

11 December 2011 Last updated at 07:10 GMT

# Climate talks end with late deal

By Richard Black Environment correspondent, BBC News, Durban



Elements of the draft text caused much discussion

UN climate talks have closed with an agreement that the chair said had "saved tomorrow, today".

The European Union will place its current emission-cutting pledges inside the legally-binding Kyoto Protocol, a key demand of developing countries.

Talks on a new legal deal covering all countries will begin next year and end by 2015, coming into effect by 2020.

Management of a fund for climate aid to poor countries has also been agreed, though how to raise the money has not.

Talks ran nearly 36 hours beyond their scheduled close, with many delegates saying the host government lacked urgency and strategy.

Nevertheless, there was applause in the main conference hall when South Africa's International Relations Minister, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, brought down the long-awaited final gavel.

"We came here with plan A, and we have concluded this meeting with plan A to save one planet for the future of our children and our grandchildren to come," she said.

"We have made history."

The conclusion was delayed by a dispute between the EU and India over the precise wording of the "roadmap" for a new global deal.

"While they develop, we die; and why should we accept this?"

Karl Hood Foreign Minister of Grenada

- [Reaction to UN climate deal](#)

India did not want a specification that it must be legally binding.

Eventually, a Brazilian diplomat came up with the formulation that the deal must have "legal

force", which proved acceptable.

The roadmap proposal originated with the EU, the Alliance of Small Island States (Aosis) and the Least Developed Countries bloc (LDCs).

They argued that only a new legal agreement eventually covering emissions from all countries - particularly fast-growing major emitters such as China - could keep the rise in global average temperatures since pre-industrial times below 2C (3.6F), the internationally-agreed threshold.

"If there is no legal instrument by which we can make countries responsible for their actions, then we are relegating countries to the fancies of beautiful words," said Karl Hood, Grenada's Foreign Minister, speaking for Aosis.

"While they develop, we die; and why should we accept this?"

Impassioned arguments



Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, president of the talks: "No one can walk out of this room and say we don't care about climate change"

Delegates from the Basic group - Brazil, South Africa, India and China - criticised what they saw as a tight timetable and excessive legality.

"I stand firm on my position of equity," said an impassioned Jayanthi Natarajan, India's environment minister.

"This is not about India, it is about the entire world."

India believes in maintaining the current stark division where only countries labelled

"developed" have to cut their greenhouse gas emissions.

Western nations, she said, have not cut their own emissions as they had pledged; so why should poorer countries have to do it for them?

Xie Zhenhua, head of the Chinese delegation, agreed.

Apparently trembling with rage, he berated the developed countries: "We are doing things you are not doing... we want to see your real actions".

However, Bangladesh and some other developing countries weighed in on the side of Aosis, saying a new legally-binding deal was needed.

Aosis and the LDCs agree that rich countries need to do more.

But they also accept analyses concluding that fast-developing countries such as China will need to cut their emissions several years in the future if governments are to meet their goal of keeping the rise in global average temperature since pre-industrial times below 2C.

Once the roadmap blockage had been cleared, everything else followed quickly.

Action that helps cope with the effects of climate change - for example construction of barriers to protect against rising sea levels, or conversion to crops capable of surviving high temperatures and drought.

[Glossary in full](#)

There were some surreal moment of confusion, but few objections, except from members of the Latin American Alba group, who said the developed world was not living up to its promises.

Green fund

A management framework was adopted for the Green Climate Fund, which will eventually gather and disburse finance amounting to \$100bn (£64bn) per year to help poor countries develop cleanly and adapt to climate impacts.

There has also been significant progress on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD).

Environment groups were divided in their reaction, with some finding it a significant step forward and others saying it had done nothing to change the course of climate change.

Many studies indicate that current pledges on reducing emissions are taking the Earth towards a temperature rise of double the 2C target.

Michael Jacobs, visiting professor at the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment in London, said the agreement could bring real changes.

"The agreement here has not in itself taken us off the 4C path we are on," he said.

"But by forcing countries for the first time to admit that their current policies are inadequate and must be strengthened by 2015, it has snatched 2C from the jaws of impossibility.

"At the same time it has re-established the principle that climate change should be tackled

through international law, not national, voluntarism."

12 December 2011 Last updated at 22:27 GMT

## **Canada to withdraw from Kyoto Protocol**

Canada will formally withdraw from the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, the minister of the environment has said.

Peter Kent said the protocol "does not represent a way forward for Canada" and would have forced it to take "radical and irresponsible choices".

The move, which is legal and was expected, makes it the first nation to pull out of the global treaty.

The protocol, initially adopted in Kyoto, Japan, in 1997, is aimed at fighting global warming.

"Kyoto, for Canada, is in the past, and as such we are invoking our legal right to withdraw from Kyoto," Mr Kent said in Toronto.

He said he would be formally advising the United Nations of his country's intention to withdraw.

He said the cost of meeting Canada's obligations under Kyoto would cost \$13.6bn (10.3bn euros; £8.7bn): "That's \$1,600 from every Canadian family - that's the Kyoto cost to Canadians, that was the legacy of an incompetent liberal government".

Canada declared four years ago that it did not intend to meet its existing Kyoto Protocol commitments and its annual emissions have risen by about one third since 1990.

13 December 2011 Last updated at 18:40 GMT

## **Canada under fire over Kyoto protocol exit**



Environment Minister Peter Kent: "Kyoto is not the path forward for a global solution for climate change"

Several countries have criticised Canada for formally withdrawing from the Kyoto Protocol on climate change.

A spokesman for France's foreign ministry called the move "bad news for the fight against climate change", a sentiment echoed by other officials.

Peter Kent, Canada's minister of the environment, has said the protocol "does not represent a way forward".

The move, which is legal and was expected, makes Canada the first nation to pull out of the global treaty.

A spokesman for China's foreign ministry told reporters that the decision was "regrettable and flies in the face of the efforts of the international community", Reuters news agency reported.

The protocol, initially adopted in Kyoto, Japan, in 1997, is aimed at fighting global warming. Through the agreement, countries like China and India take voluntary, but non-binding steps to reduce their carbon emissions.

Japan's own environment minister, Goshi Hosono, urged Canada to stay in the protocol.

## **Analysis**

Richard Black Environment correspondent, BBC News

That Canada would withdraw from the Kyoto Protocol has been the worst-kept recent secret in climate change politics.

On taking office in 2007, Stephen Harper's government found their predecessors, for all their green rhetoric, had done little to cut Canada's emissions.

Rather than heading for a 6% cut from 1990 levels by 2020, the Kyoto pledge, it was and still is set for a rise of about 16% - more like 30% if you include forestry. The obvious answer, to huge disdain from critics, was to say they wouldn't try meeting the target.

Since then, the approach has been to copy the US line. Canada's current pledge is exactly the same as the US one - a cut of 17% from 2005 levels by 2020 - with the proviso that the number will change if the US passes legislation with a different target.

And as the US is outside Kyoto, Canada's last act of mimicry was to leave as well.

A burning question at the recent UN talks in Durban was whether Japan, Russia, Australia or New Zealand would follow Canada's lead - which would effectively leave just European countries inside.

For the moment, it appears unlikely, as all like the flexibility Kyoto offers for meeting emission targets. But it's not impossible.

But that will not happen, Mr Kent said. "Kyoto, for Canada, is in the past, and as such we are invoking our legal right to withdraw from Kyoto," Mr Kent said.

He said he would be formally advising the United Nations of his country's intention to pull out.

### **'Impediment'**

He said meeting Canada's obligations under Kyoto would cost \$13.6bn (10.3bn euros; £8.7bn): "That's \$1,600 from every Canadian family - that's the Kyoto cost to Canadians, that was the legacy of an incompetent Liberal government."

Despite that cost, greenhouse emissions would continue to rise as two of the world's largest polluters - the US and China - were not covered by the Kyoto agreement, Mr Kent said.

"We believe that a new agreement that will allow us to generate jobs and economic growth represents the way forward."

Mr Kent's announcement came just hours after a last-minute deal on climate change was agreed in Durban

Talks on a new legal deal covering all countries will begin next year and end by 2015, coming into effect by 2020, the UN climate conference decided.

Some countries, including India, were worried that the first nation to formally remove itself from the binding Kyoto agreement would jeopardise the future conferences.

For low-lying island nation Tuvalu, most at-risk for rising sea levels, the withdrawal was more



personal.

"For a vulnerable country like Tuvalu, its an act of sabotage on our future," Ian Fry, Tuvalu's lead negotiator told Reuters. "Withdrawing from the Kyoto Protocol is a reckless and totally irresponsible act."



Australia delegate Greg Combet (left)

defended Canada's decision

Australia's lead delegate, Minister of Climate Change Greg Combet has defended Canada's decision.

"The Canadian decision to withdraw from the protocol should not be used to suggest Canada does not intend to play its part in global efforts to tackle climate change," a spokesman told the Sydney Morning Herald.

