents.org/heinberg090110.htm>*

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## What it means?

The Copenhagen Accord is a short document of around 1,400 words, limited in detail and ambition. Though it is largely in line with the text of the 1992 Framework Convention on Climate Change, it is not legally binding. The agreement also reflects a new political reality in which the pursuit of either a second phase of the Kyoto Protocol or a new, legally binding Copenhagen agreement now appears unlikely.

Though the accord formally recognises that average global temperatures should not be allowed to rise by more than two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, it is not substantial enough to suggest that such a goal is achievable. Signatories "commit to implement quantified economy-wide emissions targets for 2020", but these targets are self-determined and the targets submitted by the United States or China, for instance, are likely contribute to warming of more than two degrees.

The United States and China, the world's largest historical contributor to climate change and the world's largest current emitter, were at the heart of the failure to

reach a more substantial agreement. Negotiators for the United States rejected the possibility that they might surpass the targets currently being debated in the senate - despite the fact these targets are considerably weaker than those of most developed country counterparts. China remained closed to the possibility that after 2020, the country might take on binding emissions caps - or that it should set a target for the year at which its emissions peak.

Not every developing nation supported this position. Tuvalu, a small island nation - most of that is no more than one-meter above sea level - staged a dramatic intervention during the first week of the conference. Echoing the cries of other small island states, Tuvalu called for the formation of a "Copenhagen Protocol", including ambitious targets to limit atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases to 350 parts per million (ppm), as opposed to the 450ppm recommended by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and temperature rise to no more than 1.5 degrees Cel-

sus. China rejected this proposal as it would have required Chinese emissions to peak very soon.

Further fractures between the previously aligned positions of developing nations became evident during the final days of the conference. A group of nations, including Sudan - which currently holds the presidency of the G77 - and a collection of Latin American nations refused to sign the accord. Cuban foreign minister Bruno Rodriguez denounced the accord, suggesting it was the work of an "imperial" and "arrogant" United States. China has since accused developed nations of "fomenting discord" among developing nations. But an obvious division has now emerged between the positions of more advanced developing nations - China, India, Brazil and South Africa - and the most vulnerable, least developed nations. This may explain why the US president Barack Obama chose to emphasise the crucial role that these emerging economies played in helping to reach a deal.

The accord drew the contours of a largely volun-

tary system, quite unlike the top-down, legally binding and international Kyoto Protocol, which allowed emissions trading between states and included a variety of flexible market mechanisms. If the agreement is used as a foundation in the coming months, then the prospect of nations complying with the Kyoto Protocol is likely to recede.

Neither is this a good deal for those seeking to invest in renewable energy or clean technologies. Investors are faced with an uncertain terrain of diverse national policies on climate change. This creates an uneven playing field and increases the possibility of high-carbon industries "leaking" to those countries with less stringent policies; and some countries imposing tariffs on carbon-intensive imports. Carbon prices fell to a six-month low shortly after the talks; the long-term outlook for international emissions trading now seems bleak.

*The Copenhagen accord, by Tan Copsey, Open Democracy 4 January 2010, [www.opendemocracy.net/tan-copsey/copenhagen-accord](http://www.opendemocracy.net/tan-copsey/copenhagen-accord)*

# The Drama

The Copenhagen accord was gavelled through in the early hours after a night of extraordinary drama and two weeks of subterfuge. It is a document that will shape the world, the climate and the balance of power for decades to come, but the story of how it came into existence is one of high drama and low politics.

American officials spun the deal as a "meaningful agreement", but even Obama said: "This progress

is not enough." "We have come a long way, but we have much further to go," he added.

Gordon Brown said the agreement was a "vital first step" and accepted there was a lot more work to do to get assurances it would become a legally binding agreement. He declined to call it a "historic" conference: "This is the first step we are taking towards a green and low carbon future for the world, steps we are

taking together. But like all first steps, the steps are difficult and they are hard."

"I know what we really need is a legally binding treaty as quickly as possible."

The deal was brokered between China, South Africa, India, Brazil and the US. The deal aims to provide \$30bn a year for poor countries to adapt to climate change from next year to 2012, and \$100bn a year by 2020.

But it disappointed African and other vulnerable countries, which had been

holding out for deeper emission cuts to hold the global temperature rise to 1.5C this century. As widely expected, all references to 1.5C in past drafts were removed at the last minute, but more surprisingly, the earlier 2050 goal of reducing global CO2 emissions by 80% was also dropped.

**Low targets, goals dropped: Copenhagen ends in failure** by John Vidal, Allegra Stratton and Suzanne Goldenberg, *The Guardian*. 19 December 2009.

