

## The Copenhagen Accord

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Climate change has received unprecedented attention of the world leaders and media as well as activists, industrialists and ordinary citizens. The scientific community and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in particular have been pleading for action to halt global warming and the resulting climate change. The Copenhagen Climate Convention is a great success to the extent it brought a global environmental issue to the centrestage as evidenced by the assembly of the largest number of heads of state and governments, nearly 130 of them and government delegations from 191 countries, and over 40,000 delegates (scientists, activists, industrialists, etc.) registering for the convention. It was also a success in that no leader, for the first time, doubted the science of climate change; in fact leader after leader quoted IPCC scientific findings and spoke passionately and emotionally about the threats of climate change and how it will affect their people, food production, water supply and environment, and a last chance to save the world.

### Copenhagen convention and key issues

Ideally negotiations for a post-Kyoto Protocol agreement should have been completed at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) convention in Copenhagen and a legally binding deal should have been signed. The Bali Action Plan (agreed in 2007) had laid a roadmap for a post-Kyoto protocol agreement for developed countries (called Annex 1 Parties in the convention) to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emission and to assist developing countries to adapt to climate change and to enable a shift to a low carbon development pathway with funding and technology. The Bali Climate Convention agreed to two track negotiations; first, a working group on long-term cooperative action (LCA) and secondly, working group on Kyoto Protocol (KP). The LCA aimed at decisions on long-term emission reduction targets for developed countries and potential role for developing coun-

tries on emission reduction, enhanced mitigation and adaptation actions, financing mitigation and adaptation, support for technology transfer and capacity building for developing countries. The KP negotiations aimed at new deep emission reduction commitments for developed countries, potential amendments for KP, continuation of flexibility mechanisms (clean development mechanism, joint implementation and emissions trading) and activities and role of land-use change and forestry. Negotiations on both these counts (LCA and KP) should have been concluded by the end of Copenhagen convention. The key issues on which an agreement or deal was expected at Copenhagen are as follows.

1. *Continuation of KP*: This meant GHG emission reduction commitments only for developed countries or 'Annex 1 Parties'. Developing countries insisted on continuation of this arrangement and exclusion of developing countries from emission reduction commitments. Many industrialized countries insisted on modifying or annulling the KP, so that major developing countries could also undertake commitments to reduce emissions, and arguing for a single list of countries for emission reduction targets, probably excluding least developed countries.

2. *Mid-term GHG emission reduction commitments*: Deep emission reduction cuts from developed countries as expected did not materialize and the emission reduction commitment announced by many developed countries is inadequate for stabilizing CO<sub>2</sub> concentration at 450 ppm and limiting global warming to less than 2°C. Discussion and potential agreement on the role of developing countries in reducing emission reduction was expected. Developing countries resisted any emission reduction commitment. Developed countries insisted that major developing countries (China, India, Brazil, etc.) should also be part of the deal and accept reduction cuts. Many developing countries such as China, India, Brazil and South Africa announced various voluntary measures to reduce carbon and energy intensity of gross domestic products (GDP).

3. *Monitoring, reporting and verification*: Under the KP, the emission reduction commitment of developed countries is subjected to strict international monitoring and verification to ensure compliance and transparency. Developing countries such as China and India were not ready for international monitoring and verification of domestic actions, not funded by developed countries on the ground of national sovereignty.

4. *Financing of adaptation and mitigation costs*: Various estimates of funding requirement of US\$ 100–400 billion annually for adaptation are available to enable poorer countries to adapt to climate change. Such large scale funding was not acceptable to the developed countries. Developing countries wanted developed countries to pay for the cost of shifting to low carbon development path. There was also disagreement on the governance structure of the financing mechanisms, some wanting World Bank and others a new arrangement, a more inclusive mechanism.

5. *Technology transfer*: An agreement on technology transfer mechanism was expected. A long-term demand of developing countries has been free access to mitigation and adaptation technologies, and financing to access modern technologies. However, developed countries have raised the issue of intellectual property rights and private sector ownership of technologies.

Ad hoc working groups on LCA and on KP (consisting of delegations from 191 countries) met 8 and 10 times respectively, during 2008–09; most of the meetings lasting for two working weeks each. Despite such long, arduous and protracted negotiations, very limited progress was made, prompting a smaller group of countries consisting of Denmark, USA, major European countries, China, India, Brazil and representatives of Africa and small island countries to prepare a draft of 'Copenhagen accord', in the dying hours of the conference to be formally adopted by the world leaders. However, the accord in the UN language was only 'noted' by the convention and not 'adopted' as a legal

instrument by the UN process, more out of procedural wrangling.