Mr Kent said that Kyoto was a "dated document" but said "there was good will demonstrated in Durban, the agreement that we ended up with provides the basis for an agreement by 2015".

Though the text of the Durban agreement "provides a loophole for China and India", the Canadian minister said, it represents "the way forward".

Canada's previous Liberal government signed the accord but Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservative government never embraced it.

Canada declared four years ago that it did not intend to meet its existing Kyoto Protocol commitments and its annual emissions have risen by about a third since 1990.

## Canadian reaction on Kyoto withdrawal

Canada's withdrawal from Kyoto from not unexpected. In early December, Canada's The Globe and Mail [looked at the likely costs or penalties](#) of either failing to meet the 2012 Kyoto targets or withdrawing from the protocol. "The question which remains is whether the effect on Canada's international reputation would be greater as a result of withdrawal or non-compliance," Andrew Leach writes.

A CBC analysis argues that the original Kyoto protocol did its job, if only in the narrow sense of reducing the emissions of signatories. However, at the time same emissions levels in other countries grew. [Robert Sheppard writes](#) that Canada set naive set targets last time and by failing to live up to them has damaged its position.

"It's a legitimate argument: China needs to step up." he says. "But how do you make it with a straight face when you haven't come anywhere close to meeting your own international obligations and you also want to turn around and sell China as much oil sands petroleum as it

is willing to take?"

Globe and Mail opinion columnist Margaret Wente [dismisses the Durban talks as "absurd"](#) and says climate change conferences are more about power and money and the opportunity for growing economies to "extract billions" from rich countries.

Meanwhile, Craig McInnes at the Vancouver Sun [sees the Kyoto withdrawal](#) as part of a larger abandonment by the Canadian government on the climate issue, and worries that while his fellow citizens say they care about the environment, they lack the will as consumers and citizens to make significant changes.

8 December 2011 Last updated at 05:29 GMT

## Climate talks 'lacking urgency'

By Richard Black Environment correspondent, BBC News, Durban  
Environment activists are demanding firmer action from climate talks delegates

Lack of urgency in the Durban meeting halls and pressing issues elsewhere threaten to block progress as the UN climate summit enters its final days.

Some delegates said there was no clear process for bridging divides.

Others suggested that the EU summit on Thursday and Friday would see European leaders "thinking of the euro crisis, not the climate crisis".

Most nations appear to want a strong deal - but the exceptions are some of the world's most powerful countries.

The US, India, China and Brazil are among those likely to oppose parts of the solution sought by the EU and the majority of developing countries.

As those four together account for nearly half of the world's emissions, the diplomacy is harder than the mere numbers might indicate.

With two days left to run in the South African city, some experienced delegates said the talks appeared to lack urgency.

By this stage in last year's meeting, they said, the Mexican hosts had already decided a process to resolve outstanding differences; but that is not the case here.

Final stages of negotiations often involve a few calls between heads of state, who can sometimes break an impasse when their underlings cannot.

But with EU nations desperately searching for a solution to the eurozone crisis at the Brussels summit, delegates questioned whether European leaders would have the time or inclination to make the key calls.

Coalition of the willing

There is clearly a broad coalition here that wants a process leading to a new, legally-binding agreement covering all nations to begin as soon as possible.



It includes the Least Developed Countries bloc (LDCs), the Alliance of Small Island States (Aosis), the European Union and some countries in Africa and Latin America.

But the big emitters are holding out for a longer timescale.

Brazil has made clear that it does not want the process to begin until 2015 at the earliest, while China, India, and the US are believed to favour even longer timescales.

[Continue reading the main story](#)

Climate change glossary

Select a term to learn more:

Adaptation

Adaptation

Action that helps cope with the effects of climate change - for example construction of barriers to protect against rising sea levels, or conversion to crops capable of surviving high temperatures and drought.

[Glossary in full](#)

Part of their argument is that discussions should start after the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has published its next assessment report in 2013-4, so that policy is based on the latest science.

The UN climate convention (UNFCCC) itself is also due to review its existing agreements in 2013-5, to judge whether they need strengthening.

But Brazil, China and India also argue that Western countries should follow through fully on their existing pledges first before any new process starts - including by making further emission cuts under the Kyoto Protocol.

"If you committed to do something, you have to implement what you said you would do," said Luiz Alberto Figueiredo Machado, head of the Brazilian delegation.

The EU is willing to put its existing emission pledges under the Kyoto Protocol, provided that the summit agrees a clear roadmap or process leading to a new global agreement under which, eventually, every nation's emissions could be regulated.

"The EU is not about to agree to a Kyoto Protocol second commitment period without strong commitment on the part of players who would not be a part of that agreement," said UK Climate Secretary Chris Huhne.

Most observers agree that the biggest question is whether China, India, Brazil and the US can be persuaded to move far enough towards the common ground shared by the EU and the LDCs and Aosis.

One view shared by delegates from different blocs is that Brazil will move, China might - but India and the US will be tougher.

"In that case, the question will be whether India or the US or both really want to be the ones to stand up and say 'we broke the deal in Durban'," said one delegate who did not wish to be named.

Forest of issues

Many other issues are on the agenda besides emission cuts.

On the Green Climate Fund - the new body that will eventually collect and disburse sums of \$100bn (£64bn) per year to poor countries - there is consensus on rules.

The draft agreement for this meeting specifies that a levy on fuel used by international shipping could be one source of money for the fund.

But progress on agreeing other sources is being blocked, reportedly by the US.

"Negotiators have an option on the table here to raise billions of dollars to help protect poor people on the front lines of the climate crisis by capping emissions from the shipping sector," said David Waskow, Oxfam's policy adviser.

"Blocking progress on this practical solution would undermine a future where everyone has enough to eat."

The meeting is also supposed to implement agreements already reached in principle, including on a scheme to fund Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD) and the transfer of clean technologies to developing countries.

On forests, there are genuine disagreements over technical and social factors.

But there is also a chance that any or all of these issues could be held hostage as leverage in the bigger picture.

While many delegates say there is still all to play for, there are outliers on both sides.

"Very optimistic" and "a car crash" were two very divergent views of the state of play with two days remaining. 6 December 2011 Last updated at 15:37 GMT

## UN climate talks 'ambition' call



By Richard Black Environment correspondent, BBC News, Durban



Mr Zuma described the Durban talks as a "decisive moment" in global climate negotiations

South African President Jacob Zuma has called on governments to be more ambitious as they

search for agreement at the UN climate talks.

The Earth is in danger, he said - but deciding what to do about it was a more difficult issue.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon also asked for more ambition, saying that the financial crisis should be a spur.

Twelve heads of state and about 130 ministers have until Friday to decide what outcome they want from the talks.

Earlier in the day, their delegations heard [analysts confirm that the Earth's surface is on course to warm by about 3.5C \(6.3F\) by 2100](#), rather than the 2C (3.6F) that governments have agreed as the maximum.

Opening the ministerial segment, Mr Zuma described the UN talks, in the coastal city of Durban, as "a decisive moment".

He appealed for all governments to respect the tradition of multilateralism, describing climate change as "a global problem that requires a global solution".

Decisions here need to reflect current and future concerns, he said.

"We are all agreed that the Earth is in danger, and we're all agreed that we must do something about it," he told delegates.

"But the problem is when we've got to say what it is, and how."

Mr Ban said that movement towards a green economy was crucial in order to overcome not only climate change, but the coming shortages of natural resources.

"The answer is clear, even if the exact path is not," he said.

Indian anger

Behind the scenes, ministers and their teams began to step up diplomatic activity in a series of multilateral and bilateral meetings.

[Continue reading the main story](#)



The head of China's delegation, Xie Zhenhua, says a legally binding climate agreement is needed

- [UN climate talks looking to China](#)

Many delegates are particularly keen to discover how far and how fast China is prepared to go towards a future legally-binding agreement to drive emissions down.

It is widely believed that China holds the key to whether the talks end with a breakthrough or a breakdown.

Many developing countries are also angered by the hard line being taken by the Indian delegation, which is holding to the line that only the traditional "developed" countries should have to engage in binding restrictions, despite the fact that some countries in the "developing world" bloc now have higher per-capita emissions and incomes.

Some African nations and small island states are keen to tell the Indian government that it risks isolating itself from the rest of the developing world bloc here.

There is also generalised frustration with the US. Despite President Obama's pledge three years ago to "lead the world" on climate change, many sources indicate that behind the scenes, his officials are blocking whatever measures they can.

#### Rising tide

Concern of countries that feel vulnerable to climate impacts has been fuelled by several recent analyses showing that current pledges made by governments are very unlikely to keep the rise in global average temperature since pre-industrial times below 2C.

