

Climate deal reached in Cancun

Delegates hail last-minute accord at Mexico summit, but agreement fails to set specific targets for reducing emissions.



The accord recognises that 'deep cuts' in emissions are needed to combat global warming [Gallo/Getty]

Representatives of almost 200 nations have agreed on a plan aimed at combating climate change, including a target to limit global warming and a fund to help developing nations tackle the effects of the crisis.

However, the deal that was reached at the Climate Change Summit in Cancun, Mexico, on Saturday does not set binding targets on reducing the so-called greenhouse gases that cause climate change.

The draft simply aims to work out a "global goal for substantially reducing global emissions by 2050".



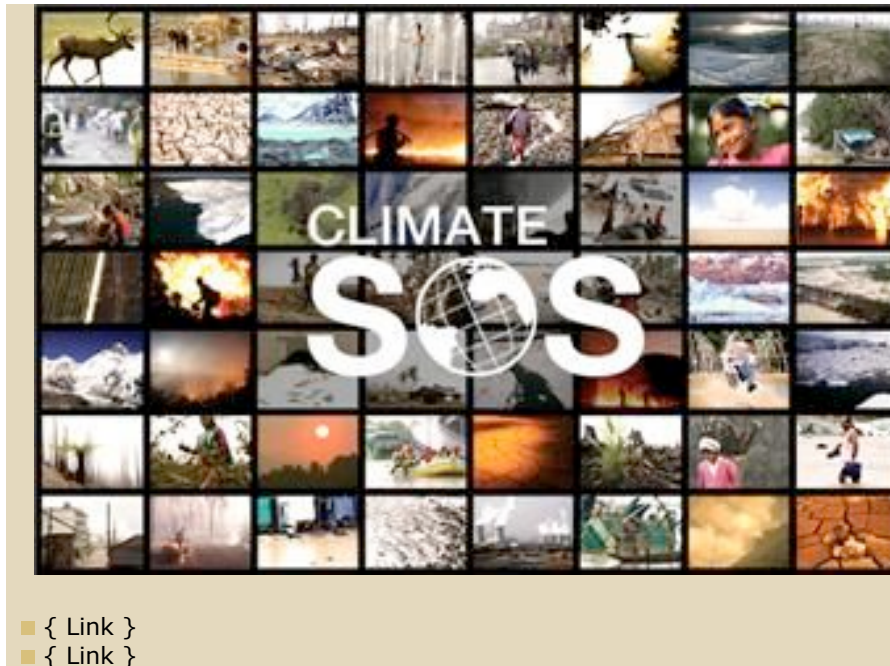
The accord says that the conference "recognises that deep cuts in global greenhouse gas emissions are required according to science ... with a view to reducing global greenhouse gas emissions so as to hold the increase in global average temperatures below two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels".

A UN advisory panel had suggested placing levies of some kind on the fuel or emissions of airlines and shipping companies, but such a proposal was dropped during the negotiations.

Green Climate Fund

Many of the accords from Cancun simply firm up non-binding deals from the Copenhagen summit last year, which were endorsed by only 140 nations.

In depth



A new \$100bn Green Climate Fund is to help developing nations obtain clean-energy technology for cutting their own greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to potentially damaging climate change.

The fund will be steered by a board of 24 members chosen evenly from developed and developing nations.

For the first three years, the international organisation would be overseen by the World Bank.

"This sets the framework for developing countries also to take on their obligations," Barry Coates, New Zealand executive director of Oxfam, told Al Jazeera at the end of two weeks of talks that were overshadowed by disputes between rich and poor countries.

"Filling up this fund of \$100bn is an urgent task. We need that funding, not only for developing countries to reduce their emissions, but because there are millions of people around the world right now suffering the effects of climate change."

The Cancun deal also agreed on ways to fight deforestation and on monitoring nations' climate pledges.

Bolivian opposition

Christiana Figueres, the head of the UN climate change secretariat, hailed the agreement as "historic".

"It's the first time that countries have agreed to such a broad set of instruments and tools that are going to help developing countries in particular," she said.

Patricia Espinosa, Mexico's foreign minister, told the delegates at the end of the summit that "this is a new era of international co-operation on climate change".

The Cancun accord was passed by the delegates despite opposition from Bolivia's

representative, who said that the accord required too little from developed nations.

"We won't sign a document that means an increase in the rise in temperatures when we already have 300,000 people dying every year," Pablo Solon, Bolivia's chief negotiator, said.

"Bolivia has clearly stated that it does not agree with this document and there is no consensus."

The deal was reached after delegates simply put off until next year differences between developed and emerging economies over the future of the Kyoto Protocol.

Kyoto Protocol

Kyoto, which obliges almost 40 developed nations to cut their emissions of greenhouses gases that cause global warming, runs out in 2012.

Japan and Russia fought off pressure to commit to a second phase of emissions reductions under Kyoto.



Bolivia's Pablo Solon said he would not sign the accord as it permitted a temperature rise [AFP]

The Japanese complained that - with the rise of China, India, Brazil and others - the 37 Kyoto-bound industrialized nations now account for only 27 per cent of global greenhouse emissions.