[www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)

## Betrayed

It is a reflection of how farcical norms rule the roost at multilateral negotiations, be it the WTO, WIPO or, in this case, UNFCCC. The UN has completely failed to uphold democratic norms and has instead allowed itself to be dictated by countries that control its purse strings.

The UN Secretary General said that the "finishing line is in sight". For the island nations and billions of farmers in the developing world, this finishing line translates to an endgame for their livelihood and culture. President Obama calls it a "meaningful" agreement that will serve as a roadmap to future wherein all countries will have to figure out how best to serve the cause of the planet. Sorry Mr. President, what the deal does is to uphold the right of the mighty United States to continue polluting the planet.

What about the other major polluters - China and India? Both can vie with each other when it comes to flaunting weak environmental norms - some of the so-called banana republics have a better record of protecting the environment than these two. Here's a rain check on what the Indian delegation is peddling as a pyrrhic victory engineered by the BASIC bloc:

**Emission Cuts:** The US gets away with 14-17% reduction on 2005 levels i.e. 3-4% of the 1990 levels; EU, Japan and Russia agree to predetermined 1990 level cuts (Europeans now are the only binding carbon regime in the world). Target for 2050 suddenly goes missing from the text! Further, these emission cuts are not binding.

**Temperature:** Cap at 2 degrees. So what if more than 100 nations (a majority, if it were ever put to vote at UNFCCC) wanted it capped at 1.5 degrees or the fact that many island nations will go under at this higher level of temperature increase.

**Peaking of Carbon Emission:** No dates set. This is to please the BASIC bloc at the expense of the rest of the developing economies. Don't believe it? Well, this is how the text goes: "We should co-operate in achieving the peaking of global and national emissions as soon as possible, recognising that the time frame for peaking will be longer in developing countries". Can anything get vaguer than this?

It allows these countries to continue polluting, ensures that some, if not all, vulnerable island nations will submerge, and postpones a deal by a year till a meeting at Mexico happens next November. By that time, citizens of Tuvalu, Kiribati and Maldives, among others, would be on their knees desperately seeking rehabilitation and

citizenship in distant nations.

Yet again India played up to the politics of rich nations and deserted the developing countries. It actively participated in allowing an eraser to be run over unresolved issues in square brackets of the text. Today it stands responsible for the cracks in the G77 and at a later date may have to pay a heavy price at other multilateral platforms of negotiations, especially the WTO. While Jairam Ramesh and Mamohan Singh might gloat over their achievement at this disastrous summit, the truth is otherwise and the world knows. By endorsing this deal, India has sleepwalked into a global disaster **Climate accord betrays the vulnerable** by Bhaskar Goswami, 20 Dec 2009. [www.d-sector.org](http://www.d-sector.org)



"Just as George Bush did in the approach to the Iraq war, Obama went behind the backs of the UN and most of its member states and assembled a coalition of the willing to strike a deal that outraged the rest of the world. This was then presented to poorer nations without negotiation: either they signed it or they lost the adaptation funds required to help them survive the first few decades of climate breakdown."

- George Monbiot

# Copenhagen cop out

It is apparent to everyone that the Copenhagen Accord is a travesty of what the world needs to avert climate change. Instead of an ambitious, effective, equitable and binding treaty with stringent emissions-cut targets for developed nations, we have a hollow Accord without legal status

The Accord mocks the efforts of a majority of nations to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Climate science is unanimous that emissions must peak by 2020 and then fall by one-half by 2050 if catastrophic climate change is to be averted with a 50-percent probability. Many scientists now believe atmospheric greenhouse concentrations must be limited to 350 parts per million.

Under the Accord, concentrations will double to

600 ppm-plus, with warming rising to 4°C. This spells the near-extinction of 40-odd island states and consigns two billion people to growing hunger, dispossession and displacement through cyclones, floods and droughts, aggravated by glacier melting, deforestation and desertification. The worst victims will be vulnerable people, including half-a-billion-plus Indians.

The Accord couldn't have materialised without the collusion of BASIC, led by China, with the US-led North. China cynically refused quantitative targets even for the North. Disgracefully, India went along. China and India want to expand their carbon space to maintain rapid emissions-intensive GDP growth in the name of defending their poor. But India's poor will suffer grievously, next only

to Africans, as the Accord accelerates climate change.

This reveals a gaping divide between India's underprivileged and elite. The poor have a huge stake in an equitable, effective global climate regime. The elite wants a weak, ineffective, non-binding regime to feed its appetite for luxury goods, which is driving up India's emissions at twice the global rate. A powerful strand among Indian policymakers wants an ineffective deal, which allows India's, elite to raise its emissions. Its influence is reflected in India's climate policy, its denial of glacier-melting, and the National Climate Action Plan, which defines its priority not as combating climate change, but as maintaining high GDP growth.

