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## Energy & Environment

Our panel of insiders discusses key issues

MONDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2009

### Whither Copenhagen?

By **Margaret Kriz Hobson**

NationalJournal.com

What have world leaders accomplished at the U.N. climate change conference in Copenhagen?

The U.S. and China, along with India and South Africa, forged a climate deal in the 11th hour of the summit on Friday, according to media reports. Details of that accord are still developing, but many are already saying it's falling short of expectations. In other notable developments: Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton pledged that the U.S. would contribute to a global fund of \$100 billion to help poor nations' climate change efforts, and negotiators were close to a deal that would curb greenhouse gas emissions through forest preservation.

How do these achievements compare to expectations? Have negotiators done enough to advance international efforts to control emissions? Will Copenhagen affect U.S. efforts to pass domestic climate change legislation?

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DECEMBER 30, 2009 10:01 AM



#### After Copenhagen: Now A New Start?

By **Mark Muro**

Fellow and Director of Policy, Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings

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Climate savants of every stripe--from our colleague Brad Plumer at The Vine to Andrew Light and Michael Levi at the Center for American Progress and the Council on Foreign Relations, respectively, to Bryan Walsh at TIME, Sharon Begley at Newsweek, and the writers at the Breakthrough Institute -- are still trying to figure out what happened at the Copenhagen climate talks and what it means. And they're right to be uncertain, as the

last days of the massive U...

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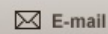
By **Bob Bendick**

Director of Government Relations, Nature Conservancy

I did not go to Copenhagen, but as I read over the reports from the Nature Conservancy's delegation, I am reminded in some ways of the early days of



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the effort to control toxic substances in the U.S. In the late 1960s and 1970s scientists were discovering a relationship between toxic chemicals and human disease. There were, of course, deniers then, and those who argued that regulation would damage economic growth. But as the public began to understand the risk, there were, across the country, hundreds of community meetings at which citizens who lived near contaminated sites

demanded explanations of why government was imposing risks from toxic chemicals on their communities, and, particularly, on their children. They wanted to know why the polluters were not stopped much sooner.

The focus, then, was on the risks of cancer and birth defects, and while scientists had developed ways of measuring those risks, it was simply the possibility rather than the mathematics that convinced lawmakers to ban the dumping of toxic...

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DECEMBER 24, 2009 9:20 AM



## A New Part Of The Game

By [Henry Derwent](#)

Copenhagen is not just the end of the beginning. It's the beginning of the middle game. For some years, participants and other stakeholders in the international climate change negotiations have talked wistfully about the impossibility of getting unanimous agreement from over 190 countries, however global and universal the problem of climate change that we have been trying to address. G8, G20, MEF were all responses to the feeling that the countries most important for mitigation, at least, needed to get together in a forum where real negotiations could take place. All of them

were undermined by doubts about legitimacy and by the belief that if the UN was intended to do anything, it must be given a chance to do this.

Well, Copenhagen may have resolved that. When the traditional approach had reached the end of the line on Thursday of the second week, the most important countries apart from the EU, whose position was already clear, went into a closed session. What emerged was not pretty, not equitable, not legitimate in the sense many are still looking for, and not...

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DECEMBER 23, 2009 4:40 PM



By [Ned Helme](#)

*President, Center for Clean Air Policy*

When Barack Obama and his counterparts arrived in Copenhagen, they each found a surprise – line diplomats had not been able to set the table effectively for their interaction. Whereas Presidents often arrive at such international gatherings with the expectation that they will say grace over the offerings prepared by their negotiators and perhaps decide one or at most two key issues, world leaders at Copenhagen found a bare table with the waiters and kitchen staff locked in arguments.

This certainly was an unusual international scene, one where world leaders themselves actually negotiated the words of the accord. The heart of what they achieved was to build trust, both in the broadest sense of the word and in the narrower sense of an agreement that identifies the road to a transparent system designed to ensure that each country keeps the promises it makes.

Several questions are paramount in assessing the spare Copenhagen Accord that emerged from those crucial discussions among world leaders.

What was really accomplished? What does the Copenhagen Accor...

