

## GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE NEGOTIATIONS: OVER THE YEARS

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**June 1988, World Conference on the Changing Atmosphere, Toronto:** This is the first crisis call. At the conference, politicians and scientists conclude that "humanity is conducting an unintended, uncontrolled, globally pervasive experiment whose ultimate consequences could be second only to a global nuclear war". The conference recommends reducing carbon dioxide emissions 20 per cent by 2005

**November 1988, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC):** A major step towards introducing trust in the geopolitics of climate change is taken with the birth of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC); the panel's first meeting is held in Geneva. The IPCC, which now consists of 2,500 scientists and experts on climate change, is given a mandate to assess the state of scientific knowledge on climate change, evaluate its impacts and come up with realistic solutions.

**August 1990, IPCC's First Assessment Report:** The report concludes that the increasing accumulation of human-made greenhouse gases in the atmosphere would "enhance the greenhouse effect, resulting on average in an additional warming of the Earth's surface" -- unless measures are adopted to limit the emissions of these gases.

**June 1992, Rio Earth Summit:** At this summit, 154 signatories to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) agree to stabilise "greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous interference with the climate system". Developed countries accept responsibility for the overwhelming majority of emissions and "aim to stabilize" those emissions at 1990 levels by the year 2000.

**March 1995, First Conference of Parties (CoP), Berlin:** The first CoP, made up of signatories to the UNFCCC, acknowledges that the UNFCCC is inadequate without country-specific commitments and agree to negotiate emission reduction targets for industrialised countries.

**December 1995, IPCC's Second Assessment Report:** The report concludes: "The balance of evidence suggests a discernible human influence on global climate."

**July 1996, Second (CoP), Geneva:** The US agrees to legally binding targets and timetables to reduce emissions, but also proposes an international emissions trading scheme. More than 100 other countries also agree to develop targets. In March 1997, at a meeting in Geneva, European environment ministers propose industrialised nations reduce their emissions by 15 per cent below 1990 levels by 2010. The chair of the IPCC says that all nations, developed and developing, would eventually be required to reduce emissions in order to stabilise the atmosphere.

**December 1997, Third (CoP), Kyoto: KYOTO PROTOCOL:** The first landmark decision, an international agreement under the UNFCCC that sets binding reduction targets for greenhouse gas emissions for developed nations under UNFCCC. It was adopted by CoP-3 in Kyoto, Japan in 1997, where more than 150 countries signed it. It came into force on February 16, 2005, after the Russian ratification, which pushed the emissions of ratified Annex 1 countries over the 55 per cent mark.

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This put binding restrictions on greenhouse gas emissions on the developed countries, requiring a decrease of 6-8 per cent from the 1990 levels of emissions in the period 2008-12 (average for all countries: 5.2 per cent). It also proposed three 'flexible' mechanisms to help developed countries meet their targets: the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), Joint Implementation (JI) and emissions trading.

The USA was not party to the protocol, which its government, calling it fatally flawed. Flawed, because it will cost them jobs, and it leaves out the big polluters China and India.

Canada had ratified the Protocol in December 2002 following a three-month national debate. In May that year, Bonn hosts the first official negotiating meeting after Kyoto comes into force, where discussion begins on the second phase of the Protocol, post-2012.

**December 2005, 11th (CoP), Montreal:** hosts the first Meeting of the Parties in CoP 11. Negotiations towards a second phase of the Protocol are agreed on under what is called the Montreal Action Plan. An Ad-Hoc Working Group on Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP) is established to ensure that discussions on the second commitment period continue unhindered. However, no deadline is given for finalising the amended Protocol.

**February-November 2007:** The IPCC releases its Fourth Assessment Report calling anthropogenic climate change "unequivocal" and stating that "most of the observed increase in global average temperatures since the mid-20th century is very likely due to the observed increase in anthropogenic greenhouse gas concentrations".

**December 2007: 13th (CoP), Bali: BALI ACTION PLAN:** The Bali Action Plan, the second land mark was agreed upon by negotiators at the 13<sup>th</sup> CoP held in Bali, Indonesia in. It set guidelines and a timeline for "up to and beyond 2012" agreement on climate change mitigation and GHG emission reduction. The Plan set a two-year time table for talks and called for an agreement to be adopted at the 15<sup>th</sup> CoP in Copenhagen.