[Continue reading the main story](#)

## Climate change glossary

Select a term to learn more:

Adaptation

### **Adaptation**

Action that helps cope with the effects of climate change - for example construction of barriers to protect against rising sea levels, or conversion to crops capable of surviving high

temperatures and drought.

[Glossary in full](#)

The latest Climate Action Tracker, compiled by analysts Climate Analytics, the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, and Ecofys, was released on the sidelines of the UN talks.

Their top-line conclusion is that warming of about 3.5C is likely by 2100.

That could be brought down by tougher caps on emissions after the current pledges' end-date of 2020; but that would be far more expensive, they calculate.

"To put it bluntly, the longer we wait, the less options we will have, the more it will cost, the less likely we are to be able to stay below global warming of 2C, and the bigger the threat to the world's most vulnerable," said Bill Hare, director of Climate Analytics.

Other recent reports from the [United Nations Environment Programme \(Unep\)](#) and the International Energy Agency (IEA) reached similar conclusions.

"The door to achieving our objectives is rapidly closing," said IEA executive director Maria van der Hoeven.

"While I strongly urge an agreement on emissions, I have a simple message for the participants in these talks: don't wait for a global deal - act now."

The longer governments wait, the more they risk locking themselves into a high-carbon energy system that is insecure and inefficient, the agency said.

Ms van der Hoeven's words were echoed by a plethora of campaign groups around the conference venue.

While they are keen to see agreement on a package of measures here, some are concerned that an overwhelming desire for a deal could make the final document very weak.

They maintain that it should be based on the science coming from groups such as Unep, Climate Analytics and the IEA.

"Ministers here in Durban have no excuse if they ignore the deafening alarm bells coming from the scientific community," said Keith Allott, head of climate change at WWF-UK.

"Durban can and must agree a second Kyoto Protocol commitment period, and a mandate to strike a comprehensive legal agreement in 2015.

"But we also need strong action to increase ambition right now - being legally bound to a world of 4C warming is simply unacceptable."

## **Durban climate deal is limping, but not dead yet**

17:12 6 December 2011

[Durban Climate Talks](#)

## Environment

*Fred Pearce, consultant, Durban*

As ministers arrive in Durban for the final days of [the latest UN climate conference](#), here is what's on the table. Countries should agree to start negotiations on a global deal to control emissions from most of the world's countries, including the US and China. For [the best chance of staving off 2 °C of warming, that deal needs to be reached by 2015 and become active in 2020](#) - eight years after the end of the existing deal, the [Kyoto protocol](#).

The protocol was legally binding, but that won't necessarily be the case for a new deal.

Meanwhile, countries that want something legally binding during the intervening years - mainly the European Union - can, with the blessing of the rest of the conference, adopt a second phase of the Kyoto protocol. It would hold them to their existing promises - which in the case of the EU is a 20 per cent emissions cut below 1990 levels.

This stunted child of the old protocol would place legal limits on about 15 per cent of the world's emissions, including only one of the top six national emitters: Germany.

The deal essentially [throws away the Bali "road map" agreed in 2007](#) and intended to deliver a global deal for 2012. Delegates here have been talking about a new "road map". For old hands it feels like groundhog day.

That is what will happen if things go well in the next few days.

They could go a lot worse.

The European Union says it doesn't want to agree a second phase of the protocol unless other existing members stay on board. But Russia, Japan and Canada say they will not renew their membership unless the US joins - which it won't.

Meanwhile, the Chinese have hinted that they would pull out of talks for a future treaty unless the Kyoto protocol lives on, as a sign of the rich world's acceptance of its prime responsibility for climate change. Brief hopes that in return for this, China might promise to agree to accept legally binding 2020 targets of its own have evaporated.

The US is keeping out of the limelight. Its chief negotiator, Todd Stern, said its position remains that it will never accept legally binding targets on its emissions unless they "bind everybody, all the major players... fully and unconditionally with no escape hatches." China, he said, won't agree to that.

But Stern also brought good news: voluntarism.

[At last year's talks in Cancùn, more than 80 nations made various unilateral promises to curb their emissions](#) and, mostly, to reduce the growth of their emissions. China, Mexico, Brazil, even the US featured on the list of those adopting voluntary targets. Those promises, says Stern, come from nations representing more than 80 per cent of global emissions. They were a starting point, and might eventually lead to a legally binding deal.

Most environmentalists regard a legally binding deal as the only one worth having, though

lawyers point out that without enforcement, legal binds are worthless.

Canada exemplifies that. Under the Kyoto protocol, in 1997, Canada promised to cut its emissions from 1990 levels by 6 per cent during the period 2008-2012. Its emissions are currently 17 per cent above 1990 levels. Its punishment should be a large carbon forfeit in the next phase of the protocol. But since Canada now says it will leave the agreement, the penalty will be void.

The stark truth is that global emissions in 2010 were 49 per cent up on 1990, driven by dramatic growth in China and India and sustained high levels in the US and elsewhere. Governments are way off track for curbing global warming at two degrees. An analysis this week from the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany said that these existing promises suggested a warming of 3.5 degrees by the end of the century - [the same number that \*New Scientist\* reported on at the close of the 2009 Copenhagen talks.](#)

Nothing that has happened so far in Durban suggests politicians have much enthusiasm for preventing it.

5 December 2011 Last updated at 14:12 GMT

## Durban: Climate summit looks back and forward



Island nations want guarantees of safety rather than risk percentages

Durban: To someone based in Europe, the demands, at first sight, seem both unconscionable and completely unrealistic.

Developed nations should cut their greenhouse gas emissions by more than 50% (from 1990 levels) by 2017, and by 100% - or, in one version, "more than 100%" - before 2040.

Developed nations whose emissions have not yet peaked must make them peak and begin to decline immediately.

Developed nations should provide sums of money each year to developing countries for climate adaptation and mitigation that "shall be equivalent to the budget that developed countries spend on defence, security and warfare".

All these are taken from the [143-page screed](#) formally known as the "Amalgamation of draft texts in preparation of a comprehensive and balanced outcome to be presented to the



Conference of the Parties for adoption at its 17th session".

Ministers and their negotiators are supposed to whittle it all down into something they can sign off at the end of the week.

And so you wonder - if developing countries are serious about getting an agreement here, why would they submit demands that have as much chance of success as a chocolate teapot?

One answer is that they're not real demands, they're negotiating ploys, designed to drag more reasonable concessions out of the developed world.

There's some truth in that. But there's another thing; from the perspective of some developing countries, these are, in fact, eminently reasonable.

If you're a small island nation, for example, you're interested in safeguarding your shores from rising sea levels.

You want a guarantee of safety - not something along the lines of "if we peak at date X and reduce emissions at rate Y that gives you Z% chance of not being flooded out of existence".

So from their point of view, asking rich nations to peak their emissions within a few years and halve them within five isn't unreasonable - especially, as another portion of the text says, that the problem of greenhouse warming has been on the radar for so long that rich countries could have peaked their emissions during the 1990s if they had wanted to.

In fact, if you choose, you can sum up the issues involved in this negotiation in terms of differing views on the relative importance of the past and the future.

For many of the developing countries, it is largely about the past - the West's responsibility for historical carbon emissions, the large share of the "atmospheric space" for carbon that Western nations have appropriated, and - usually unspoken, but real nevertheless - harms visited during the colonial era.

Their point is that at least some of these issues need to be put straight before moving on.

For other players, it's about starting where we are now - putting the past to one side and simply taking the best course from hereon in.

It might seem like the sensible course. The rate of greenhouse gas emissions is rising and we're rapidly approaching the date by which science suggests they need to peak if there's to be a reasonable chance of keeping the temperature rise under 2C.

But apart from the question of reparations to which some developing countries feel they are entitled, two other issues mean the past is always a factor.

One is, frankly, that governments of some richer developing countries appear to be in this process for what they can get.

If Western countries have to reduce emissions and fork out extensive sums of money and they do not, they stand to gain a competitive advantage - and dragging up the past as often as possible helps this agenda.

The other issue concerns trust.

What some developing country governments see happening here is that rich nations that have not fulfilled their past commitments are now demanding a new agreement.

Canada, for example, signed and ratified the Kyoto Protocol, in the process pledging to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions.

Instead, emissions soared - and rather than meeting its commitment, the government simply said it would not make the emission cuts. There's no sanction.

As Tosi Mpanu Mpanu, chair of the Africa Group, put it: "When you're a country and you commit to a legally binding instrument, you have to respect it.

"If a country cannot keep its word, that country shouldn't be trusted; so for me it's very, very grave that those countries are going against what they committed to."

So in these negotiations, the past is always with us; the one aspect that cannot be changed or washed away.

Its lessons might point the way to a more constructive future for this process, and so for the global community. Then again, they might not.

5 December 2011 Last updated at 20:19 GMT

## UN climate talks look to China for deal options



By Richard Black Environment correspondent, BBC News, Durban



Environmental campaigners have been making their point outside the venue in Durban

China's delegates here have said they are willing in principle to take part in a future, legally

binding deal provided key conditions are met.