They want a new, legally binding pact obligating the US, China and other major emitters to cut greenhouse gases.

Al Jazeera's Lucia Newman, reporting from the site of the conference in Cancun, said that most nations other than Bolivia considered that the summit had been a success.

"Fifteen hours ago it looked like this climate conference was going to be a disaster, that nothing would be approved," she said.

"This keeps the process of climate change negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations going, it doesn't allow them to collapse.

"But what it has actually done is defer a lot of the hard decisions until climate conference next

year in Durban, South Africa."

11 December 2010 Last updated at 06:48 GMT

UN climate change talks in Cancun close in on deal

By Richard Black Environment correspondent, BBC News, Cancun



Under the deal some countries will escape the extension of emission cuts under the Kyoto Protocol

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Agreement at the UN climate summit in Cancun appears to be close, with most delegations hailing compromise texts drawn up by the Mexican hosts.

Only Bolivia, with some support from Cuba, raised objections, but it is not clear if they will block consensus.

The draft texts say deeper cuts in carbon emissions are needed, but do not establish a mechanism for achieving the pledges countries have made.

It also sets up a fund to help poor countries cope with climate change.

Delegates cheered speeches from governments that had caused the most friction during negotiations - Japan, China, even the US - as one by one they endorsed the draft.

The Green Climate Fund is intended to raise and disburse \$100bn (£64bn) a year by 2020 to protect poor nations against climate impacts and assist them with low-carbon development.

A new Adaptation Committee will support countries as they establish climate protection plans.

And parameters for funding developing countries to reduce deforestation are outlined.

But the deal is a lot less than the comprehensive agreement that many countries wanted at last year's Copenhagen summit and continue to seek. It leaves open the question of whether any of

its measures, including emission cuts, will be legally binding.

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"Overall, we've moved on from Copenhagen - we can leave that ghost behind - it's another mood, another tone," said Tara Rao, senior policy adviser with environmental group WWF.

"There's enough in it that we can work towards next year's meeting in South Africa to get a legally binding agreement there."

And Dean Bialek, an adviser to the Marshall Islands, described the draft deal as "a game-changer".

"The multilateral climate regime is now back on track," he said.

"A new legally binding deal to complement the Kyoto Protocol by covering all major emitters is now well within sight."

Turning Japan

The final day of the two-week summit had dawned with low expectations of a deal.

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But ministers conducted intensive behind-the-scenes diplomacy to formulate texts that all parties could live with.

Russia and Japan have secured wording that leaves them a possible route to escape extension of the Kyoto Protocol's legally binding emission cuts, while strongly implying that the protocol has an effective future - a key demand of developing countries.

The Green Climate Fund will initially use the World Bank as a trustee - as the US, EU and Japan had demanded - while giving oversight to a new body balanced between developed and developing countries.

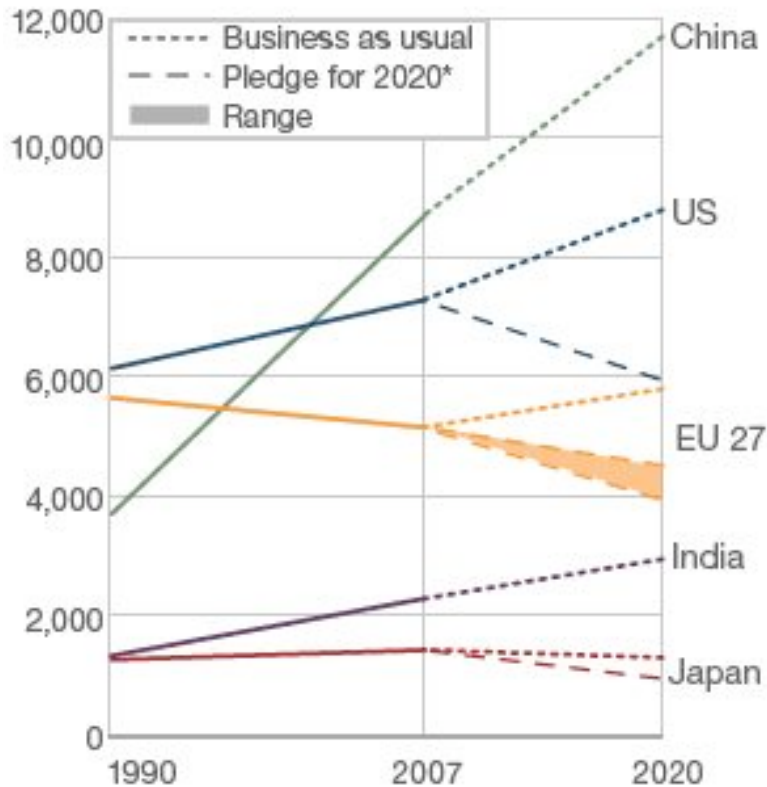
Developing countries will have their emission-curbing measures subjected to international verification only when they are funded by Western money - a formulation that seemed to satisfy both China, which had concerns on such verification procedures, and the US, which had demanded them.