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By **Nancy Young**

Well, we missed our chance. No, I'm not talking about the chance to get a new global climate change treaty or something even more important to me, a global sectoral approach to greenhouse gas emissions for aviation. We did not miss that chance, because – going into it – everyone knew that Copenhagen would just be a stop along the way. Indeed, the doors are still open and there are work programs extending into 2010 (and beyond) for the next step and the next. No, the missed chance that I'm talking about is the great entrepreneurial idea that came to me about 11 pm one night in Copenhagen's Bella Center – to sell t-shirts with the logo "I Went to

Copenhagen Looking for a [Bracketed Text] and All I Got Was This [Bracketed Text]." My colleagues thought it was a great idea. And think of the money we could have made! Because – if there is one thing I learned in Copenhagen – it is that a lot of what climate change policy is all about is money.

If I'm consoled at all about my missed opportunity for personal ga...

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DECEMBER 23, 2009 11:37 AM



By **Kyle Danish**

One of the themes emerging in the many post-game analyses of the Copenhagen talks is that conventional UN-style negotiations cannot work. Even the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has acknowledged these criticisms, and has pledged to lead a review next year.

To be clear, no one should have unreasonable expectations of what can be achieved simply by shifting forums. Climate change is an exceedingly hard issue around which to build international cooperation. All countries have some incentive to avoid the dangerous impacts of climate change, but each also has a motive to keep developing its economy. As a result, the

incentives to be a "free rider" are very strong, which puts stress on the limited ability of the international community to organize credible inducements or punishments. Yet, precisely because climate change is a hard issue, we should think carefully about how to build cooperation. Since their inception, the UN climate talks have relied on architecture that maximizes inclusivity, soft obligations, consensus-building, and managed compliance. I&...

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DECEMBER 22, 2009 7:56 PM



## Better Commitments without Caps

By **Steven Stoft**

*Director, Global Energy Policy Center*

After 17 years, Obama has cut the Gordian knot.

Obama agreed with the Chinese—and with our best climate strategists, Stiglitz, Nordhaus, and Schelling. Developing countries will not cap their emissions. Just six weeks before Copenhagen, Todd Stern was still saying China would "absolutely have to cap their emissions" significantly below "where their trend line is." The Copenhagen Accord requires only that poor countries commit to "mitigation actions," not caps. That's a much better

starting point.

As our three strategists have been explaining for years, it's not that caps are bad. They just don't make sense for poor countries or for reaching agreement. They create large and unnecessary financial risks and bitter negotiations. And trend-line capping would cap India's per-capita emissions at half the US level in 1880! Can you imagine how that plays in India? What have we been thinking?

The good news is that there is a better commitment than a cap (see ...

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DECEMBER 22, 2009 4:50 PM



By **David Hone**

Our first true view of the planet in its entirety came during the Apollo missions, with one picture taken during the Apollo 17 mission becoming the opening slide of Al Gore's Inconvenient Truth presentation. It was forty years ago that mankind took that giant leap and set foot on the moon. Copenhagen presented a very different view of the world. Dogged for nearly 10 of its 11 days by political infighting, the eventual arrival of some 100 Prime Ministers and Heads of State finally forced an outcome of sorts, with many brave faces appearing in front of the media in the late hours of Friday and during the day on Saturday to attempt to explain that progress had

indeed be made.

But has it? The weekend was certainly full of talking heads condemning the Accord for its lack of ambition and failure to set targets and it is true that it dodged that issue almost entirely, but I would argue that it sets the scene for sustained action in the years to come on the basis of a single principle that has delivered a great deal in the past - "Trust, but verify". Ronald Reagan used th...

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DECEMBER 21, 2009 8:51 PM



By **Thomas J. Pyle**

*President, Institute for Energy Research (IER)*

Even though the climate change PR machines are spinning away in the aftermath of Copenhagen's COP 15, a few of the Copenhagen Accord's more troubling consequences are not getting the attention they deserve.

Senator McCain called "the agreement to take note of the accord" reached by the United States and a handful of developed nations a "nothing burger." Senator Kerry, on the other hand, believes the accord is important and called China's participation "the most critical thing" to ensuring Senate

passage of the national energy tax, even though few observers believe China will actually do anything to curtail their growing use of carbon-based energy. Meanwhile, the question of whether the outcome in Denmark was enough to advance international efforts to control emissions can best be summarized by Henry Derwent, president of the Geneva-based International Emissions Trading Association, who noted that the climate talks were a "step backward" in terms of a signal that will support carbon prices.

...