But several critical details of its position remain unclear.

UK Climate Secretary Chris Huhne said there was "all to play for", and other delegates also appeared optimistic that remaining divisions could be overcome.

However, difficult negotiations lie ahead on both technical issues and points of principle.

There is also concern among nations vulnerable to climate change that the pace of decarbonisation will not be fast enough to protect them against impacts such as droughts and rising sea levels.

"We are beginning to see cards coming down on the table, on the first arrival of ministers," said South Africa's International Relations Minister, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, the meeting's president.

"Now countries can begin dealing with difficult political decisions."

Kyoto train

The Chinese position is critical to achieving an outcome here that everyone can live with.

The EU and many of the smaller and poorer developing nations want talks to begin soon on a new global deal that should be legally binding and include all countries.

In return, it is prepared to put its next round of emission cuts - 20% from 1990 levels by 2020 - under the umbrella of the Kyoto Protocol, as developing countries demand.



Xie Zhenhua says a legally binding agreement is needed

Some other rich nations such as Norway, Switzerland and Australia would be likely to follow the EU's lead, though others - notably Japan, Russia and Canada - will not.

China is willing to agree to talks on a new legally-binding deal provided five key conditions are satisfied - among them, that the EU and others remain within the Kyoto Protocol.

But what is meant by "others" has not been spelled out. If it includes Canada, Russia and Japan, a deal appears extremely unlikely.

Xie Zhenhua, vice chair of the national development and reform commission and effectively the minister in charge of climate policy, told reporters that "after 2020, what we need to negotiate should be a legally binding one, or some document to that effect".

But it also not clear how much negotiation China would be prepared to entertain.

"China has always been in favour of a legally binding deal," said EU Climate Commissioner Connie Hedegaard.

"The question is whether China will be bound."

Several delegates have said that the flexibility China is propounding in public is not reflected in behind-the-scenes negotiations.

"I'm prepared to believe they're being flexible, but I'm also prepared to believe it's a smokescreen so they don't get blamed for wrecking the talks," said one delegate who did not wish to be named.

African soil

If the EU and China can find a way forward, some observers here believe a package can be constructed that will satisfy the majority of participants.

Action that helps cope with the effects of climate change - for example construction of barriers to protect against rising sea levels, or conversion to crops capable of surviving high temperatures and drought.

[Glossary in full](#)

The question would then be whether India and the US, which have reportedly taken the hardest line in negotiations, will want to be portrayed as standing out against a deal that everyone else wants.

However, even if a deal can be constructed, it appears unlikely to contain measures that could tighten the pledges countries have already made on curbing emissions in 2020.

Many academic studies conclude that if emission are still increasing in 2020, it will become difficult to keep the rise in the global average temperature since pre-industrial times below 2C.

Accepting such a deal would be contentious for a summit in Africa, the continent perhaps most at risk from climate impacts.

"This meeting is a unique opportunity to keep one billion Africans safe," said Tosi Mpanu Mpanu, lead negotiator for the African Group of countries.

"So it's essential that on leaving here, we have as ambitious an outcome as possible.

"I really hope that on African soil, people will try to go above and beyond to keep Africans safe."

China is emerging as the key deal-maker or deal-breaker as the UN climate talks head into ministerial discussions.

4 December 2011 Last updated at 18:27 GMT

# Climate research bolsters 'action' call to UN talks

By Richard Black Environment correspondent, BBC News



Nepal-based Icimod calls for greater observations of ice loss rates in the Himalayas

As ministers begin arriving at the UN climate talks in South Africa, new science is showing the challenges they face in trying to curb global warming.

Using a new methodology, a Swiss team has calculated that about three-quarters of the warming seen since 1950 is down to human influences.

A second report says glacier loss in parts of the Himalayas is accelerating.

And an international research group has confirmed that emissions have soared despite the global financial crisis.

At the talks, the main task facing ministers and their negotiating teams is to find agreement on a 143-page draft text covering issues such as speeding up emission cuts, safeguarding forests and helping the poorest countries protect themselves against climate impacts.

One EU official suggested that the majority of governments favoured beginning discussions on a new legally-binding agreement as soon as possible.

But a number of important countries including China, India and the US are not persuaded.

Even if those discussions do begin soon, other nations such as Japan and Canada say their existing pledges on cutting emissions by 2020 will not be amended.

Observers point out that without tightening these pledges, global emissions will not peak before 2020 - the timeframe scientists think is necessary if the target of limiting the global temperature rise to 2C from pre-industrial times is to be met.

'Convincing'

As delegates prepared to launch into the second week of talks, the journal Nature Geoscience published a new analysis of factors driving the Earth's warming since 1950.

Using information about the Earth's "energy balance" - the difference between the amount of energy it receives from the Sun and radiates back into space - researchers from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich arrived at fresh estimates of the effects of greenhouse gas emissions and other human-induced factors.

Their main conclusion is that it is extremely likely that at least 74% of the observed warming since 1950 has been caused by man-made factors.



Environmental activists have been taking to the streets in Durban to press delegates for action. They also conclude that greenhouse warming has partially been offset by the cooling effect of aerosols - tiny particles of dust thrown into the atmosphere that can reflect solar radiation back into space.

"It's pretty convincing stuff," commented Piers Forster, professor of climate change at the UK's University of Leeds and a former lead author for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's assessment of factors driving global warming.

"Observations and the physical law of energy conservation have been used to show greenhouse gases are responsible for global warming and that alternative scenarios violate this law of nature.

"Previous proofs have relied on complex climate models, but this proof doesn't need such models - just careful observations of the land, ocean and atmospheric gases."

Careful observation of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas region, an area where climate change could bring major impacts to people, have been relatively scanty, due to the difficulty of doing science in remote areas, compounded by political disagreements.

The Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (Icimod) has released a series of reports setting out what is known and what is not known about climate change in the region.

The number of glaciers identified has risen above 54,000, largely thanks to satellite observations.

But only 10 of these have been regularly and rigorously studied, it says.

In these 10, the rate of ice loss has roughly doubled since the 1980s.

But overall, the report's conclusion is that observations need to be stepped up to enable better projections of the future for the estimated 210 million people living in the region and the 1.3 billion living in river basins supplied by Himalayan meltwater.

"Up until now, there has been complete uncertainty on the numbers and area of glaciers and the present status of their environmental conditions in the region," said Basanta Shrestha from Icimod.

"This research gives us a baseline from which to measure the potential impact of climate change in the region, and to develop options for mitigating the impact of dynamic changes the region is expecting in the coming years."

'Triple whammy'

Meanwhile, Nature Climate Change journal has published a new assessment of how greenhouse gas emissions have changed in recent years.

"Every one of us needs to change our behaviour, business needs to change their investment patterns, everybody"

Christiana Figueres UNFCCC executive secretary

Conducted by the Global Carbon Project, an international research collaboration, it confirms other analyses in showing that the financial crisis made but a small blip in the rising trend of emissions.

During 2010, emissions grew by 5.9%, they calculate - more than compensating for the fall of 1.4% seen in 2009, when the recession caused a dramatic downturn in developed countries (although not in the developing world's industrial giants such as China).

Even accounting for the 2009 drop, emissions have risen faster in the last decade than at any time in the last 50 years.

"Global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions since 2000 are tracking the high end of the projections used by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which far exceed two degrees warming by 2100," said co-author Prof Corinne Le Quere, director of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research and professor at the University of East Anglia.

"Yet governments have pledged to keep warming below two degrees to avoid the most dangerous aspects of climate change such as widespread water stress and sea level rise, and increases in extreme climatic events.

"Taking action to reverse current trends is urgent," she said.

Senior lecturer in carbon management at Edinburgh University David Reay said: "From this latest study we see that the [2009] drop was all too ephemeral, and even the limp economic recovery of 2010 has put us back on a high emissions trajectory,"

"We now face the triple whammy of distracted world leaders, a scarcity of carbon finance, and a fast-closing window of opportunity to avoid dangerous climate change.

"For those striving for a breakthrough at the climate change conference in Durban, things just got even harder," he said.



At the conference itself, many delegates seemed aware that if the broad thrust of climate science is correct, time is running out for an agreement that can curb emissions enough to give reasonable odds of making the 2C target.

Equally, few were underestimating the political difficulties.

"Every one of us needs to change our behaviour, business needs to change their investment patterns, everybody," said UNFCCC executive secretary Christiana Figueres.

"That is very difficult to do. But there is no other option."

4 December 2011 Last updated at 00:10 GMT

## Protests at climate change summit in Durban

By Richard Black Environment correspondent, BBC News



Protesters rallied in Durban on Saturday

Thousands of demonstrators have marched through the South African city of Durban demanding faster action on climate change.

The annual UN climate summit is being held at the city's convention centre.