A bureaucratic cabal, excluding independent ex-

perts makes India's climate policy in isolation from the people and representatives of civil society, leave alone those most affected by climate change. So unbalanced is the 26-member Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change that it has only one civil society member; 25 members are from Delhi or its suburbs.

Our people need a strong, equitable climate deal. Their government has failed them. It must be brought to heel and made to demand that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change process be resumed with a clear rich-poor differentiation of responsibility. This won't happen unless people's movements seize the climate agenda.

by *Praful Bidwai, Hindustan Times, 31 December, 2009.*

[www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com)

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## Beyond Copenhagen

As it drifts from the present into the past, the Copenhagen climate change conference looks both better and worse. Worse, because a considered reading of the accord, which was its only tangible output, reveals that it is not just inadequate but in fact utterly empty. Better, because of the novel manner in which this ultimate failure was reached. As the sight of the daily chaos drops out of view, it becomes easier to appreciate that the rich world was forced to haggle with the bigger emerging economies on more equal terms than ever before.

But amid all the multiple omissions in the three pages of waffle that constitute the accord, the most damning of all was a lack of anything firm about what

happens next.

While the Copenhagen product is every inch the sham that campaigners say it is, the Copenhagen process has set important precedents. Most obviously, although the haggling proved fruitless, the sheer fact that it took place - and at such a high political level - means it will probably do so again. Many of the presidents and prime ministers who swanned off to Denmark told their people that their mission was saving the world. Before Copenhagen, across much of the planet, the highly complex risks faced by the climate had rarely been discussed in such dramatic terms. Now that leaders from Beijing to Brasilia have shown that they believe that the clear and present threat is suffi-

ciently serious for them to turn up in person, they would have a tough time explaining why they were not going to bother next time.

Just as significant is what the summit revealed about the terms on which the ultimate climate deal will have to be brokered. Two moments were particularly instructive. The first involved the derailment of a western-led stitch-up, which became known as the Danish text. It would have done away with the Kyoto protocol, with its explicit acknowledgement of the industrialised world's unique responsibility for the pollution it has pumped out over the centuries. When the poor countries made plain they would not wear it, the rich felt forced

to back down. The second, which occurred only moments before stumps were finally drawn, was an American concession on monitoring emissions designed to sooth Chinese anxieties about sovereignty. Hours before, President Obama had taken a pointedly tough tone towards Beijing, but despite justified concerns about holding it to account, in the end he rightly recognised the need to compromise.

The silver that glistens within the dark cloud of Copenhagen's failure is the west's recognition that the world will not be rescued by diktat, but only through genuine dialogue.

The Guardian, 21 December 2009.  
[www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)

# Beyond Climate

So the Copenhagen summit did not deliver any hope of substantive change, or even any indication that the world's leaders are sufficiently aware of the vastness and urgency of the problem. But is that such a surprise? Nothing in the much-hyped run up to the summit suggested that the organisers and participants had genuine ambitions to change course and stop or reverse a process of clearly unsustainable growth.

Part of the problem is that the issue of climate change is increasingly portrayed as that of competing interests between countries. Thus, the summit has been interpreted variously as a fight between the "two largest culprits" - the US and China - or between a small

group of developed countries and a small group of newly emerging countries (the group of four - China, India, Brazil and South Africa), or at best between rich and poor countries.

The historical legacy of past growth in the rich countries that has a current adverse impact is certainly keenly felt in the developing world. It is not just the past: current per capita greenhouse gas emissions in the developed world are still many multiples of that in any developing country, including China. So the attempts by northern commentators to lay blame on some countries for derailing the result by pointing to this discrepancy are seen in most developing countries as further evidence of an es-

entially colonial outlook.

But describing this as a fight between countries misses the essential point: that the issue is really linked to an economic system - capitalism - that is crucially dependent upon rapid growth as its driving force, even if this "growth" does not deliver better lives for the people. So there is no questioning of the supposition that rich countries with declining populations must keep on growing in terms of GDP, rather than finding different ways of creating and distributing output to generate better quality of life. There is no debating of the pattern of growth in "successful" developing countries, which has in many cases come at

the cost of increased inequality, greater material insecurity for a significant section of the population and massive damage to the environment.

Since such questions were not even at the table at the Copenhagen summit - even a "successful" outcome with some sort of common statement would hardly have been a sign of the kind of change that is required. But this does not mean that the problem has gone away; in fact, it is more pressing than ever.

