

Climate Change: The Home Stretch to Copenhagen

Climate change is happening: global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions increased by 70 percent between 1970 and 2004, warming the planet and threatening catastrophic consequences. Already, glaciers are melting, sea levels are rising, and some of the most powerful storms in history threaten continents. Droughts and crop failures bring more hunger and conflict to regions already suffering from these scourges, and residents from shrinking islands are becoming climate refugees.

The United Nations International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the authoritative scientific source of information on the current state of climate change and its potential consequences, predicts that failing to take action to stabilize the concentration of GHGs in the atmosphere could increase temperatures by the end of this century up to 6.4°C, with dire consequences. Anything more than 2°C increase above pre-industrial levels is expected to lead to unprecedented



meteorological changes and damage, conflicts over resources and territory, environmentally-induced migration, tension over energy supplies, and intense pressure on national and international governance.

The next step in the global battle against climate change is the December 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. The Copenhagen negotiations continue a process begun in 1992 with the United Nations Framework Convention

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“If we want developing countries to come to the table with serious commitments then we need developed countries to put money on the table for adaptation to climate change and to help finance developing countries’ mitigation efforts. We need to put our money where our mouth is.”

— European Commission President
José Manuel Barroso

on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which was ratified by 194 parties, including the European Community (EC). While the UNFCCC encouraged developed countries to stabilize GHG emissions, its 1997 Kyoto Protocol introduced mandatory emission reduction targets and timetables for industrialized countries and was ratified by 184 parties, including the EC. The United States, although a party to the UNFCCC, is one of very few countries that has not ratified the Kyoto Protocol.

The Copenhagen negotiations, which seek an agreement that would enter into force on January 1, 2013, include two negotiating tracks: one under the UNFCCC’s Bali Action Plan and Roadmap, and the second under the Kyoto Protocol, which does not include the U.S., a major GHG emitter.

The EU would prefer that both tracks lead to a single, legally binding international treaty built on the essential elements of the Kyoto Protocol. Such a treaty would establish a single institutional framework for all parties, require one ratification process, and bring all countries under one international climate regime.

A binding global agreement in the Copenhagen conference could successfully stem the dangerous impacts of climate change. Regardless of the outcome in Copenhagen, the EU will continue to honor its Kyoto commitments and obligations.

The EU’s Position on Copenhagen

Emission Reductions. The EU calls on all parties to embrace the 2°C objective, and to agree to global emission reductions of at least 50 percent from 1990 levels—including aggregate developed country emission reductions of at least 80–95 percent—by 2050.

The EU appeals to developing countries, particularly those in a more advanced stage of development, to commit to appropriate climate change mitigation actions by limiting emissions’ growth to 15 to 30 percent below projected “business as usual” levels by 2020, and by pursuing changes in land use and reducing deforestation.

Technology. Developed economies must take the lead in developing and deploying new sustainable technologies and providing incentives to engage the private sector in technology cooperation. Private financing will be stimulated by developing carbon

markets based on robust cap-and-trade systems in developed countries and trading mechanisms for action in developing countries.

Financing. According to EU estimates, by 2020 the total cost of climate change mitigation and adaptation in developing countries could amount to around €100 billion annually; developing countries would need an additional injection of roughly €5 to €7 billion per year between 2010 and 2012 to jump-start the mitigation process.

To share such costs equitably, the EU suggests a combination of domestic finance from developing countries, an expanded international market in carbon credits, and international public finance provided by the EU, together with other developed countries and the more advanced developing economies, based on each country’s responsibility for GHG emissions and its ability to pay.

EU Actions to Stem Climate Change

As a veteran in the battle against climate change at home and abroad, the EU's ongoing transformation to a low-carbon economy demonstrates what can be done to curb GHG emissions, advance renewable energy and energy efficiency, and spur technology to develop and deploy affordable, accessible alternatives to traditional fossil fuels.

Energy and Climate Change: 20-20-20 by 2020. In 2008, EU leaders agreed to an unprecedented and comprehensive package of emission-cutting measures aimed at reducing GHG by 20 percent from 1990 levels by 2020, raising the market share of renewable energy to 20 percent by 2020, and cutting overall energy consumption by 20 percent by 2020 through improved energy efficiency. If other major players commit to comparable reductions, the EU will increase its GHG reduction target to 30 percent.

Emissions Trading System. The EU is the first major region in the world to commit to far-reaching and legally binding emission reductions. The EU's emissions trading system (ETS) has been in place since 2005, and is cutting CO₂ emissions cost-effectively by incentivizing businesses to reduce their CO₂ emissions through a cap-and-trade market mechanism that puts a price on carbon. Emissions are limited ("capped") at a specific level, and companies whose emissions exceed

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“I am very proud of the lead Europe has taken on climate change.... We were the first to unilaterally cut our own emissions of greenhouse gases (and have now promised to deliver 20 percent cuts by 2020). The first to promise even more substantial cuts needed as part of an overall deal. And the first to set out credible funding arrangements to help mitigation and adaptation in developing countries.”

— European Commission President
José Manuel Barroso

their credits or allowances can then purchase allowances (“trade”) from other companies that emit less.

Technology. EU support for technology and innovation is spurring the development and deployment of clean, renewable, home-grown energy. The EU's Strategic Energy Technology Plan (SET Plan) accelerates the development and deployment of low-carbon technologies and the European Commission (the EU's executive arm) has committed €1 billion per

year for energy technology research between 2007 and 2013.

Targets. The EU's comprehensive climate change and energy measures include quantitative and qualitative targets:

- Cuts in emission allowances under the ETS, which covers 40 percent of total EU emissions, will reduce emissions from power plants and energy-intensive industries to 21 percent below 2005 levels by 2020.
- Binding national targets in sectors not subject to ETS—transport (except aviation, which falls under ETS as of 2012), farming, waste disposal, and households—will lead to emission cuts of 10 percent below 2005 levels by 2020.
- Renewables will produce 20 percent of total EU energy by 2020, with binding national targets ranging from 10 percent for Malta to 49 percent for Sweden. At least 10 percent of transport fuel in each country must come from renewable sources (sustainable biofuels, hydrogen, “green electricity”).
- Safe carbon capture and geological storage (CCS) technologies will eventually remove the bulk of carbon emissions from fossil fuels utilized in power generation and industry.

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Cooperation on Climate Change: Two Presidents, One Common Cause

“Together, we will work toward an agreement that will set the world on a path of low-carbon growth and development, aspires to a global goal of a 50 percent reduction of global emissions by 2050, and reflects the respective mid-term mitigation efforts of all major economies, both developed and emerging.”

— 2009 EU-U.S. Summit Declaration

“The EU-U.S. relationship is an essential source of stability in a fast-changing world.... we must tackle together the challenge of climate change which threatens our livelihood and security. It is paramount that we push our negotiators to find solutions at the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December.”

— European Commission President
José Manuel Barroso

“It is imperative for us to redouble our efforts in the weeks between now and the Copenhagen meeting to assure that we create a framework for progress in dealing with what is a potential ecologic disaster.”

— U.S. President Barack Obama

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