Protesters were particularly angered by the stance of rich countries such as the US and Canada.

In London, former UK Deputy Prime Minister Lord Prescott said the approach of these nations was "appalling".

Halfway through this summit, some progress has been made, but a few countries including the US, Canada and Saudi Arabia are holding out on important issues such as the future of the Kyoto Protocol.

Fourteen years ago, Lord Prescott played a leading role in the UN summit in Kyoto that

brought the protocol into existence.

Speaking to the BBC, he was scathing about nations trying to delay progress now.

"Let's have a reassessment of it by 2015," he said. "But if you don't finish in time for the ending of Kyoto Two, which is next year, 2012, then, you know, it will actually wither on the vine and that's what Canada and America wants - and one or two other rich countries.

"It's a conspiracy against the poor. It's appalling. I'm ashamed of such countries not recognising their responsibilities."

The European Union wants talks on a new global agreement covering all nations to start as soon as possible.

It is backed by most of the world's poorest countries and small island states vulnerable to rising sea levels.

But even if resistance from the US and others can be overcome, it is hard to envisage anything being agreed that can start to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions before 2020.

And that is the timeframe science suggests is necessary if the most dangerous climate impacts are to be avoided.

1 December 2011 Last updated at 18:37 GMT

## Climate deal pushed by poorest nations

By Richard Black Environment correspondent, BBC News



Some of the LDCs are at risk of inundation if sea levels rise as forecast

The world's poorest countries have asked that talks on a new climate deal covering all nations begin immediately.

At the UN climate summit, the Least Developed Countries bloc and small island states tabled papers saying the deal should be finalised within a year.

Many of them are vulnerable to climate impacts such as drought or inundation.

The move puts the blocs on a collision course not only with many rich nations, but also with developing world partners such as China, India and Brazil.

These three developing world giants believe talks on a new mandate should not begin now

because developed nations have yet to fulfil existing commitments.

But their smaller peers believe there is no time to lose.

"We put forward our mandate for a new legal agreement today to get things moving quickly in an effort to respond to the urgency of our challenge," said Selwin Hart, lead negotiator for Barbados, speaking for the Alliance of Small Island States (Aosis).

"We can no longer afford to wait. We need to conclude the new deal in the next 12 months."

Water woes



India and The Maldives have a common agenda on many things - but maybe not on climate

The 48-country Least Developed Countries bloc (LDCs) includes drought-prone states such as Ethiopia and Mali, those with long flat coastal zones such as Bangladesh and Tanzania, and Himalayan mountain states including Bhutan and Nepal for whom melting glaciers pose serious dangers.

The 39-strong Aosis includes a plethora of Pacific and Caribbean islands, some of which are very low-lying and vulnerable to sea level rise.

The draft mandate that the LDCs launched into the current UN summit in Durban, South Africa, says that talks "shall begin immediately after 1 January 2012 and shall conclude... by COP18 (next year's summit)".

"All Parties must take urgent action to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions and set a long term goal so as to hold the increase in global average temperature below 1.5C above pre-industrial levels and stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere below 350 parts per million of carbon dioxide equivalent (350ppm CO<sub>2</sub>e)," it continues.

[Continue reading the main story](#)

## Climate change glossary

Select a term to learn more:

Adaptation

## Adaptation

Action that helps cope with the effects of climate change - for example construction of barriers to protect against rising sea levels, or conversion to crops capable of surviving high temperatures and drought.

[Glossary in full](#)

The 1.5C goal is tougher than the 2C goal originally tabled by the European Union and subsequently adopted at last year's UN conference in Mexico.

But 1.5C is supported by more than half of the world's governments, including members of the LDCs and Aosis.

However, stabilising at 350ppm CO<sub>2</sub>e is a very demanding target, given that the current concentration is more than 450ppm.

The LDC draft mandate continues: "The negotiations shall also be guided by the fact that in order to achieve the long term goal, global emissions should peak by no later than 2015 and will need to be reduced by at least 85% below 1990 levels by 2050."

Measures stemming from the new mandate should "operate alongside" emission cuts made under the Kyoto Protocol.

The Aosis draft is much shorter but makes the same essential point - that negotiators should "develop and finalise a Protocol or other legally binding and ratifiable instrument(s) under the Convention to be presented for adoption by the COP at its 18th session".

Degrees of separation

Brazil and India have argued that no new process should begin before 2015; and China is also known to be resistant.

## Durban climate conference

- Summit will attempt to agree the road map for a future global deal on reducing carbon emissions
- Developing countries are insisting rich nations pledge further emission cuts under the Kyoto Protocol
- Delegates also aim to finalise some deals struck at last year's summit
- These include speeding up the roll-out of clean technology to developing nations...
- ... and a system for managing the Green Climate Fund, scheduled to gather and distribute billions of dollars per year to developing countries
- Progress may also be made on funding forest protection

Along with Canada, the US, Japan and Russia, they have also argued that the current pledges on curbing emissions, which most countries tabled around the time of the Copenhagen summit two years ago and which run until 2020, should not be adjusted before that date.

But the UNFCCC is obliged to review those pledges in 2015; and the LDCs believe the 1.5C target will be very difficult if not impossible to achieve without strengthening the existing pledges.

In the past, the developing world has resisted endorsing a global target for emissions in 2050,

as it implies that developing countries will have to accept binding cuts.

The LDCs and Aosis are used to finding themselves in the opposite corner to the US and other developed nations.

But going up against the might of fellow developing countries is a relatively new experience, and has been taken only because they did not see their interests as compatible with the waiting strategy of India, Brazil and China.

"Delaying a new agreement or deeper targets until 2020, as some of the big emitters have proposed, is not an option," Mr Hart told BBC News.

"It is quite frankly a dereliction of our collective responsibility to present and future generations."

The proposals are likely to gain support from the EU and some Latin American nations.

29 November 2011 Last updated at 14:35 GMT

## Warm blast hits UN climate summit

By Richard Black Environment correspondent, BBC News



A huge swathe of East Africa has seen severe drought for several years

Despite non-record temperatures this year, the Earth's surface is continuing to get warmer, according to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

In [its annual briefing](#) to the UN climate summit, the agency says 2011 is so far the 10th warmest year on record.

But continued warming was masked by cooling La Nina conditions, it adds.

At [the summit](#) itself, in the South African city of Durban, delegates discussed Monday's news that Canada may formally renounce the Kyoto Protocol.

[Continue reading the main story](#)

## “Start Quote

The protocol... must be preserved and strengthened”

End Quote Silvia Merega G77/China

The government is concerned that its economic development could be hindered if it takes stronger action on greenhouse gas emissions than the US, its main trading partner.

The developing world is split between countries that share Canada's concern that curbing emissions could damage economic competitiveness, and those that insist curbs are absolutely necessary in order to safeguard their existence against projected climate impacts such as sea level rise.

The WMO briefing will not have given comfort to any delegates hoping that the slowdown in temperature rise observed over the last decade meant global warming had stopped.

Although provisional figures put 2011 as only the 10th warmest on record, the WMO says it has been hotter than any previous year on record that experienced such strong La Nina conditions.

[Continue reading the main story](#)

## Climate change glossary

Select a term to learn more:

Adaptation

### Adaptation

Action that helps cope with the effects of climate change - for example construction of barriers to protect against rising sea levels, or conversion to crops capable of surviving high temperatures and drought.

[Glossary in full](#)

Here, the appearance of relatively cold water at the surface of the eastern Pacific Ocean reduces the average temperature in the atmosphere.

This year's La Nina conditions were also associated with droughts in East Africa, Pacific islands and the southern US, and flooding in southern Africa, eastern Australia and southern Asia.

The agency also points out that the 13 warmest years on record have all occurred in the 15 years since 1997, and that the summer Arctic melt saw sea ice decline to the smallest volume on record.

"Our science is solid, and it proves unequivocally that the world is warming and that this warming is due to human activities," said WMO secretary-general Michel Jarraud.

"Concentrations of greenhouse gases... are very rapidly approaching levels consistent with a 2.0-2.4C rise in average global temperatures, which scientists believe could trigger far-reaching and irreversible changes in our Earth, biosphere and oceans."

Sticking to the rules

Inside the conference halls in Durban, one of the climate convention's sharpest divides - the future of the Kyoto Protocol - was thrown into sharp relief by Canada's announcement that it



would not accept further emission cuts under the treaty.



Tar sands exploitation comes at a heavy environmental cost, locally as well as globally  
On Monday, Canada's environment minister Peter Kent confirmed the government's decision to reporters in the capital Ottawa.

The current emission targets expire at the end of next year.

Though this helps align Canada with its giant southern neighbour, it has embarked on a collision course with developing nations.

As formal negotiations on the protocol began in Durban, Argentinian delegate Silvia Meregá spelled out what the powerful 132-nation G77/China bloc of developing countries was anticipating.