"What we have now is text that while not perfect, is certainly a good basis for moving forward," said Todd Stern, the US climate envoy.

"So let us do what it takes to get this deal done and put the world on a path to a low emission and more sustainable pathway."

Emissions pledges by major nations

Total greenhouse gas emissions (MtCO₂eq)



China has pledged to lower its emission intensity per unit of GDP by 40-45% by 2020, compared to 2005 levels. India has pledged to lower its emission intensity per unit of GDP by 20-25% by 2020 compared to 2005 levels.

*Excluding LULUCF credits

Source: Ecofys/Climate Action Tracker

Mr Stern's comments marked the first time in many years that a US delegate has been cheered to the rafters of a UN climate convention hall.

Bolivia, though, found faults both with elements of the deal and with the way the texts were constructed through private conversations between small groups of countries.

"What concerns us most is that a list is going to be drawn up [of emission-cutting pledges countries have made], and it will not be commitments under the Kyoto Protocol," said delegation chief Pablo Solon.

"We're talking about a [combined] reduction in emissions of 13-16%, and what this means is an increase of more than 4C.

"Responsibly, we cannot go along with this - this would mean we went along with a situation that my president has termed 'ecocide and genocide'," Mr Solon said.

However, no other members of the left-wing Alba group of Latin American nations - with the partial exception of Cuba - supported Mr Solon.

His intervention means the meeting has to split into small groups for further discussions before making a formal decision on the draft agreements.

As is traditional, the summit appears set to run for many hours beyond its scheduled close.

10 December 2010 Last updated at 17:34 GMT

UN climate deal hopes in Mexico look bleak



By Richard Black Environment correspondent, BBC News, Cancun, Mexico



Environmental campaigners were hopeful of progress being made in Cancun

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Prospects for a deal at the UN climate summit appear to be receding, with countries clashing on principle as the meeting entered its final day.

Japan and Russia look set to maintain their opposition to further emission cuts under the Kyoto Protocol, which is a major demand of developing countries.

Blocs also clashed over a proposed fund to help poor nations deal with climate impacts and low-carbon development.

One delegate described the latest draft texts as "worse than Copenhagen".

The money wrangle concerns the proposed "Green Fund" - a vehicle that would gather and distribute funds running to perhaps \$100bn (£63bn) per year by 2020.

During overnight discussions, the US, EU and Japan stuck to their line that the World Bank must administer the fund.

For developing countries, this is unacceptable, as they view the bank as a western-run institution.

Some - especially the Latin American Alba bloc, spear-headed by Bolivia - also object to the Green Fund as currently conceived, because they believe western nations have a duty to pay up from the public purse, whereas the fund calls for money to be raised through levies on carbon trading, taxes on aviation, or other "innovative mechanisms".

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Bolivia's stance is not popular with all other developing countries, with Costa Rica saying it was "leading the process to delay the discussion"

A number of world leaders - as many as 20 - scheduled phone calls to Japanese Prime Minister Naoko Kan, in an attempt to get him to soften Japan's position on the Kyoto Protocol.

'Washed away'

UK Prime Minister David Cameron held a conversation with the premier.

Environmental groups took out an advertisement in the Financial Times asking whether Japan's stance meant the Kyoto Protocol had been "washed away" - a reference to the acclaimed Japanese animation Spirited Away.

But Japanese sources said Mr Kan was sticking to his guns.

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The government is being pressed by business leaders to hold firm on this issue; and giving ground would be seen as a concession to China at a time when the two countries are clashing over disputed islands and supplies of rare earth elements, a key ingredient of some electronic devices.

It appears none of the leaders has put in a call to Moscow, whose opposition to further cuts under the protocol appears just as solid as Japan's.

India offered beleaguered delegates a ray of optimism by indicating it might be prepared to accept legally-binding constraints on its carbon emissions - but not yet.

However, the meanings of phrases such as "legally-binding" are subject to a range of interpretations, and it is clear that the Indian position will depend on other elements of any final package.

A number of nations wanted the pledges countries made around the time of last year's Copenhagen summit to be "inscribed" into formal UN agreements, so that they could be reviewed and negotiated at a later date.

Several analyses have indicated the pledges do not add up to enough to keep the global average temperature rise since pre-industrial times below the 2C (3.6F) ceiling that many countries regard as the maximum "safe" level, let alone the 1.5C that others demand.

However, it appears this inscription is being resisted by a bloc of western nations. Campaigners cited Canada, Russia and Japan.

"This text reflects rich countries' effort to obliterate the existing system for achieving science-based pollution cuts and replace it with a new pledge-based paradigm," said Kate Horner,

policy analyst at Friends of the Earth US.

"Such a paradigm, with rich countries polluting however much they like, would lead to extreme destabilisation of the planet's climate system and unacceptable impacts on human civilisation."

The talks are due to conclude at 6pm local time on Friday (0000 GMT Saturday).

But an overrun appears inevitable, with rumours suggesting the Mexican host government may even call formally for an extra day.