*Beyond Ecological Imperialism* by Jayati Ghosh, 22 December, 2009.

*Guardian.co.uk.*

[www.countercurrents.org/ghosh221209.htm](http://www.countercurrents.org/ghosh221209.htm)

## Overcoming Copenhagen

The failure of Copenhagen was not the absence of a legally binding agreement. The real failure was that there was no agreement about how to achieve the lofty goal of saving the planet, no agreement about reductions in carbon emissions, no agreement on how to share the burden, and no agreement on help for developing countries. Even the commitment of the accord to provide amounts approaching \$30 billion for the period 2010-12 for adaptation and mitigation appears paltry next to the hundreds of billions of dollars that have been doled out to the banks in the bailouts of 2008-09. If we can afford that much to save banks, we can afford something more to save the planet.

The consequences of the failure are already apparent: The price of emission rights in the European Union Emission Trading System has fallen, which means that firms will have less incentive to reduce emissions now and less incentive to invest in innovations that will reduce emissions in the future. Firms that wanted to do the right thing, to spend the money to reduce their emissions, now worry that doing so would put them at a com-

petitive disadvantage as others continue to emit without restraint. European firms will continue to be at a competitive disadvantage relative to American firms, which bear no cost for their emissions.

Underlying the failure in Copenhagen are some deep problems. The Kyoto approach allocated emission rights, which are a valuable asset. If emissions were appropriately restricted, the value of emission rights would be a couple trillion dollars a year -- no wonder that there is a squabble over who should get them.

Clearly, the idea that those who emitted more in the past should get more emission rights for the future is unacceptable. The "minimally" fair allocation to the developing countries requires equal emission rights per capita. Most ethical principles would suggest that, if one is distributing what amounts to "money" around the world, one should give more (per capita) to the poor.

So, too, most ethical principles would suggest that those that have polluted more in the past -- especially after the problem was recognized in 1992 -- should have less right to

pollute in the future. But such an allocation would implicitly transfer hundreds of billions of dollars from rich to poor. Given the difficulty of coming up with even \$10 billion a year -- let alone the \$200 billion a year that is needed for mitigation and adaptation -- it is wishful thinking to expect an agreement along these lines.

Perhaps it is time to try another approach: a commitment by each country to raise the price of emissions (whether through a carbon tax or emissions caps) to an agreed level, say, \$80 per ton. Countries could use the revenues as an alternative to other taxes -- it makes much more sense to tax bad things than good things. Developed countries could use some of the revenues generated to fulfill their obligations to help the developing countries in terms of adaptation and to compensate them for maintaining forests, which provide a global public good through carbon sequestration.

We have seen that goodwill alone can get us only so far. We must now conjoin self-interest with good intentions, especially because leaders in some countries (particularly the United

States) seem afraid of competition from emerging markets even without any advantage they might receive from not having to pay for carbon emissions. A system of border taxes -- imposed on imports from countries where firms do not have to pay appropriately for carbon emissions -- would level the playing field and provide economic and political incentives for countries to adopt a carbon tax or emission caps. That, in turn, would provide economic incentives for firms to reduce their emissions.

Time is of the essence. While the world dawdles, greenhouse gases are building up in the atmosphere, and the likelihood that the world will meet even the agreed-upon target of limiting global warming to two degrees Celsius is diminishing. We have given the Kyoto approach, based on emission rights, more than a fair chance. Given the fundamental problems underlying it, Copenhagen's failure should not be a surprise. At the very least, it is worth giving the alternative a chance.

by Joseph E. Stiglitz. *The Capital Times*, 9 January, 2010.

[www.countercurrents.org](http://www.countercurrents.org)

# India in Copenhagen

While India was the voice of the global South in Rio (China was nowhere in sight), it occupied the low moral ground in Copenhagen. Despite the presence of the irrepressible Ramesh, who is never at a loss for words normally and indeed shoots his mouth off when it isn't required, India was conspicuous by its public absence at the recent summit. Moreover, it was plain to most of us covering the conference that the Indian 'delegation' was - as is common in so many international events - doing its best to keep the Indian people at arm's length.

First, since when did India's interests diverge from those of other devel-

oping countries, the G77 group of 130 nations, as Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh is now explicitly stating? He has gone further to assert that India wasn't in Copenhagen to save the world or humanity. If India's interests coincide with those of the US, which orchestrated the suspect Copenhagen accord, or the recently cobbled together BASIC coalition (of "the willing") consisting of Brazil, south Africa and China as well, all of whom comprise the biggest emitters of greenhouse gases in absolute terms, this is a drastic change in India's foreign policy, let alone environmental policy.