"The Group of 77 and China expects that developed countries put forward ambitious quantified emission reduction commitments under the Kyoto Protocol," she said.

"The protocol, its mechanisms, its rules and its compliance system must be preserved and strengthened for the preservation of the legally-binding, international, multilateral rules-based system created under the [UN climate] convention."

[Continue reading the main story](#)

## **Durban climate conference**

- Summit will attempt to agree the road map for a future global deal on reducing carbon emissions
- Developing countries are insisting rich nations pledge further emission cuts under the Kyoto Protocol
- Delegates also aim to finalise some deals struck at last year's summit
- These include speeding up the roll-out of clean technology to developing nations...
- ... and a system for managing the Green Climate Fund, scheduled to gather and distribute billions of dollars per year to developing countries
- Progress may also be made on funding forest protection



The Canadian CTV network said the country would begin the year-long process of formally withdrawing next month, which Mr Kent declined to confirm or refute.

Russia and Japan have also said they will not make further emission cuts under the protocol, though it is not known whether they plan formally to withdraw.

In Durban, the US deputy climate negotiator Jonathan Pershing said he did not foresee governments changing their existing pledges on curbing emissions by 2020.

"The idea that countries would change their current pledges that they listed in the Cancun agreements [from last year's summit in Mexico] seems unlikely to me," he told reporters.

"I don't see the major economies shifting those actions."

At a meeting of the [Major Economies Forum \(MEF\)](#) earlier this month - the body that brings together 17 of the world's biggest greenhouse gas emitters - India and Brazil joined the US in wanting to delay beginning talks on a new global climate agreement until at least 2015.

The EU and many smaller developing states want to reach agreement in Durban on starting talks as soon as possible, reaching agreement by 2015 and cutting emissions by 2020.

Reports by numerous organisations, most recently [the International Energy Agency](#), have [concluded](#) that in order to meet the goal of keeping global average temperature rise since pre-industrial times below 2C, emissions should peak and begin to fall around 2020, if not earlier.

The current pledges to which Mr Pershing referred will not achieve this.

8 November 2011 Last updated at 19:21 GMT

## Canada makes Kyoto climate strike

By Richard Black Environment correspondent, BBC News



South African President Jacob Zuma: Climate change is "a matter of life and death"

Canada will not make further cuts in its greenhouse gas emissions under the Kyoto Protocol, and may begin formally withdrawing next month.

Though not a surprise, the news will anger poor countries that say the rich are renegeing on

pledges made 14 years ago when the protocol was signed.

They see the protocol as the only way to make emission cuts legally binding.

Also on the first day of the [UN climate summit](#) in South Africa, the UK was criticised over support for tar sands.

In the main conference hall, delegates heard South African President Jacob Zuma call for meaningful progress.

"For most people in the developing world and Africa, climate change is a matter of life and death," he said.

"In these talks, states, parties will need to look beyond their national interests to find a global solution for the common good and benefit of all humanity."

Different worlds

"The consequence for some of the islands will be extinction"

End Quote Selwyn Hart Aosis

The very differing interpretations of "national interests" did not take long to surface.

Canada declared four years ago that it did not intend to meet its existing Kyoto Protocol commitment - to bring annual emissions in the period 2008-12 down by 6% from their 1990 level.

They have in fact risen by about one-third since 1990.

And just a few hours after talks began in the Durban conference hall, Canadian environment minister Peter Kent was confirming to reporters in the capital Ottawa that its involvement with Kyoto was over.

"We will not make a second commitment to Kyoto," he said. "We don't need a binding convention."



Tar sands exploitation comes at a heavy environmental cost, locally as well as globally

Since the election of Stephen Harper's Conservative government in 2006, Canada has sought to align its stance with its most important trading partner, the US.

It fears that its economy would suffer if it took on stronger curbs than its southern neighbour.

Canadian network CTV reported that the government would begin formally withdrawing from the protocol next month.

Mr Kent declined to comment.

But with 12 months notice needed to withdraw, and the current set of targets expiring at the end of next year, the timescale for a formal secession would make sense and would then put Canada in the same bracket formally as the US, which withdrew under President George W Bush.

Russia and Japan have also said they will not make further emission cuts under the protocol, though it is not known whether they plan formally to withdraw.

In Durban, the US deputy climate negotiator Jonathan Pershing said he did not see existing pledges on curbing emissions by 2020 changing.

## **DURBAN CLIMATE CONFERENCE**

- Summit will attempt to agree the roadmap for a future global deal on reducing carbon emissions
- Developing countries are insisting rich nations pledge further emission cuts under the Kyoto Protocol
- Delegates also aim to finalise some deals struck at last year's summit
- These include speeding up the roll-out of clean technology to developing nations...
- ... and a system for managing the Green Climate Fund, scheduled to gather and distribute billions of dollars per year to developing countries
- Progress may also be made on funding forest protection

"The idea that countries would change their current pledges that they listed in the Cancun agreements [from last year's summit in Mexico] seems unlikely to me," he told reporters.

"I don't see the major economies shifting those actions."

At a [meeting of the Major Economies Forum \(MEF\)](#) earlier this month - the body that brings together 17 of the world's biggest greenhouse gas emitters - India and Brazil joined the US in wanting to delay beginning talks on a new global climate agreement until at least 2015.

The EU and many smaller developing states want to reach agreement in Durban on starting talks pretty much immediately, reaching agreement by 2015 and cutting emissions by 2020.

Reports by numerous organisations, most recently the International Energy Agency, have concluded that in order to meet the goal of keeping global average temperature rise since pre-industrial times below 2C, emissions should peak and begin to fall around 2020, if not earlier.

The current pledges to which Mr Pershing referred will not achieve this.

Fossil fired

Speaking for the Alliance of Small Island States (Aosis), Barbadian delegate Selwyn Hart said

his group was not prepared to contemplate delay.

"At the heart of any agreement should be the principle that no country is expendable," he said.

"It's morally and ethically indefensible to sign an agreement that will result in the demise of a single nation state. The consequence for some of the islands will be extinction."

The UK, meanwhile, received one of the unwanted "Fossil of the Day" awards from a coalition of campaign groups.

They were angered by reports, deriving from a Freedom of Information (FoI) request by the Co-operative, that the UK has been lobbying to weaken EU rules on oil from Canadian tar sands.

Extracting oil from the tar deposits that spread across Canada's prairie provinces is much more energy-intensive than conventional oil drilling, and also uses huge amounts of water.

Some climate scientists say exploiting the reserves is simply incompatible with curbing global warming.

27 November 2011 Last updated at 11:38 GMT

## Climate summit faces big emitters' stalling tactics

By Richard Black Environment correspondent, BBC News



Connie Hedegaard's EU is increasingly isolated among the industrialised world bloc

Some of the developing world's biggest greenhouse gas emitters are bidding to delay talks on a new climate agreement.

To the anger of small islands and other vulnerable countries, India and Brazil are joining rich nations such as the US and Japan in wanting to start talks on a legal deal no earlier than 2015.

The EU and climate-vulnerable blocs want to start as soon as possible, and have the deal finalised by 2015.

The UN climate summit opens on Monday in Durban, South Africa.

Some observers say small island states, which traditionally aim their criticism at the industrialised world's big emitters, may begin "naming and shaming" developing countries that are also delaying progress.

"They're on the edge of a mess," one experienced delegate told BBC News, "and they may not be able to resolve this mess".

Developing countries will certainly target rich governments such as Japan, Canada and Russia over their refusal to commit to new emission cuts under the Kyoto Protocol, whose current targets expire at the end of next year.

They see this as a breach of previous commitments and of trust.

But some of the most vulnerable nations say the impasse should not delay talks on a new deal, arguing that to do so would be, in one delegate's wording, "the politics of mutually-assured destruction".

However, on one of the summit's other main topics - financial aid for poor countries - there is a strong chance of progress at the fortnight-long summit.

Seismic shift

[Continue reading the main story](#)

## “Start Quote

The global response to climate change simply does not have time for advancing self-serving national interests”

End Quote Mark Roberts EIA

The politics of the UN climate process are undergoing something of a fundamental transformation.

Increasingly, countries are dividing into one group that wants a new global treaty as soon as possible - the EU plus lots of developing countries - and another that prefers a delay and perhaps something less rigorous than a full treaty.

The divide was evident earlier this month at the [Major Economies Forum \(MEF\) meeting](#) in Arlington, US - the body that includes 17 of the world's highest-polluting nations.

There, the UK and others argued that the Durban summit should agree to begin work on a new

global agreement immediately, to have it in place by 2015, and operating by 2020 at the very latest.

The US, Russia and Japan were already arguing for a longer timeframe.

But BBC News has learned that at the MEF meeting, Brazil and India took the same position.

Brazil wants the period 2012-15 to be a "reflection phase", while India suggested it should be a "technical/scientific period".