There is also a stand-off between Mexico and South Africa - hosts of next year's meeting - as to who should run the UN climate process through next year, with neither apparently keen on the idea.

10 December 2010 Last updated at 06:32 GMT

Japan targeted on Kyoto climate stance at Cancun Summit



By Richard Black Environment correspondent, BBC News, Cancun, Mexico



Kyoto Protocol, which runs out in 2012

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As this year's UN climate summit nears its end, nations looking for a new deal have launched a diplomatic assault on Japan in the hope of softening its resistance to the Kyoto Protocol.

As many as 20 world leaders are in line to phone Prime Minister Naoko Kan to ask for a change of stance.

Japan has rejected a proposed extension of the

Japan's position is seen as the single biggest barrier to reaching a deal.

Agreement here is seen as crucial to hopes of securing a comprehensive new climate treaty in the next few years.

Together with Russia and Canada, Japan is adamant it will not accept future cuts in carbon emissions under the 13-year-old Kyoto agreement.

But many developing countries are equally determined that the protocol must continue.

Meanwhile, some Latin American nations want the most radical country in their bloc, Bolivia, to show more flexibility in negotiations.

Costa Rica said the Bolivians were delaying progress on key issues.

But Bolivian President Evo Morales confirmed his status as the darling of the conference with a rousing speech punctuated by several rounds of applause and cheers.

"We came to Cancun to save nature, forests, planet Earth," he said.

"We are not here to convert nature into a commodity; we have not come here to revitalise capitalism with carbon markets.

"The climate crisis is one of the crises of capitalism."

'Ecocide and genocide'

Despite having hosted the 1997 UN climate meeting that saw the Kyoto Protocol signed, Japan has for many months been saying it will not accept further emission cuts under the agreement.

It is joined in its opposition by Russia, Canada and Turkey in public - and by other developed nations in private.

But for many developing countries - including Bolivia - continuing the protocol is mandatory. They like its legally-binding character, and the fact that it generates funds for clean development in poorer nations.

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"If we throw the Kyoto Protocol in the rubbish bin, we will be guilty of ecocide and hence of genocide, because we are affecting humanity as a whole," said Mr Morales in his speech.

Japan has come under huge pressure to soften its stance - not necessarily to embrace the protocol, but at least to agree to a form of words that will allow discussions to continue beyond this summit.

A number of leaders, including UK Prime Minister David Cameron and Mexican President Felipe Calderon, timetabled calls to Mr Kan.

But reports from Tokyo suggested Mr Kan was not taking the calls, instead referring everything back to Cancun.

Campaigners suggested Japan should be held accountable if the Kyoto issue does derail the talks here.

"It may be possible that if Japan keeps blocking the progress of these climate talks, and if they're seen to be undermining the UN process, it could start to threaten their hopes for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council," said Joss Garman of Greenpeace UK.

Other sources suggested Russia may prove equally implacable in its opposition to an extension of the Kyoto mandate.

Ideas divide

Usually western countries get the blame for delaying progress in UN fora. However, in the last few days, some environmental groups and some developing countries have also singled out Bolivia, the most hardline in the developing world on these issues.

Its stance includes demanding that the global average temperature rise since pre-industrial times be limited to 1C and that rich countries should pay several percent of their GDP per year out of public finances for "climate damage".

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While appreciating the principles, others feel Bolivia's line is unworkable, and its negotiating tactics negative.

On Thursday, Costa Rica became the first developing country to put its concerns on record.

While declining to formally criticise its Latin neighbour, deputy energy minister Andrei Bourrouet told BBC News that Mr Morales' country was "leading the process to delay the discussion" through its fundamental opposition to ideas such as market mechanisms.

"They have a political and ideological position," he said.

"We understand this position, but the common issue for the rest of the countries is that we have to be flexible; this is the message coming from many many countries.

"We have a time limit in order to get agreements during the next hours."

However, others backed the Bolivian position, instead citing western intransigence.

"We cannot continue to have this pattern of donor-recipient relationship that has been so damaging," said Yolanda Kakabadse, formerly Ecuador's Environment Minister and now president of environmental group WWF.

"And unless all the governments confirm that we all have a stake, we will continue to have people like the Bolivian representatives who feel that this is not a fair deal."

Meanwhile, the Mexican host government is producing new, slimmed-down versions of the main draft agreements.

With just one day remaining of the two-week summit here, it is unclear whether any kind of deal can be agreed - and if so, what it would do to curb climate change.

Climate talks 'on a knife edge'

5:32 PM Friday Dec 10, 2010

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Chris Huhne. Photo / Getty Images.

The UN climate change talks in Cancun are "poised on a knife edge" as they enter their final day this morning, with the possibility of success, but also the possibility of "a car crash," according to Britain's Energy and Climate Change Secretary, Chris Huhne.

Mr Huhne, who is leading a special group of ministers tackling the meeting's key problem - how to replace the current international climate treaty, the Kyoto Protocol - gave a solemn warning last night that the conference could very possibly end in outright failure, as happened at Copenhagen last year.