Second, and perhaps

more insidiously, did Ramesh in his justification in the Rajya Sabha actually imply that India no longer cares for the 600 million nationals who have to make do without any commercial energy whatsoever, as well as 300 million of these who don't have access to electricity? This is the only inference one can draw from his statements: it means that the government is aligning itself with the well to do of the world.

Thomas Freidman, the prolific New York Times columnist, refers to 'Americans' in the world. These are the three or four groups of 300-odd million consumers in countries, or groups of countries like the

EU, who use resources on an American scale, at least by purchasing power parity. India consitutes one of these Americans, but to turn our backs on the 800 million other Indians (who spend Rs 20 a day, according to official statistics) is a terrible volte-face.

So much for the moral ground. The contrast between the stand taken by India in the predecessor to Copenhagen - the UN Earth summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 - couldn't have been starker.

**India's missteps at Copenhagen** by Darryl D'Monte, 31 December, 2009, *India Together*. [www.indiatogether.org/2009/dec/env-copen.htm](http://www.indiatogether.org/2009/dec/env-copen.htm)

## Just a Cop Out?

The good news is that the truth is coming out, and that people all over the world are seeing it. Everyone, and I imagine this includes Barack Obama, knows a hell of a lot more about the climate crisis, and its politics, than they did a year ago. Not, to be sure, that we didn't already know that climatic destabilization is triggering a planetary emergency. This has been obvious for years. The difference now is rather that thanks to Mohamed Nasheed, the President of Tuvalu and a whole lot of

terrified scientists-we know that we know it. And that we know it with appalling, quantitative confidence.

The bad news is that after Copenhagen, we also know that the elites are at their limits. That what is needed, as the Copenhagen street had it, is "system change not climate change," and that lacking system change, our governments are quite incapable of organizing a decisive response to the climate crisis.

The bad news, more particularly, is that if we in "civil society" are to do better

than our putative leaders, if indeed we are to help the elites break their own chains of powerlessness, we're going to have to actually dare to assign a bit of responsibility for the Copenhagen fiasco. The bulk of which, alas, will have to go to the wealthy world.

For the moment, let me add only that Copenhagen, for all its disappointments, marked a turning point. The need for a global emergency mobilization is obvious, and with it, a set of social and political challenges that can no longer be denied. These

challenges will get clearer in the days and years ahead, but the essential situation is already before us, ready to be discovered-with the atmosphere's ability to absorb carbon now critically limited, we face the greatest resource-sharing problem of all time.

The climate problem, in other words, was and remains a justice problem. If we fail to solve it, it will be in large part because we refuse to see it as such.

by Tom Athanasiou, *Yes Magazine*, Dec 22, 2009 [www.yesmagazine.org](http://www.yesmagazine.org)

*"Fixing the climate is not a practical conundrum, it is a purely political problem. We could build the windmills, the solar, the nuclear and whatever it takes to be self-sustaining with clean energy for ever if we wanted to. But enough people have to want to change how they live and spend to make it happen. So far they don't, not by a long chalk. What would it take? A tidal wave destroying New York maybe - New Orleans was the wrong people - with London, St Petersburg and Shanghai wiped out all at once. But cataclysms will come too late for action. Just pray for a scientific wonder or that Lord Stern is right and the market can fix it, as green technology becomes more profitable than oil and coal. As things stand, politics has not enough heft nor authority. It would take a political miracle to save us now."*

-Polly Toynebee

<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/42369/planets-future-no-priority-ours.html>

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# THE AGE OF THE CLIMATE REFUGEE

"As early as 1990, the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) suggested that the "gravest effects of climate change may be those on human migration." Similar predictions today suggest that 200 million people could be forced from their homes by 2050 due to environmental factors arising from climate change".

"In Bangladesh alone, where about a third of the population lives in the coastal region which is less than 10 m above sea level, up to 80 million people are likely to be forced to migrate inland or to other countries. Similar numbers can be expected along India's coast, since many coastal cities will be severely affected. Sea Level Rise will possibly lead to internal displacement in large countries like China and India and also result in a significant number of stateless people from the smaller low-lying countries such as Bangladesh and Vietnam and some atoll nations including the Pacific, Caribbean and Indian Ocean islands. The displacement is not expected to happen all at once, but will probably be spread out over time as various areas become unliveable".



*The phenomena of climate refugees was not on the agenda at Copenhagen.*

## 'Climate change to force 1 bn people to migrate'

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While the Copenhagen product is every inch the sham that campaigners say it is, the Copenhagen process has set important precedents. Most obviously, although the haggling proved fruitless, the sheer fact that it took place - and at such a high political level - means it will probably do so again. Many of the presidents and prime ministers who swanned off to Denmark told their people that their mission was saving the world. Before Copenhagen, across much of the planet,

the highly complex risks faced by the climate had rarely been discussed in such dramatic terms. Now that leaders from Beijing to Brasilia have shown that they believe that the clear and present threat is sufficiently serious for them to turn up in person, they would have a tough time explaining why they were not going to bother next time.