India's emissions are growing as the country develops, and it is working to delay restrictions. China, now the world's biggest emitter, is said by sources to be more flexible, though its top priority for Durban is the Kyoto Protocol.

"The planet has no other sustainable alternative other than to ensure the continuity of the Kyoto Protocol, through a second commitment period starting in 2013," said Jorge Arguello, leader of the Argentinian delegation, which this year chairs the powerful G77/China bloc of 131 nations.

"The adoption of a second commitment period for the reduction of greenhouse gases emissions under the Kyoto Protocol is not only a political imperative and a historical responsibility, but a legal obligation that must be faced as such."

Although the EU does not oppose a second commitment period, other developed nations do.

And as the US left the protocol years ago, nations still signed on account only for about 15% of global emissions - which is why there is so much emphasis on a new instrument, with some legal force, covering all countries.

Cooling wish

The US, Russia, Japan and Canada have all argued for delaying negotiations on this for various domestic political reasons.

But the news that big developing countries are also lobbying for a delay is likely to lead to fireworks in Durban.

[Continue reading the main story](#)

## Climate change glossary

Select a term to learn more:

Glossary Glossary Adaptation fund Annex I countries Annex II Anthropogenic climate change Aosis AR4 Atmospheric aerosols Bali action plan Bali roadmap Baseline for cuts Biofuel Black carbon Boxer-Kerry bill Business as usual Cap and trade Carbon



capture and storage (CCS) Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) equivalent Carbon footprint Carbon intensity Carbon leakage Carbon neutral Carbon offsetting Carbon sequestration Carbon sink Certified Emission Reduction (CER) CFCs Clean coal technology Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) Climate change CO<sub>2</sub> Commitment period COP15 Country in transition Dangerous climate change Deforestation Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) EU Burden-sharing agreement Feedback loop Flexible mechanism Fossil fuels G77 Geological sequestration Global average temperature Global energy budget Global dimming Global warming Global Warming Potential (GWP) Greenhouse gases (GHGs) Greenhouse effect Hockey stick IPCC Joint implementation (JI) Kyoto Protocol LDCs LULUCF Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate Methane Mitigation Nairobi work programme Natural greenhouse effect Non-annex I countries Ocean acidification Per-capita emissions ppm (350/450) Pre-industrial levels of carbon dioxide Renewable energy REDD Stern review Technology transfer Tipping point Twenty-twenty-twenty (20-20-20) UNFCCC Waxman-Markey bill Weather

[Suggest additions](#)

[Glossary in full](#)

Many of the countries most at risk from climate impacts want to cut emissions fast enough to hold the global average temperature rise from pre-industrial times under 1.5C.

Scientific assessments say that for this to happen, global emissions should peak and begin to fall before 2020, adding urgency to these nations' quest for a new and effective global agreement.

President Nasheed of the Maldives is virtually the only leader who has spoken openly of the need for major developing countries to begin cutting emissions soon.

Equating the need to develop with the right to emit greenhouse gases is, he has said, "rather silly".

But sources in Durban indicate that delegates from other small developing countries may join him before the fortnight elapses, and demand more of the big developing nations.

China, Brazil and India are also being blamed for blocking moves to phase out the climate-warming industrial HFC gases, which small island states tabled at the Montreal Protocol meeting in Bali last week.

"The global response to climate change simply does not have time for advancing self-serving national interests," said Mark Roberts, international policy advisor for the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA).

**Funding gap**

Sources say, however, that there is real prospect of agreement in Durban on rules and mechanisms for a Green Climate Fund.





Nigerian artist Bright Ugochukwu Eke hopes to raise climate awareness with his exhibit in Durban. This would raise and disburse sums, rising to \$100bn per year by 2020, to developing nations.

There is no agreement on where the money should come from.

Developing countries say the public coffers of industrialised nations should be the main source, whereas western governments say the bulk must come from private sector sources.

That is unlikely to be resolved until the end of next year.

But finalising the fund's rules in Durban would be a concrete step forward.

Tim Gore, Oxfam's chief policy adviser, said UK Climate Minister Chris Huhne must push for "getting the money flowing through the Green Climate Fund that poor people need to fight climate change now.

"A deal to raise resources from international transport could be on the table, and Huhne must convince other ministers to strike it," he said.

However, there is widespread scepticism about the much smaller funds - \$10bn per year - that developed nations are already supposed to be contributing under the Fast Start Finance agreement made in 2009.

Developing countries say only a small fraction of what has been pledged is genuinely "new and additional", as it is meant to be; and that little has actually materialised.

The summit may also see a row over the EU's imminent integration of aviation into the Emission Trading Schemes, which India and some other developing nations oppose.

Follow Richard [on Twitter](#)

## Rich nations 'give up' on new climate treaty until 2020

Ahead of critical talks and despite pledge for new treaty by 2012, biggest economies privately admit likelihood of long delay

- [Fiona Harvey](#), environment correspondent
- [guardian.co.uk](#), Sunday 20 November 2011 20.54 GMT



Tory leader David Cameron at a climate change bill campaign in 2006. Critically, and despite such pledges, the PM and leaders are now likely to delay any climate agreement until 2012.

Photograph: Scott Barbour/Getty Images

Governments of the world's richest countries have given up on forging a new treaty on [climate change](#) to take effect this decade, with potentially disastrous consequences for the environment through global warming.

Ahead of critical talks starting next week, most of the world's leading economies now privately admit that no new global climate agreement will be reached before 2016 at the earliest, and that even if it were negotiated by then, they would stipulate it could not come into force until 2020.

The eight-year delay is the worst contemplated by world governments during 20 years of tortuous negotiations on greenhouse gas emissions, and comes despite intensifying warnings from scientists and economists about the rapidly increasing dangers of putting off prompt action.

After the Copenhagen climate talks in 2009 ended amid scenes of chaos, governments pledged to try to sign a new treaty in 2012. The date is critical, because next year marks the expiry of the current provisions of the [Kyoto protocol](#), the only legally binding international agreement to limit emissions.

The UK, [European Union](#), [Japan](#), US and other rich nations are all now united in opting to put off an agreement and the [United Nations](#) also appears to accept this.

Developing countries are furious, and the delay will be fiercely debated at the next round of international climate talks beginning a week on Monday in Durban, [South Africa](#).

The Alliance of Small Island States, which represents some of the countries most at risk from global warming, called moves to delay a new treaty "reckless and irresponsible".

Postponing an operational agreement until 2020 would be fatal to hopes of avoiding

catastrophic climate change, according to scientists, economists and green campaigners.

Fatih Birol, chief economist at the International [Energy Agency](#) (IEA), and one of the world's foremost authorities on climate economics, told the Guardian: "If we do not have an international agreement whose effect is put in place by 2017, then the door to [holding temperatures below 2C] will be closed forever."

Lord Stern, author of a landmark review of the economics of climate change, said aiming for a 2020 deadline was "pessimistic and risks introducing lethargy" to the process: "It's not fast enough – this is a collective failure, and [leaving agreement to] 2020 is taking considerable risks with the planet."

However, he said he was hopeful that countries and companies would continue to try to cut carbon in the absence of a deal in the short term.

Sir David King, former UK chief scientist, said: "[A date of 2020] for an agreement is absolutely to be expected, and I am not at all dismayed by that."

He believes individual countries and industries taking action even without a global deal provides the best chance of cutting emissions.

Scientists say the only way to avoid catastrophic and irreversible climate change is to hold temperatures to no more than 2C above pre-industrial levels.

The new delay comes as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned on Friday of mounting evidence that global warming was leading to more extreme weather events such as floods and droughts, and fiercer storms.

Although the world's major economies made pledges to limit their emissions at the Copenhagen talks, there is little sign these are having an effect.

Last year, global carbon dioxide emissions from burning fossil fuels rose by more than 5% despite the worst recession for 80 years, according to the IEA.

Voluntary pledges by individual countries might never be enough to effect the massive changes needed. Birol said: "Our analysis shows [what happens] if you do not change investment patterns, which can only happen as a result of an international agreement."

Scientists warn that even if current pledges are met, they would not be enough to hold the global temperature rise to 2C, so more ambitious cuts are needed. Participants in the talks say there is little chance of that happening.

Connie Hedegaard, Europe's climate chief, said the EU's roadmap was to aim for an agreement to be drawn up "by the first COP [UN meeting] after 2015", which would be December 2016, and this could then come into force in 2020.

A Japanese official told the Guardian that Tokyo was aiming for an agreement to come into force in 2020, which was "realistic", though he later said Japan was aiming for agreement "as soon as possible". The UK's negotiators are now fixed on 2020, and the US is understood to expect a similar trajectory.

Christiana Figueres, the UN's top official on climate change, did not disagree with this

roadmap. She said: "Making an agreement is not easy. What we are looking at is not an international environment agreement — what we are looking at is nothing other than the biggest industrial and energy revolution that has ever been seen."