Such an outcome would be "very very serious" not only for the issue of global warming, but also for the whole UN process which has been set up to deal with it, he said, and it would risk turning future talks into a "zombie conference", at which there would nobody of sufficient seniority in attendance to take any serious decisions.

Mr Huhne is leading a group which includes ministers from Brazil, New Zealand and Indonesia on tackling the Cancun's most intractable problem - how to resolve the split between rich countries and poor countries over Kyoto, which runs out at the end of 2012.

For two weeks at Cancun's luxury Moon Palace hotel complex, while 15,000 delegates from nearly 200 nations have been discussing all aspects of a new climate deal, from a treaty to prevent deforestation to a new global Green Fund which could give developing countries billions of dollars annually in climate aid, Kyoto has remained the central question, threatening to undermine everything else.



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Signed in the Japanese city in 1997, the treaty makes the rich industrialised countries take on legally-binding commitments to cut their emissions of greenhouse gases, while imposing no such commitment on the poorer developing nations.

The developing countries are fiercely attached to it, not only for self-interest - although that is clearly part of it - but also because they see it as an earnest sign of the rich countries' continuing good intent in tackling the climate problem and they want there to be a so-called "second commitment period" of the protocol, binding the industrialised nations to new and tougher targets for cutting their emissions, while they themselves are still legally obliged to do nothing.

The rich countries want a new treaty which binds everybody to cut their CO₂ and it was essentially over this difference that Copenhagen collapsed.

It was hoped that a compromise could be found in Mexico - Britain and the European Union would now accept a renewed Kyoto, as long as there is a separate, parallel agreement which binds everybody - but on the opening day the Japanese electrified the conference by asserting in unusually strong language that "under no circumstances" would they consent to renewing the treaty signed in their historic city.

They were joined in their stance by Russia and Canada, who are also refusing to sign up again.

They were met with a fierce response from the conference's most radical grouping, the "Alba"

group of socialist Latin American states, who insisted that without a new Kyoto, there would be no deal.

These positions have become entrenched and Mr Huhne has spent the last three days leading the special group set up to try to bring them together, but yesterday he said that in essence the two sides were still far apart and unless people gave ground, the conference would end in deadlock.

"The issue is whether countries that are on the extremes about this are prepared to recognise that they're not going to get what they want in its entirety here in Cancun," he said.

There was "a deal to be had", on many aspects of climate change, but it could would not be done without some sort of resolution of the question of Kyoto and a future parallel treaty binding everyone.

He disclosed that David Cameron was seeking to be in direct contact with the Japanese Prime Minister, Mr Naoto Kan, as was the Mexican President, Felipe Calderon, to see if the Japanese position could be softened.

Referring more than once to the possibility of a "car crash" at the end of today, Mr Huhne said: "I think the consequences would be very very serious and very worrying. "Obviously the science on climate change is getting more worrying, not less; the evidence over the last year has got stronger for anthropogenic climate change, and we really do have a very limited window in which we have to move forward globally to get emissions down - if we don't do that, we are going to lose any real prospect of holding temperatures to below two degrees above pre-industrial levels." [regarded as the danger threshold for the world.]

He went on: "I think the other element which is very worrying, is that if there is a failure here, the whole question of the effectiveness of the United Nations process at coming up with solutions to global problems, is going to get called into question. And the worrying scenario there will be that this process becomes a sort of zombie conference, where there won't actually be anybody able to be at a senior enough level to take any serious decisions at all. So the stakes are extremely high here, both for climate change, because this is the pre-eminent global problem, and for our existing means of dealing with global problems - the UN process."

The reason why Kyoto is no longer acceptable to some nations now, when it was signed by all the world community in 1997, lies in changing circumstances. The agreed basis on which it was constructed was that "parties should protect the climate system ... in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities".

What "common but differentiated responsibilities" means is that we're all in this global warming business together, but some of us have done, and are doing, a lot more to cause it than some others, and on that basis, we should bear the lion's share of putting it right. We, of course, are the industrialised countries. Most of the excess carbon dioxide in the atmosphere which is causing climate change was put there by us, in the two fossil-fuel-burning centuries since the Industrial Revolution began in Britain, and when the original UN Climate Convention was being drawn up, between 1990 and 1992, not only did we have the historical responsibility, we had the present responsibility.

If you look at the left-hand side of the graph on this page you can see how CO2 emissions were divided up in 1990: America, the blue chunk at the bottom of the graph, was overwhelmingly the world's biggest single polluter, emitting 25 per cent of the world's CO2 for

less than five per cent of the world's population. The major, OECD countries of Europe were next, with something approaching 20 per cent, and the industrialised world as a whole, which ends with the green band, was emitting between two-thirds and three-quarters of the total; the developing countries were far, far behind, and even the emissions of China, the largest, were less than half those of the US.

Under these circumstances, who could argue against common but differentiated responsibilities? Who could gainsay the fact that we in the industrialised world had not only done most to cause the problem, we were still doing it and therefore should do most to put things right? And if you go back to the graph and use a ruler or a sheet of paper to see where countries were in 1997, you can see that it was still the case, as the Kyoto deal was being negotiated in the city of a thousand temples, that the industrialised world was emitting far more than the developing world was.