Just as significant is what the summit revealed about the terms on which the ultimate climate deal will have to be brokered. Two moments were particularly

instructive. The first involved the derailment of a western-led stitch-up, which became known as the Danish text. It would have done away with the Kyoto protocol, with its explicit acknowledgement of the industrialised world's unique responsibility for the pollution it has pumped out over the centuries. When the poor countries made plain they would not wear it, the rich felt forced to back down. The second, which occurred only moments before stumps were finally drawn, was an American concession on monitor-

ing emissions designed to sooth Chinese anxieties about sovereignty. Hours before, President Obama had taken a pointedly tough tone towards Beijing, but despite justified concerns about holding it to account, in the end he rightly recognised the need to compromise.

The silver that glistens within the dark cloud of Copenhagen's failure is the west's recognition that the world will not be rescued by diktat, but only through genuine dialogue.

[www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)

### Climate Refugee and the Law

"Until there is a significant movement calling for recognition of climate refugees - under the UN climate convention or another international governance instrument - the issue will continue to be swept under the carpet. This will not make the problem go away".

International law is unfit to deal with the millions of people expected to flee their home countries to escape droughts and floods intensified by climate change, a group of lawyers said on Thursday.

Under existing laws, host countries must protect and care for cross-border refugees, who are defined as those forced to migrate because of violence or political, racial or religious persecution.

There are no such provisions for so-called climate refugees. Yet by 2050, between 200 million and 1 billion people could be forced to leave their homes because of global warming, said the Foundation for International Environmental Law and Development, which advises vulnerable countries and communities.

"International refugee law ... was not designed for those who are left homeless

by environmental pressures," said the group's director Joy Hyvarinen.

"The international legal framework needs to be adjusted to help climate exiles and deal with statelessness and compensation," she said in a statement.

*Law change needed to cover climate exiles: lawyers*, Reuters, Oct 14, 2009  
[www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com)

# Who is a Climate Refugee?

Conflict is brewing in within the UN over the recognition of this new brand of asylum seeker- the environmental refugee.

In spite of millions in danger of becoming refugees, at present there is no international law to protect their rights. UNHCR, the United Nations' refugee agency, does not recognise climate or environment refugees as these categories are not included in the list of legal refugees under the UN's 1951 Refugee Convention. The Convention currently defines a legal refugee as a person who has fled his or her country due to persecution by the state for reasons of race, religion,

nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

UNHCR however says it does not want to expand the Refugee Convention to include climate refugees as that may reduce protection for the conventional political refugees. Sources at UNHCR, add that UNHCR is not equipped or designed to handle hundreds of millions of refugees from climate change. It already finds its resources

Yoichiro Tsuchida, UNHCR Senior Advisor on Climate Change, explains that the case for environmental refugees is too complicated and disparate to fit within the current refugee

framework. Justifying international migration due to natural disasters is difficult, as is the task of attributing environmental phenomena directly to climate change. "While environmental factors can contribute to prompting cross-border movements, they are not grounds, in and of themselves, for the grant of refugee status under international refugee law," she says.

Janos Bogardi, director of UNU's Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS) called for the issue of environmentally induced migration to be addressed in December's global climate change talks

in Poznan, Poland. However, much of the focus of the conference remained on helping countries to contain the problem within their borders by implementing climate change adaptation measures such as flood control.

A WWF UK study released on the sidelines of climate change talks in Poznan, said that the world may need a new UN pact to compensate victims of climate change or risk billion-dollar lawsuits linked to natural disasters caused by climate change.

*Climate change refugees seek a new international deal, by Rajesh Chhabara, 27 Dec 2008*  
[www.climatechangecorp.com](http://www.climatechangecorp.com)

## Climate Exiles

Three hours on this road from Baroda and you arrive at Danti - a fishing village just 12 km away from where Mahatma Gandhi led his famous Dandi Salt March. The car meanders through a dirt path into the village. And then, the unmistakable signs of climate change - nature's unforgiving backlash to human progress - start to show. Between the sea and a row of sea-flanked houses, which ends abruptly, there stands an 8-10 feet wall erected by the government. In the near distance, one can spot wells in the sea, brick-layered walls embedded deep in the sand; the flagpole of a temple.