Ruth Davis of Greenpeace said: "Failing to agree a plan to tackle the climate crisis in Durban would be a disaster, but agreeing on a plan to do almost nothing for a decade would arguably be worse. Leaders in Durban must ... agree to sign a binding global deal no later than 2015, which will re-establish the link between climate science and the pace and scale of action. Otherwise we risk sliding rapidly from climate crisis to climate catastrophe."

## Showdown nears for climate deal

Expected debate over Kyoto Protocol threatens to stall progress on other fronts.

- [Jeff Tollefson](#)

22 November 2011

### Main



Nations that are vulnerable to flooding and drought stand to lose out if climate talks fail.

P. KITTIWONGSAKUL/AFP/GETTY

There's a storm brewing in South Africa, although not the kind that climate scientists warned



of last week in a report linking extreme weather to global warming (see <http://dx.doi.org/10.1038/nature.2011.9397>; 2011). This one is the political tempest that is swirling around the Kyoto Protocol. Forecasts suggest that it will hit in full force when delegates to the seventeenth meeting of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change gather in Durban on 28 November — and it could threaten progress on an alternative agreement.

Negotiated in 1997, Kyoto combines commitments by wealthy nations (excluding the United States, which has never ratified the agreement) to limit greenhouse-gas emissions with monetary and technical support for poor nations. The commitments are set to expire next year and nothing comparable has materialized to take their place.

The world has changed since Kyoto was negotiated. Powerhouse developing economies are now among the world's leading carbon dioxide emitters. Today, China holds the number one spot and India is fourth behind the United States and the European Union (EU). With Western nations in the midst of a financial crisis, there is little enthusiasm for renewing Kyoto, or for the underlying assumption that the developed world should shoulder the full burden of controlling greenhouse-gas emissions. In Durban, supporters of Kyoto — mainly developing nations — will make their last stand.

“The world can't punt this issue any longer,” says Robert Stavins, an environmental economist at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Stavins believes that negotiators will find some way to keep the Kyoto Protocol alive, if only in spirit, but he acknowledges that the meeting could also fall apart. “Some people would say that this is the death that is required in order to have a rebirth” in the negotiating process, he says.

Cracks began to show in the framework's political underpinnings two years ago in Copenhagen (see *Nature* **462**, 966–967; 2009), when world leaders first broke with the Kyoto formula to offer the developing world rewards without commitments. Japan, Canada and Russia, which all agreed to the original protocol, said that they opposed a second commitment period. Even the EU may not support an extension of Kyoto, Stavins says, although its trail-blazing carbon trading system could continue even if the treaty becomes dormant.

In Copenhagen, and again last year in Cancún, Mexico, countries such as China, Brazil and South Africa joined wealthy nations in making voluntary commitments to limit emissions of greenhouse gases. In exchange, wealthy countries agreed to ramp up financing to help the poorest countries prepare for global warming. The framework that emerged is more inclusive than Kyoto, but lacks the formal stature of a fully binding international treaty. Developing countries, as a bloc, are reluctant give up on the old protocol until something more concrete takes its place.

“The call to mandate a new treaty in place of the Kyoto Protocol should be understood for what it is — rich countries backtracking on inconvenient commitments, at the expense of the poor and the planet,” says Lim Li Lin, who works with developing countries at the Third World Network, a non-profit advocacy group based in Penang, Malaysia.

Under the Copenhagen Accord, countries agreed to try to limit global warming to 2 °C and to consider lowering that target to 1.5 °C. Actual commitments to greenhouse-gas cuts fell well short of what studies suggest are needed to meet the 2 °C goal. The accord also includes provisions to slow deforestation, promote adaptation and hasten the spread of green technologies, with wealthy countries promising US\$30 billion in financing by 2012, which will

increase to \$100 billion annually by 2020.

Negotiators were able to advance many of these initiatives in Cancún last year, but crucial details regarding which institutions will manage this money, who will decide how it is spent and how emissions commitments will be registered and tracked remain unresolved. “Durban needs to put the entire architecture of climate-resilient development on a more solid basis,” says Koko Warner, a climate policy expert with the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security in Bonn, Germany.

But many fear that frustration over Kyoto could stall progress in other areas of the talks and threaten the viability of the Copenhagen Accord.

“I think what really kept developing countries at the negotiating table in Copenhagen was the \$100 billion per year,” says Timmons Roberts, who heads the Center for Environmental Studies at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island. “If it’s just another empty aid promise, the Copenhagen Accord is going to fall apart.”

Journal name:

Nature

Volume:

479,

Pages:

454–455

Date published:

(24 November 2011)

DOI:

doi:10.1038/479454a

## Durban – your guide to the latest vital climate summit

- 17:38 25 November 2011 by [Fred Pearce](#)
- For similar stories, visit the [Climate Change](#) Topic Guide

*Climate negotiators meet in Durban, South Africa, from Monday to discuss controls on greenhouse gas emissions. The ostensible aim is to devise a continuation for the Kyoto protocol, which ends in December 2012. It is two years on from the deal-that-never-was in Copenhagen, Denmark, and the global temperature is still rising. Environment consultant **Fred Pearce** offers his guide to understanding what's at stake.*

### Will there be a deal this year?

Sadly not. American legislators won't entertain the idea of legally enforceable limits on their emissions. The Russians and Japanese say that without the US, they are not interested. Ditto China and India. That leaves only Germany of the top six national emitters still in favour of a binding deal.

Even optimists don't think US politicians will be in the mood to consummate a new deal until 2016 at the earliest. The best that can be hoped for is a "coalition of the willing" committed to a stop-gap extension of the Kyoto protocol which does not include the US. We are facing a "lost



decade" in climate talks.

Most of the US Senate barely believes in climate change, let alone doing anything about it. Most other nations play lip service, but blame economic travails for postponing hard decisions. Some think the recession will buy us time. Not so. Last year saw the biggest annual increase in carbon dioxide emissions ever recorded – almost 6 per cent. This was mostly due to China, India and others burning more coal, the dirtiest fuel.

### **Isn't coal supposedly on the way out?**

Quite the reverse. When the new climate talks started in 2006, the world got 25 per cent of its primary energy from coal; now the proportion is 30 per cent. Even Germany will likely burn more coal as it shuts its nuclear plants in the wake of the nuclear disaster at Japan's Fukushima Daiichi plant. Just 2 hours' drive from Durban, South Africa feeds the coal addiction with the world's largest coal export terminal at Richards Bay.

Meanwhile, CO<sub>2</sub> is accumulating in the atmosphere. By 2016, concentrations will probably pass 400 parts per million, compared with 353 ppm when the climate convention was passed in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

### **Is there a plan B?**

There could be. Even without a Durban protocol, some countries say they will meet voluntary national targets. The European Union has legislated to cut emissions to 20 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020. China, Brazil, Mexico and some others say they will reduce the "carbon intensity" of their economies – the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> they emit per unit of GDP - though their emissions will probably continue to rise. A few US states, led by California, plan to cap their emissions. Some see this resorting to a voluntary approach as doomed. Others see it as the only way forward.

Durban will also see negotiations on REDD (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation), which could deliver a system for countries and corporations with self-imposed targets to offset their emissions by investing in forest conservation. This could kick-start a global carbon market and help create political consensus for a future deal.

### **But can there be a carbon market without a global deal first?**

Doubtful. Without legal limits on emissions, there are no legally enforceable emissions permits to trade, so a voluntary system could be prone to collapse. The price of carbon on the existing limited market, based around EU Kyoto protocol permits, has halved during November to below 6 euros per tonne.

### **Any other possibilities?**

Yes. The UN Environment Programme is behind a big push to cut emissions of soot from diesel emissions, traditional cooking stoves, brick kilns and the like. Soot, often termed black carbon, is the second biggest contributor to climate change, but is not part of the climate talks. Soot only stays in the air for a few days, so cutting emissions would have a big and immediate impact. UNEP says banishing it could cut global warming by 0.5°C by 2030 – 0.7°C in the Arctic. Watch out for separate talks. Even the US might buy into this one.

**Even so, the climate forecast is bad, right?**

Dreadful. Nobody knows for sure, but the sober-minded International Energy Agency said this month that we have just six years to stave off 2°C of warming. And the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned that such a warming would bring a big increase in many extreme weather events, from droughts and floods to killer heat waves.

**So what will the crux of the Durban meeting be?**

The hottest topic will probably be drumming up money for the promised \$100 billion "green fund" to help poor countries adapt to climate change. It's supposed to start in 2013.

**How do you apply?**

Good question. Nobody seems sure what the eligibility criteria should be. One view is countries vulnerable to any kind of extreme weather should be entitled to cash from the fund. Another is that the money should go to those who can show that they are threatened directly by human-made climate change. In any case, rich nations are proving very slow to put their hands in their pockets.

**So what's the smart money on?**

Umm. [Geoengineering?](#)