But then the graph starts to change radically: developing world emissions begin to shoot up, those of China above all. Chinese carbon emissions doubled, from three to six billion tones from 1996 to 2006, and in 2007 they overtook the US, the biggest polluter of all. Now go back to the graph and look at this year, 2010: the industrialised world and developing country emissions are nearly equal (and they will be soon); then look at the projections for 2030: the developing world is well ahead, and its emissions are shooting away from those of the industrialised nations, growing far faster. This colossal, historical shift has thrown a spanner in the works of the UN climate mechanism, because it undermines the idea of common but differentiated responsibilities, as the key organising principle. It may not undermine the principle itself, but it certainly undermines its universal acceptance, in so far as it means that the industrialised world should do everything and the developing world should do nothing. For even if the historical responsibility of the rich world remains - as it does - what are we to do about the present?

Are the huge developing country emissions simply to be ignored?

Some countries such as Japan will no longer accept this, and the split has become a fault line which now bisects the world's climate change machinery, and which, if agreement cannot be reached in Cancun by tonight, will become unmistakably visible.

- THE INDEPENDENT



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7 December 2010 Last updated at 23:29 GMT

Climate change warning at UN Cancun summit



By Richard Black Environment correspondent, BBC News, Cancun, Mexico



Top UN climate official Christiana Figueres said the fate of low-lying islands should be a 'wake-up call'

Ministers have begun talks at the UN climate summit in Cancun, Mexico, amid warnings that time is running out to curb climate change.

Top UN climate official Christiana Figueres said the fate of low-lying islands should be a "wake-up call".

Big differences remain between nations on issues such as cutting emissions, protection from climate impacts and inspections of others' emission curbs.

It is unclear whether those issues can be resolved in the three days left.

Mexican President Felipe Calderon congratulated negotiators for their work so far.

CANCUN CLIMATE SUMMIT



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"The work has been difficult, but I see the results of negotiations are encouraging, although it is clear there are formidable challenges to overcome," he said in his opening speech.

"What should prevail is goodwill, trust and understanding, and with that we will be able to offer the world an opportunity to open a new path when it comes to fighting climate change."

Ms Figueres, the Costa Rican diplomat who took up the post of UN climate convention (UNFCCC) executive secretary earlier this year, warned that much was at stake.

"The political stakes are high because the effectiveness and credibility of your inter-governmental, multilateral process are in danger," she said.

"And the environmental stakes are high because we are quickly running out of time to safeguard our future.

"Tuvalu, The Maldives, Kiribati, Vanuatu are looking for ways of evacuating their entire populations because of salt water intrusion and sea-level rise. Their fate is a wake-up call to all of us."

Earlier, the UN Environment Programme (Unep) formally presented delegates with the results of a study published two weeks ago.

It showed that pledges on the table for curbing emissions will not be enough to keep the global average temperature rise below the levels that most governments say they want.

The vast majority of countries want to keep the rise since pre-industrial times to within either 1.5C or 2C.

Lou Leonard from environmental group WWF was one of many campaigners emphasising that the agreement coming out of Cancun must allow for countries to increase their pledges, to close this gap.

"They say they want 2C, the pledges don't get to 2C. It is like the emperor has no clothes," he said.

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Nature talks see mood of compromise emerge



By Richard Black Environment correspondent, BBC News, Cancun



Hopes are widespread for a more open and inclusive set of negotiations

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The second week of this year's UN climate summit opens in Mexico with signs that countries are keen to find compromise on key issues.

China and India have softened some hard lines that helped drive last year's Copenhagen summit to stalemate.

New draft agreements released over the weekend have so far been met with cautious approval.

However, fundamental divisions remain - not least over the future of the Kyoto Protocol.

Japan, supported by Russia and Canada, is steadfastly rejecting demands that developed countries agree new emission cuts under the protocol.

They argue that nations inside it account for less than one-quarter of global greenhouse gas emissions, so logically the protocol cannot play a bit part in curbing them.

However, some developing countries are adamant that developed countries must use it for further pledges.

They approve of its legally-binding nature, and the funds it generates to help poor nations prepare for climate impacts.

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China's head of delegation Su Wei signalled that Beijing was prepared to be flexible.

"In the spirit of compromise, we would consider any options that would keep open the continuation of the Kyoto Protocol," he told Bloomberg News.

"Not the numbers, but a clear confirmation to have a second commitment period."

Together with India, China has also hinted at a gentler line on the issue of monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) - in other words, how countries' should be assessed to prove they are complying with declared emission levels.

That developing countries should be subject to MRV has been a key demand of the US.

Over the weekend, conference chairs released new draft agreements aimed at capturing some of the views and demands made by different delegations.

At Copenhagen, the leaking of a draft accord early in the meeting proved a toxic ingredient; it had been drawn up in secret, not every country had been consulted, and it was seen to play into the hands of the rich nations.