These are remnants of a village called Moti Danti, now mostly drowned in the Arabian Sea. Hundreds of fishing families from this village have permanently migrated inland.

IN WEST Bengal's ecological wonderland - the Sunderbans - devastating cyclones have pushed the Lohachara Island into the sea, displacing 7,000- 10,000 people permanently. In Orissa, which has experienced some of the worst coastal erosion in the country, entire villages have been swept away in a storm surge. In the Himalayas, where "glaciers are receding at the fastest rate in the

world," according to the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change, flash floods are wiping out villages in Ladakh and droughts are causing crippling water scarcity in Uttarakhand. In the monsoon dependent Bundhelkhand area, successive droughts are similarly forcing full families to head to the cities for work. "Villages are there but there's no life, land is there but there's no productivity," says SN Pandey, a natural resource management expert who works in Bundelkhand's Tikamgarh district. "When people come back, they have mobile phones but no drinking water."

The number of such climate migrants are not apoca-

lyptic yet, but as a Greenpeace International Report from March 2008 warned, "If left unchecked, climate change could lead to global temperature increases of between 4-5°C, unleashing a barrage of impacts that will drive mass migration in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh." In such a scenario, the number of environmental migrants could be as high as a catastrophic 125 million by the end of this century. But if global and local policy interventions contain global warming below the 2 degrees Celsius limit, the number of migrants would be 5 million.

They are among the swelling ranks of global "environmental migrants" or "climate exiles" - people who have to leave their habitats because of sudden or gradual alterations related to one of three impacts of cli-

mate change: sea-level rise, extreme weather events, and drought and water scarcity. The quintessential non-combatants in the climate war, they are the ones who have contributed least to global warming, but whose lives and livelihoods are most threatened by it.

The Government of India's National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), released more than a year ago, made no mention of environmental migrants or a plan to help them adapt to climate change. Meanwhile, there are early but sure signs of the doomsday scenario unfolding across India.

*Meet A New Community Of The Displaced In India: Climate Refugees, by Divya Gupta, Tehelka, 9 November, 2009.*  
[www.tehelka.net](http://www.tehelka.net)

## Fencing Climate Refugees

A high, heavily reinforced barbed wire fence cuts a jagged line through an otherwise empty field of tall grass and tamarind plants here. Climate change didn't bring this fence, but it is providing a fresh reason for its existence and ongoing expansion.

On this side of the fence, rising sea levels caused by climate change are beginning to inundate low-lying Bangladesh.

Scientists estimate that by midcentury as many as 15 million people could be displaced.

On the other side of the fence, India isn't taking any chances. Already alarmed about illegal immigration, it is nearing completion of about 2,100 miles worth of high-tech fencing along its long and porous border with Bangladesh.

"Bangladesh is a country that could provide more

climate refugees than anywhere else on earth," said Isabel Hilton, an environmental commentator whose London-based nonprofit promotes climate change dialogue in China and throughout Asia.

"What that fence says to me is, wherever those people are going to go, they're not going to India," Hilton said.

[www.scientificamerican.com](http://www.scientificamerican.com)



# System change - not climate change

## A People's Declaration from Klimaforum09

### (Summary)

There are solutions to the climate crisis. What people and the planet need is a just and sustainable transition of our societies to a form that will ensure the rights of life and dignity of all peoples and deliver a more fertile planet and more fulfilling lives to future generations.

We, participating peoples, communities, and all organizations at the Klimaforum09 in Copenhagen, call upon every person, organization, government, and institution, including the United Nations (UN), to contribute to this necessary transition. It will be a challenging task. The crisis of today has economic, social, environmental, geopolitical, and ideological aspects interacting with and reinforcing each other as well as the climate crisis.

For this reason, we call for urgent climate action: o

- A complete abandonment of fossil fuels within the next 30 years, which must include specific milestones for every 5-year period. We demand an immediate cut in GHG of industrialized countries of at least 40% compared to 1990 levels by 2020.
- Recognition, payment and compensation of climate debt for the overconsumption of atmospheric space and adverse effects of climate change on all affected groups and people. ● A rejection of purely market-oriented and technology-centred false and dangerous solutions such as nuclear energy, agro-fuels, carbon capture and storage, Clean Development Mechanisms, biochar, genetically "climate-readied" crops, geo-engineering, and reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD), which deepens social and environmental conflicts.
- Real solutions to climate crisis based on safe, clean, renewable, and sustainable use of natural resources, as well as transitions to food, energy, land, and water sovereignty.

Therefore, we demand that COP15 reach an agreement that will initiate the restoration of the environmental, social, and economic balance of planet Earth by means that are environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable and equitable, and finally come up with a legally binding treaty.

