



Copenhagen Climate Conference



The Copenhagen Climate Change Summit

The Copenhagen Climate Change summit was a gathering of world leaders in the capital of Denmark over a two week period from 7th - 18th December 2009.

Aims of the Summit

The aims of this meeting was to come up with a deal to replace the Kyoto protocol, a deal which is to expire in 2012. 15,000 delegates and officials were present, representing 192 nations, all with different expectations/aspirations of what they wanted to achieve.

What About Kyoto?

The Kyoto Protocol was a global agreement on the reduction of the main greenhouse gas emissions that are linked to climate change and global warming.

The original meeting took place in Kyoto, Japan in 1997, when 110 governments agreed that industrialised countries should cut their greenhouse gas emissions by an average of 5.2% from the 1990 level by the year 2008-2012. The Kyoto Agreement would only become legally binding when the industrialised nations accounting for 55% of the carbon dioxide emissions ratify the agreement.

The Kyoto Protocol was the first international treaty to set legally binding targets to cut greenhouse gas emissions. It was finally ratified by 183 countries and the EC; the USA was not one of them, despite having the world's biggest economy and emitting the second largest amount of greenhouse gases/carbon. It was sig

ned as a framework accord in 1997 but didn't come into effect until February 2005.

The Kyoto agreement provided a legal distinction between developed and developing nations which the poorer countries wanted to maintain. It placed a clear responsibility on the shoulders of rich nations, committing them to reduce overall emissions of 6 categories of greenhouse gases by at least 5% by 2008-12, compared to 1990 levels. Developing nations did not have any binding targets to meet; they were only expected to attempt to develop in 'clean' ways. Some countries like the US did not ratify this agreement thinking it unfair that they would have to meet set targets while other countries would not. Developing countries were concerned that any new treaty would not be as strict or legally binding. They were also concerned that their development could be slowed down because they couldn't use as many fossil fuels as developed nations had done in the past. However, some of these 'developing' countries included China which has overtaken American as the bigger carbon producer even though per capita each person has a much smaller footprint and much of what they produce is for export to the richer nations.

During the Summit

The final few days of the summit were meant to be when the majority of negotiations would be done so that world leaders who arrived at that time could tie things up. However, progress was incredibly slow until Barack Obama arrived on the last day. Negotiations almost collapsed altogether when the US, together with some of her key nations together proposed an 'accord'. At the time this was merely 'noted' by the UN but has since become something more concrete. Many people thought the summit a failure, but some gems of hope can be extracted from it, not least the fact that so many world leaders gathered to discuss what is finally recognized as a global threat of extreme importance.

The Results

The summit did not result in the historic deal which millions of people had hoped for, but there were some signs of progress which should not be overlooked.

It 'recognised' the scientific case for keeping global temperature rises below the 2 degree centigrade danger threshold (although not the 1.5 degree centigrade which many developing nations thought necessary to protect their land and people). However, the accord did not set any emission targets to achieve this limit so countries did not have to commit to anything in particular. The deal was 'non-binding' so countries only sign up to it on a volun

tary basis. The goal of cutting emissions by 80% by 2050 was also dropped. It is up to individual governments to set their own targets of what they are prepared to do.

The legally binding Kyoto protocol is currently preserved.

The accord aims to provide funds to help developing nations adapt to climate change - \$30 billion/year until 2012 and \$100 billion by 2020.

They also agreed to provide finance to help prevent deforestation which accounts for about 17% of carbon emissions.

Reasons for Hope

Considering the US did not even ratify the Kyoto Protocol, the fact that their President attended the Copenhagen summit and was a key player in coming to some kind of agreement is a huge step forward.

As of 18th February 2010, 61 countries, accounting for over 78% of global emissions from energy use have submitted their mitigation pledges including representatives from both developed and developing nations - something which has never happened before. These include all the EU countries, the USA, China, India, Indonesia and Brazil. It is notable though that Brazil is so far the only Latin American country to have signed up and that only 6 out of a possible 55 African countries have too. That leaves 137 countries which have not made pledges. While these pledges are a good start it is said that if achieved they are only half of what needs to be done in order to avoid the worst effects of climate change.

Climate-gate

Attention was unfortunately diverted from the summit's ideals when a leak from some private e-mails between members of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) became international news. This served to undermine the authenticity of their reports on Climate Change which so many world bodies were relying on for accurate information. In the UK data from the MET Office was quickly released in order to c

counteract this and show the public and leaders alike that there was still huge amounts of data in favour of the arguments put forward regarding climate change by the IPCC.

The People Movement

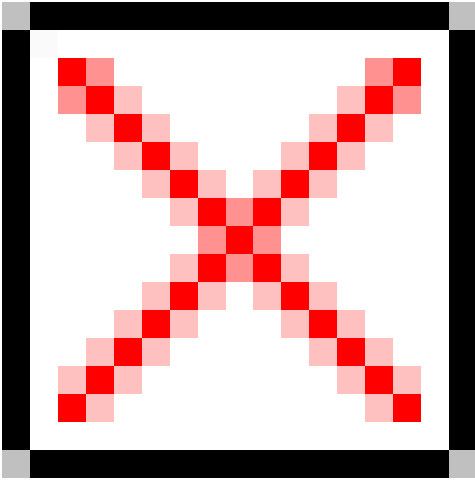
The Copenhagen Climate Change Summit saw an international movement of people involved in demonstrations and protests. On December 12th 2009 a march of up to 100,000 protesters took to the streets of Copenhagen. Many thought it hypocrisy that leaders should be turning up in limousines and private jets!

'The Wave' was a peaceful demonstration in London where people marched to Parliament to demonstrate their support for a strong treaty in Copenhagen. It was attended by about 20,000 - 40,000 protesters (estimates vary wildly!) with another 7,000 in Scotland. They were marching with three goals in mind:

to ask developed countries to cut their emissions by 40% by 2020; increase the UK's renewable energy supply and provide \$150 billion a year to help poorer nations cope with the impacts of climate change.

The UK government was already the first in the world to set its own legally binding law in October 2008, committing to 80% cuts in all UK carbon emissions by 2050, including aviation and shipping. This was largely the result of a grassroots campaign.

For further information see:



www.actoncopenhagen.decc.gov.uk

www.stopclimatechaos.org

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