Here, though, the Mexican hosts say they have been at pains to make this an open process, with every country welcome to inject ideas.

So far, responses have generally been favourable.

"The draft text provides a good basis for negotiation," said Gordon Shepherd, head of the global climate initiative at WWF, echoing the sentiments of other major environment groups.

"We now look to governments to accept the text, so we can move out of process and into the substance of the negotiations."

However, he pointed out that the carbon cuts stemming from the new documents - essentially the same pledges that countries put forward at Copenhagen - were not enough to keep the global temperature rise since pre-industrial times below 2C, by the UN's own analysis.

UK Climate Secretary Chris Huhne said that he - and by extension, the EU - was as determined as ever to push towards a new global legally binding deal.

"We believe a legally binding global deal is not just good for the planet; it also good for its

inhabitants," he said.

"We do not underestimate the scale of the task. The negotiations are wide-ranging and complex; in their scope and their detail, they are without parallel.

"But the indications are good."

Hot and cold oil in Cancun climate

[Richard Black](#) | 18:55 UK time, Friday, 3 December 2010



Campaigners have accused governments of having their heads in the sand regarding the urgent need for action

Reading the runes of [Cancun's first week](#) at a distance (the BBC, unlike [Britain's best-selling daily paper The Sun](#), is deploying its correspondent on site for only the second half of the meeting this year), it seems that the familiar top-line story of villains and double-dealing is underpinned by something a little more subtle.

You can interpret some of the developments as indicating that governments are looking at [the latest data on temperatures and weather](#), then looking back to Copenhagen and asking "what have we done?"

The fingers of blame so far have been pointed principally at a fairly unfamiliar target: Japan.

A leader on energy efficiency, and a champion of the Kyoto agreement around the time it was

signed 13 years ago, it now finds itself [in the firing line from developing countries](#) and from campaigners over [its decision to say a categorical "no"](#) to any chance of setting further targets for emission reductions under the [Kyoto Protocol \(KP\)](#).

This is a story that [began in the middle of the year at one of the preparatory meetings in Bonn](#), when Japanese and Russian negotiators lined up side-by-side against more KP.

On the surface, the reasoning is simple. Not all big emitters are inside the protocol; so why seek a further agreement that doesn't set targets for, for example, the US and China, the biggest two emitters?

The reason why China isn't covered in this way is simple, yet something that some western governments apparently have trouble remembering from day to day; it's a developing country, and thus under the terms of the UN climate convention itself, it does not have to take the lead in cutting emissions.

Its per-capita emissions remain much lower than those of the US or Japan.



Japan's Prime Minister found himself lampooned over objections to the Kyoto Protocol

What's exercising Japan, principally, appears to be the fact that China is set to emerge as the dominant East Asian economy.

At a time when [Japan-China relations are also strained by a spat over ship collisions in the waters of a disputed island](#) and by [China's restrictions on exporting rare earth elements to Japan](#), giving way to Beijing on climate change is, it appears, not feasible.

On the face of it, Japan's stance makes agreement on an eventual package near impossible; it won't take more cuts under the KP, but developing countries won't budge without extending

the protocol.

Add in the fact that no-one can yet be sure how the US can meet its target for emission cuts, and potentially you have a recipe for stalemate.

But this is where the more subtle undercurrents come in.

Exhibit One is India. In Copenhagen, its government was bullish, sticking out for nothing that could be taken as international restraints on its emissions, and co-leading with China the BASIC group of big developing nations that wielded the most power during the conference's final days.

Now, we have Environment Minister [Jairam Ramesh talking of "being a bridge between the developed and the developing world"](#).

As part of that bridge-building, Mr Ramesh [has been working on a proposal for monitoring, reporting and verification \(MRV\)](#) - in other words, making sure countries are constraining emissions as they say they are - that could answer concerns China has about preserving its sovereignty, while allowing the US administration to tell the Senate it has its eyes on what China is up to.

India, so I hear, now has reservations about the BASIC bloc - as do Brazil and South Africa - although a rending asunder isn't imminent.

Exhibit Two - much more profoundly - is the progress being made by countries involved in [the Cartagena Dialogue](#).

Australia, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Peru, Samoa, Thailand, the UK... just some of the loose grouping of countries from very different circumstances that all want to see progress within the UN climate framework.

Its genesis is curious.



China's protection of rare earth elements has angered Japan - and others

On the final morning of the Copenhagen meeting, a group of about 20 leaders assembled in a chilly room expecting to meet Danish Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen and talk about a

political agreement.

Mr Rasmussen didn't turn up - the previous evening, he'd launched his new-look, stripped-down Copenhagen Accord on unsuspecting leaders at the state dinner, and was busy pursuing that elsewhere.

Not quite knowing what to do, the leaders decided they might as well use their time constructively; and so the Cartagena Dialogue was born.

Meetings have taken place during the intervening year - and so it comes to be that there is at play in the meeting a group of nations determined to be constructive and build more than bridges.

They've managed to set up an informal group to discuss the Japanese/Kyoto issue and its wider context, for example - something that various blocs have vetoed in the past.