The Copenhagen convention, despite the participation and seriousness of the world leaders, failed to deliver a fair, binding and ambitious (FAB) deal. The Copenhagen accord has been variedly described as 'a first step' by the UN Secretary General, as an 'important breakthrough' by the US President, shockingly as 'suicide pact or an incineration pact' by the negotiator for the developing countries bloc and by all NGOs as a 'sham, empty, flop deal, etc.'. One can always criticize the accord, however, the alternative could have been a complete collapse of the UNFCCC process. Though all the world leaders from developing and developed countries agree that the deal was inadequate, the accord did provide an opportunity to continue the negotiation process and work towards a binding protocol hopefully by the end of 2010 in Mexico.

### IPCC emission reduction target

One of the most important guiding principles set by the scientists of IPCC for the negotiators is that the global GHG emissions should peak soon say by around 2015 and then decline by 25–40% over 1990 level by 2020, followed by a further reduction by 80% over 1990 by 2050, to stabilize CO<sub>2</sub> concentration at 450 ppm to limit the global warming to below 2°C (ref. 1). According to a recent assessment, even if the CO<sub>2</sub> concentration is stabilized at 450 ppm, which seems highly unlikely, there is a 26–78% of risk of overshooting the 2°C goal<sup>2</sup>. So, the first agreement should have been on GHG emission reduction targets for rich countries under the KP and possibly for the developing countries under the LCA. There was no agreement on this issue, a fundamental basis for the failure of Copenhagen convention. China has overtaken USA as the largest emitter of GHGs, and nearly 50% of all future incremental emissions are projected to come from China and India<sup>3</sup>. The per capita emission of China is about half of that of Europe or a fourth of USA, but is growing. If China also adopts India's principle that 'they will not adopt GHG emission reduction commitments since their per capita emissions will always be lower than that of rich countries' there is no way the climate change issue

can be addressed. Even if, by miracle, the GHG emissions from rich countries are reduced to zero and if the emissions from developing countries continue to grow at current rates, a global warming of over 3°C is guaranteed much before the end of the century, a catastrophic level for the global environment and poor. Rich countries will soon account for only a quarter of the global emissions. The question is whether a deal involving only the developed countries is adequate to address climate change.

### Copenhagen Accord

The Accord, for the first time, recognizes the scientific view on the need to restrict the warming to below 2°C, on the basis of equity and sustainable development, a vague formulation. It also recognizes the potential adverse impacts on the poor and highlights the need for comprehensive adaptation. The 2°C should have been a binding target. This is important recognition by the world leaders. In fact, the least developed and island countries wanted to limit the global warming to below 1.5°C, which according to many reports, was opposed vehemently by the Chinese delegation, though finally, the 1.5°C was included for future consideration. Keeping a warming limit of 1.5°C, which is in the interest of the poorest not only in Africa and island countries but also the Indian poor, was not vehemently supported by India. Such a recognition would have forced the negotiators, scientists and economists in the coming months to think of mechanisms to limit global warming to below 1.5°C.

The Accord also recognizes the need to cooperate in achieving peaking of the global and national emissions as soon as possible, bearing in mind the special circumstances of developing countries and the need for economic development and poverty alleviation, again a vague formulation. According to IPCC<sup>1</sup>, global emissions need to peak by around 2015 and then decline sharply. The Indian negotiators, certain NGOs and opposition parliamentarians are happy that there is no specific time limit set in the accord for peaking the emission, on the ground that India needs to increase its fossil fuel based energy use to promote economic growth. Here, there is a basic assumption that increased fossil fuel energy use automatically reduces poverty. Is this really

so, is there scientific evidence to prove this? Even if the installed capacity of power generation increases by say 50% in the next 2–3 years, by miracle, not even a fraction of this incremental power generation may go to the poorest in Bihar or Orissa or Rajasthan.

There was a hue and cry on the monitoring, reporting and verification of national commitments made by developing countries, particularly by China and India to reduce carbon or energy intensity of GDP. It is evident from the discussion in the parliament before and after the Copenhagen convention, that the government and the opposition were against any review or verification of the domestic carbon or energy intensity reduction announced by India. This view is based on the question of India's sovereignty. It should be mentioned here that there are clear UN guidelines for international expert monitoring, verification and reporting of the GHG emission reduction commitments of developed countries. This has been agreed to by the rich countries. If rich countries can allow UN inspectors to verify and review their data and GHG inventory, why not India or China?