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DECEMBER 21, 2009 2:25 PM



By **Paul Sullivan**

*Professor of Economics, National Defense University*

The climate conference at Copenhagen may go down in history as the most carbon intensive waste of money in the history of diplomacy.

Given how many passenger miles the huge amount of delegates traveled to get there it is likely that for the major days of coming and going Copenhagen was at the height of its net carbon additions.

It was hyped beyond any common sense.

It had too many delegates.

The leadership engaged only at the end.

The disputes were well-known yet not well handled.

It was a botch up all around.

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The President and other leaders need move in more productive and realistic directions and leave the holier-than-though preaching of the unrealistic to the soap boxes not the negotiating tables.

All of this was predicable and I said so on this site a couple of weeks ago.

Now is the time to do the real tough negotiating. This time it should be done quietly, in less intense surroundings, and by the real pros who know how to get things done. It may take a decade, but at least some realism will prevail.

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DECEMBER 21, 2009 9:11 AM



## More Face Saving Than Planet Saving?

By **Jonathan Wootliff**

*Head of Corporate Accountability, Reputation Partners*

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There was nothing elegant about the scenes during the closing hours of the climate summit in Denmark. In the small hours of Saturday morning delegates were to be seen in a daze walking around the Bella Center not quite knowing what to make of the outcome.

Over the past two weeks, those of us at the talks, were witnesses to politics in the raw. What started with great expectations ended with frustrating uncertainty.

It was two years ago in Bali when the nations agreed to work on a new, legally-binding deal to combat climate change which was to be sealed last week in Copenhagen.

There have been many intergovernmental meetings over the past 24 months, including large interim gatherings in Poland, Thailand and Spain. In spite of all these efforts and the participation of over 100 world leaders last week, the much heralded prospect of Denmark facilitating a new treaty to slash greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) were buried late Friday evening.

When politicians emerged from the talks declaring that there had been a historic agreeme...

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DECEMBER 21, 2009 8:38 AM



## Talk is Cheap

By **Bill Snape**

*Senior Counsel, Center For Biological Diversity*

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Although Copenhagen was a failure, humanity has no choice but to treat it like a first step. The scientific imperative of stemming, stopping and reversing climate change is unquestioned except by a few flat earthers. The saddest irony is that the United States could have brought so much more tangible to the table, things that are achievable in the short term and technologically feasible: black carbon reductions both in the U.S. and the developing world, methane reductions that spur natural gas recapture, and

full implementation of the existing Clean Air Act (e.g., mobile sources, stationary sources and national ambient air quality standards). Why didn't the Obama administration do this? Because in the current political game of "hot potato," it has cynically bought into the fiction that "we need Congress to pass comprehensive legislation." That we need more from Congress than its constitutional duty to authorize funding is false despite the mainstream media's pre-occupation with "cap and trade." The reality is that we already have the Clean Air...

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## What Hath Copenhagen Wrought?

By **Rob Stavins**

*Business and Government Professor; Director, Harvard Environmental Economics Program Harvard's Kennedy School of Government*

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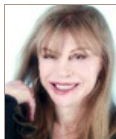
After years of preparation, the Fifteenth Conference of the Parties (COP-15) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) commenced on December 7th, 2009, and adjourned some two weeks later on December 19th after a raucous all-night session. The original purpose of the conference had been to complete negotiations on a new international agreement on climate change to come into force when the Kyoto Protocol's

first commitment period comes to an end in 2012. But for at least the past six months, it had become clear to virtually all participants that such a goal was out of reach — and the COP-15 objective was publically downgraded in mid-November to a non-binding agreement by heads of state at a meeting in Singapore of the Asia-Pacific Economic Conference.

I begin by describing what were reasonable expectations going into the Copenhagen negotiations and appropriate definitions of success for COP-15, and then turn to the unprecedented process which unfolded over the final 36 hours of the conference. Next, I descr...

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## The Copenhagen Accord

By **Graciela Chichilnisky**

*Director, Columbia Consortium for Risk Management, and Professor of Economics and Statistics, Columbia University*

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The Copenhagen accord was neither a disappointment nor a relief - although it had elements of both. The accord represents a major transition and a step forward to the future - and much more work will be needed in the months ahead to complete the work started in Copenhagen.