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The Bali Action Plan was set on enhanced action on four pillars: mitigation, adaptation, technology and finance. All these measures, it said, must be shared by all Parties by the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities".

**December 2009: 15th (CoP), Copenhagen: Copenhagen Accord**

The Copenhagen Accord was pushed through in the last hours of the disastrous 15th CoP on Friday, December 18, 2009. However, when the Accord was presented to the plenary, there was no consensus on the process and substance of the document. It was finally agreed to "take note" of the Accord.

Talks almost collapse, to be ostensibly rescued by the USA at the last moment, which charts a much lower ambition of GHG emissions. All the negotiating clauses are kept open, historic burden of emission reduction is ignored completely, hits at moving out of a legally binding agreement on emission reduction to a pledge and review regime. Urges all countries, including those in the South, to commit to emission reduction targets even if voluntarily and be open up to a third-party verification regime for the same commitments.

Tables turned at Copenhagen, so did the foundations of climate negotiations laid at Bali. After an enormous amount of wheeling-dealing, coaxing and cajoling, the US emerged with a text — perhaps the weakest ever penned in the history of climate negotiations — from the point of view

of equity and justice, effective mitigation of GHG emissions and the ethos of “common but differentiated responsibility”.

**August 2010 – November 2010:** Wikileaks provide the explanation how US manufactured consent by arm-twisting smaller countries. Power dynamics indicates to a new climate hegemony, one that the US would not dictate

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**December 2010: 16th (CoP), Cancun:** Mexico managed the impossible. It had got all countries — except Bolivia — to agree on a draft very similar to

the Copenhagen Accord.

The final Agreement had striking resemblance with Copenhagen Accord. In brief, it erased historic debt to emission and atmospheric space, no legal instrument of emission reduction was adopted neither the current one (Kyoto Protocol) was extended. To institutionalize the voluntary pledge regime in emissions reduction, a third-party verification of domestic emission targets and actions was agreed upon.

Developed countries, especially the US and Canada, also tweaked the base year and said they will reduce emissions by 17 per cent over 2005. This meant only about 4 per cent reduction over the agreed 1990 levels. Following this, 86 countries, of which 42 were developed, voluntarily pledged to reduce emissions. At COP-16 held in Cancun in 2010, these pledges were recognised and developed countries were to measure, verify and report their emissions. There was no penalty if they failed.

**December 2011: 17th (CoP), Durban:** The European Union(EU) wanted that the world should agree to commit to a global legal agreement to cut emissions; [this agreement would be applicable to all parties—thereby removing the differentiation between the industrialised world and the rest.](#) It was suggested that this agreement, which would come into force as early as 2015, would replace the Framework Convention on Climate Change and step up levels of ambition for all. [The EU said it would not agree to Kyoto Protocol-2 unless the world acceded to its demand for a legal instrument to bind all.](#) Canada, Japan, New Zealand and Russia withdrew from the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. These countries along with EU and Australia emitted about 26 per cent of CO<sub>2</sub>. With countries gone, less than 15 per cent of the world's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions would be addressed in phase two of Kyoto Protocol.

**December 2012: 18th (CoP), Doha:** Countries at Doha agreed on the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. But the agreement is marred by weak greenhouse gas emissions reduction commitments by developed countries. With crucial developed countries—Japan, New Zealand and Canada—not being part of the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, only Europe, Switzerland, Norway and Australia are left to take legally binding commitments. The emission cuts these countries have committed to would amount to 18 per cent reduction by 2020, relative to the 1990 levels, compared to 25-40 per cent required to restrict global temperature rise to 2°C. Less than 15 per cent of the emissions will be covered under the Kyoto Protocol's second commitment period. Targets set in this second commitment period match the ones pledged in Cancun Agreement

Five years after Bali, the world has not gained much. The ambitious emissions reduction agreement is nowhere to be seen. Instead, most big polluting countries sit pretty without having to do much. If at all a new deal is struck, it will be after 2020.