IPCC has highlighted the need for reducing the global GHG emissions by 80% by 2050 compared to 1990 levels to limit the warming to 2°C. According to many reports, the earlier drafts of the Copenhagen Accord prepared by select countries had sections such as 'to reduce global emissions by 50% over 1990 levels by 2050 and for rich countries to commit to reducing their emissions by 80% by 2050 over 1990'. This was also vehemently demanded by the least developed as well as island countries since they are most vulnerable to climate change. In fact, the rich countries had agreed to these numbers and an agreement on this would have helped the negotiators, the scientists and the NGOs to press for mechanisms to achieve this. However, according to reports, this was opposed by the Chinese and was deleted. This was because China expects to be a rich country soon and did not want any reference to 80% reduction by 2050. Many countries have announced emission reduction targets as presented in Table 1.

An analysis by the World Resource Institute<sup>4</sup> shows that the commitments announced so far by the rich countries may add up to only 13–19% emission reduction, whereas according to IPCC

**Table 1.** Emission reduction targets announced by selected countries

	Countries	Emission reduction targets	Base year
Developed countries	EU	20–30%	1990
	USA	In the range of 17% (30% reduction in 2025 and a 42% reduction in 2030, in line with the goal to reduce emissions 83% by 2050)	2005
	Australia	5% up to 15% or 25%	2000
	Japan	25%	1990
	Canada	17%	2005
	Developing countries	India	20–25% by 2020 (emission intensity of GDP)
	China	40–45% per unit of GDP by 2020	2005
	Brazil	36–39% by 2020	Reduction in projected emissions
	South Africa	34% by 2020 42% by 2025	Business as usual

Source: UNFCCC website, <http://unfccc.int/home/items/5262.php>

25–40% reduction is needed. According to a study by the International Energy Agency, limiting warming to 2°C with a CO<sub>2</sub> concentration limited to 450 parts per million, is feasible, if the world is ready to invest US\$ 10 trillion in low carbon technologies.

Copenhagen Green Fund has been established to support mitigation, adaptation, technology transfer and reducing emissions from deforestation. The Accord also agreed to enhance technology transfer and establish a mechanism. The developed countries agreed to provide US\$ 30 billion immediately for the period of 2010–2012 and mobilize US\$ 100 billion per year by 2020. Agreed this is not adequate, but imagine if tomorrow US\$ 100 billion per year is made available to developing countries, most countries including India will not be able to utilize the funds due to lack of institutional arrangement and capacity.

In summary, Copenhagen Accord, though inadequate, keeps the door open

for further negotiations to achieve a goal of hopefully restricting global warming to below 1.5°C, which many experts feel is unachievable, even 2°C target may be difficult. Tough negotiations will start soon towards an agreement in Mexico, later this year. The governments will have to inform the UN about the emission reduction targets. The big challenge is how to operationalize the vague paragraphs of the Copenhagen Accord.

In India, there is very limited quality scientific, economic and policy research on climate change and very little or no consultation with experts, state governments, legislators, representatives of farmers or fisherfolk or even the industry. There is need for quality peer-reviewed scientific modelling and research, policy and economic analysis and more importantly a consultation process on climate change policy formulation. The main focus of climate policy making should be from the perspective of the poor and the environment and should be not lost in a

maze of targets, percentages, dollars, procedures, etc.

1. IPCC, Climate Change, Synthesis Report, WMO-UNEP, Geneva, 2007.
2. Meinshausen, M., On the risk of overshooting 2°C. Scientific Symposium on 'Avoiding Dangerous Climate Change', MetOffice, Exeter, UK, 1–3 February 2005.
3. IEA, World Energy Outlook – 2009, International Energy Agency, Paris, 2009.
4. Levin, K. and Bradley, R., Comparability of Annex I Emission Reduction Pledges, WRI Working Paper, World Resource Institute, Washington, 2009; [http://pdf.wri.org/working\\_papers/comparability\\_of\\_annex1\\_emission\\_reduction\\_pledges\\_2009-12-04.pdf](http://pdf.wri.org/working_papers/comparability_of_annex1_emission_reduction_pledges_2009-12-04.pdf)

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