The adverse impacts of human-induced climate change cause gross violations of human rights. All nations have an obligation to cooperate internationally to ensure respect for human rights everywhere in the world in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. Any specific agreement on climate change must be seen in the broader context of achieving a sustainable transition of our societies.

We, participating peoples and organisations at Klimaforum09, commit to continue our full and active engagement in promoting such a transition, which will require a fundamental change in social, political, and economic structures and a rectification of gender, class, race, generational, and ethnic inequalities and injustices.

This requires a restoration of the democratic sovereignty of our local communities and of their role as a basic social, political, and economic unit. Local and democratic ownership of, control over, and access to natural resources will be the basis for meaningful and sustainable development of communities and simultaneously for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

There is also a need for stronger regional and international cooperative arrangements to manage common and shared resources, as well as for a stronger and democratic UN.

We call upon every concerned person, social movement, and cultural, political or economic organisation to join us in building a strong global movement of movements, which can bring forward peoples' visions and demands at every level of society. Together, we can make global transitions to sustainable futures.

#### **A global movement for sustainable transition**

Irrespective of the outcome of the Copenhagen Summit on Climate Change, there is an urgent need to build a global movement of movements dedicated to the long-term task of promoting a sustainable transition of our societies. Contrary to the prevailing power structures, this movement must grow from the bottom and up. What is needed is a broad alliance of environmental movements, social movements, trade unions, farmers, civil societies, and other aligned parties that can work together in everyday political struggle on the local as well as national and international level. Such an alliance entails at the same time the creation of a new mindset and of new types of social activisms, and must be capable not only of reacting to unsustainable practices, but also showing by example how a new sustainable economy can indeed function.

We, participating peoples, communities, and social organizations at Klimaforum09 are all committed to build on the results achieved at this event in the further development of a global movement of movements.

This Declaration aims to inspire the further development of such a movement by pointing to the general direction in which we choose to move. Together, we can make global transitions to sustainable future.

**Join us.**



<http://www.klimaforum09.org/Declaration?lang=en>

# INVITATION

## **To the Peoples' World Conference On Climate Change And Mother Earth's Rights April 20-22, 2010 – Cochabamba, Bolivia**

Considering that climate change represents a real threat to the existence of humanity, of living beings and our Mother Earth as we know it today;

Noting the serious danger that exists to islands, coastal areas, glaciers in the Himalayas, the Andes and mountains of the world, poles of the Earth, warm regions like Africa, water sources, populations affected by increasing natural disasters, plants and animals, and ecosystems in general;

Making clear that those most affected by climate change will be the poorest in the world who will see their homes and their sources of survival destroyed, and who will be forced to migrate and seek refuge; Confirming that 75% of historical emissions of greenhouse gases originated in the countries of the North that followed a path of irrational industrialization;

Noting that climate change is a product of the capitalist system;

Regretting the failure of the Copenhagen Conference caused by countries called "developed", that fail to recognize the climate debt they have with developing countries, future generations and Mother Earth;

Affirming that in order to ensure the full fulfillment of human rights in the twenty-first century, it is necessary to recognize and respect Mother Earth's rights;

Reaffirming the need to fight for climate justice;

Recognizing the need to take urgent actions to avoid further damage and suffering to humanity, Mother Earth and to restore harmony with nature;

Confident that the peoples of the world, guided by the principles of solidarity, justice and respect for life, will be able to save humanity and Mother Earth, and Celebrating the International Day of Mother Earth,

The Government of the Plurinational State of Bolivia calls on the peoples of the world, social movements and Mother Earth's defenders, and invites scientists, academics, lawyers and governments that want to work with their citizens to the Peoples' World Conference on Climate Change and Mother Earth's Rights to be held from 20th to 22nd April 2010 in Cochabamba, Bolivia.

The Peoples' World Conference on Climate Change and Mother Earth's Rights has as objectives:

- (1) To analyze the structural and systemic causes that drive climate change and to propose radical measures to ensure the well-being of all humanity in harmony with nature
- (2) To discuss and agree on the project of a Universal Declaration of Mother Earth Rights
- (3) To agree on proposals for new commitments to the Kyoto Protocol and projects for a COP Decision under the United Nations Framework for Climate Change that will guide future actions in those countries that are engaged with life during climate change > Shared Vision
- (4) To work on the organization of the Peoples' World Referendum on Climate Change
- (5) To analyze and develop an action plan to advance the establishment of a Climate Justice Tribunal
- (6) To define strategies for action and mobilization to defend life from Climate Change and to defend Mother Earth's Rights.

Evo Morales Ayma  
President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia  
Bolivia, January 5th, 2010