Finally come [the comments from President Nasheed of The Maldives](#), who I interviewed in London at the launch of [a new report on climate vulnerability](#).

He went further than developing country chiefs generally do in public about the case for breaking down the traditional silos that countries usually inhabit.

[The G77/China bloc](#) encompasses nearly 130 nations including oil-rich Saudi Arabia, small island developing states, really poor countries such as Togo and Haiti and ones that are rapidly developing towards western levels of affluence.

By any analysis, their interests in the climate issue are not the same. Yet historically, the shape of the UN process has assumed they are, by having them all inside the G77/China umbrella.

I'm told that privately, The Maldives isn't the only country wondering whether it's worth it, or whether countries should instead work in alliances that truly reflect their interests.

The bridge-building isn't without its domestic perils.

[Mr Ramesh's efforts are being condemned in India](#) - while in the US, four senators are now [demanding that the administration withdraws](#) the \$1.7bn it's earmarked for climate assistance in poor countries this year, citing the national debt (measured in trillions of dollars).

It's far too early to speculate on whether Cancun will be a failure or a success - partly because no-one really knows how to define those terms - and at the time of writing, rumour has just emerged that a separate political agreement, a Cancun Accord maybe, is being drafted.

That, if it's true, will bring very uncomfortable echoes of Copenhagen. Usually reliable sources think it isn't true - in which case, there's a question to be asked about who said it was, and why.

Lots of smoke, and obscured mirrors - that's the UN climate process.

But some see in the shape of Cartagena a reason to hope that some of the smoke can be dispelled over the remaining week.

'Terrific ten' given days to save the world

[Richard Black](#) | 17:55 UK time, Tuesday, 7 December 2010

From the [UN climate summit](#) in Cancun, Mexico.

Enid Blyton had five (and then seven) - Ocean had 11 (and then 12).

Mexican Foreign Minister Patricia Espinosa, president of the [UN climate summit here](#), has gone for 10 - 10 people who have just three days to save the planet.



The UK's Chris Huhne says the "fundamentals" hold the key to progress in Cancun

OK, that's a bit of hyperbole - the planet itself is going to be fine, whatever holds for life on it - but there's no doubt that the task Ms Espinosa has handed to 10 ministers here is a tough one.

In five pairs - developing country paired with rich world counterpart - the ministers have been charged with finding compromise routes through the trickiest areas of negotiation.

Sweden and Grenada are looking at the shared vision - the over-arching description of what countries want this process to achieve. Currently there are at least three distinguishable visions - arguably many more - held by different groups of countries.

Spain and Algeria will discuss adaptation, while Australia and Bangladesh have finance, technology and capacity building.

Taken together, these areas really deal with how rich countries help poorer ones to deal with climate change - adapting to impacts, and developing along "clean" lines - as they are obliged to do under the climate convention.

When it comes to cutting carbon, New Zealand and Indonesia get to deal with the big picture - developing countries, the US, the long-term goals - while the UK and Brazil have secured possibly the thorniest of issues, [the future of the Kyoto Protocol](#).

Japan said definitively at the beginning of this conference that they would not accept further emission cuts under the protocol; developing countries demand that it continues.

You might ask why they're so insistent on the protocol - why should the vehicle chosen for the West's carbon cuts matter, so long as the cuts are big enough?

In part it's because of the protocol's legally-binding character, in part because it contains procedures to channel support to developing countries, and partly because they figured that rich countries promised, so they should keep their promise.

So the UK's Chris Huhne - barely six months into his term of office as [UK climate and energy secretary](#) - and Brazil's Environment Minister Izabella Teixeira have to find a way between the archetypal Scylla and Charybdis.



Ten ministers, including Brazil's Izabella Teixeira, have the task of getting all sides to agree

The pairs of ministers are holding meetings with key countries, and are supposed to report back to the Mexican chairs early on Wednesday.

Mr Huhne and Ms Teixeira have so far talked to Japan, the G77 group of developing countries, Australia, the African group. Talks are set with Russia, Canada, the small island states; there'll also be a free-for all session where anyone can come and pitch in their ideas.

[Japan, reportedly, was "robust"](#) - when you've come out with such a strong statement as they have, it's not easy to pull back without a great deal being promised in return.

For all 10 ministers, this is a painstaking job. But Mr Huhne outlined the importance of getting the fundamentals sorted here, before he and others begin the big push for a legally-binding deal next year.

"You can't expect to have an 'instant coffee' solution - just add hot water and you've got a climate change treaty," he told reporters.

What we have is more of a sushi preparation scenario - a slice of fish here, a smattering of wasabi, a substantive lump of rice folded into a tasty envelope of tofu - specialist work indeed.

Luckily, the 10 ministers have legal teams to help them - people who are adept at melting and casting and re-melting and re-casting language until it takes on a form in which all parties can see beauty.

And it's probably no exaggeration to say that on their capacity to do so, plus the personal chemistry ministers manage to generate with sometimes aggrieved and sometimes belligerent delegates, hangs the the success or failure of Cancun.