The accord represents a transition to a new world regime where the US becomes part of the international community in sharing the responsibility for overcoming the risks of climate change, as the largest wealthy nation carbon emitter. It comes on the heels of the 2007 US Supreme Court Decision to allow the President to impose emissions limits under the Clean Air Act, the June 2009 Waxman - Markey Climate Change Bill that is a mini version of the Kyoto Protocol with emissions caps and trading, the recent decision of the US Environmental Protection Agency to regulate carbon emissions as dangerous, the first unilateral offer ever from the US, President Obama's offer to reduce 17% of US emissions by 2009, and an offer by Secretary of State Hilary Clinton to participate in a \$100 bn/ year Fund for adaptation and mitigation in poor nations that are small emitters, which was a watered down version of a Fund proposal I published earlier in the FT and the National Journal in Washington DC, and which I discussed in Copenhagen with the US Department of State, US Treasury, the US delegation in Copenhagen, and the G77.

The Copenhagen accord obviously did not go as far as many had hoped for - prominently, it did not establish binding emissions limits for the post 2012 period - the needed continuation of the Kyoto Protocol limits that end in 2012. Binding limits from the wealthy nations, who emit the overwhelming majority of global emissions, was the hope of the great majority of the nations and of the participants in the Copenhagen event - but it did not happen.

Furthermore, since the accord was signed only by five nations - US, China, India, South Africa and Brazil - and the rest did not sign on - it remains a "good will offer" from those nations - and the Kyoto Protocol remains the single agreement we ever had and we continue to have to deal with global warming.

The Parties reaffirmed in the Copenhagen meetings the continuation of the Kyoto Protocol, and the document itself provides a reaffirmation of this principle.

The document also reaffirms the United Nations 1992 Convention that was signed and ratified by the US -- and the principle that developing nations' first priority is to

alleviate poverty, as provided in the Convention Article 4.

Beyond the disappointment that many felt - there is a silver lining to the clouds. The accord can only be seen as a strengthening of the Kyoto Protocol in the sense of smoothing down certain rough edges that some objected to, with its provisions for voluntary verifications of emissions by all nations.

The accord is also a reaffirmation at least in words of the historic nature of the climate change problem that all nations - as President Obama said - must face and resolve together; and the agreement at least by the 5 nations who were involved, to commit to no more than 2 C temperature increase - an issue that is a positive step forward even though it can be said to be little and too late.

The Copenhagen results were a show of unity for the international community - even if the results are slower than one would have hoped and is needed. Ideally this accord would have been reached 5 days before the end of the Copenhagen round and more ambitious targets could have been achieved in the last few days when all heads of state were there. Temperature increase of 2 C can lead to the disappearance of 25% of the UN nations - the 43 Small Island States - and thus must be reduced to 1.5 C at most. The 2015 deadline for binding emissions is clearly too little and too late.

The hope is that the transition that the document represents takes us into a self-reinforcing situation where it is clear that change will happen - that the tipping point has been reached - and through the economic incentives of the carbon market that all sides support, this can lead to accelerated action in the months and years ahead, by the business and the political communities.

I found it very rewarding that the carbon market that I designed and crafted into the Kyoto Protocol is enthusiastically accepted and supported by almost everyone in the Copenhagen round, and to have been able to introduce in these two weeks in Copenhagen the concept of negative carbon into the CDM -- which is the only way that small emitter nations in Africa, Latin America and Small Island States can benefit from the Clean Development mechanism to invest in clean technologies for sustainable development.

But as a Mathematician who studied Economics because human organization seems to be our species' weakest link, I have to admit that the weakness of this link was in full display in Copenhagen. One cannot fail to observe that, if such delays, chaos and conflicts as we observed in Copenhagen are a natural consequence of making difficult global decisions - one must be seriously concerned about the strain that climate change will create not just on physical systems -- but predominantly on the organization of human societies.

## Collapse

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DECEMBER 21, 2009 7:30 AM



### No Big Claims A Relief

By **William O'Keefe**

*CEO, George C. Marshall Institute*

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The outcome of Copenhagen brings to mind the observation that insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. It also reminds me of an exchange between Alice and Humpty Dumpty in *Through the Looking Glass*, "When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less. The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things." The COP process proves that delegates can make words mean whatever they want them to mean.

For the first time a COP did not end with claims of great success. And because of that, I view COP-15 as a great success. The coalition of true believers has started to come apart as EU zealots continue to demand targets and timetables for future reductions which are totally unrealistic, developing countries increase their demands for bribes to take actions that are not in their self interest, and the US, China, and a few other developing countries agree to "Pledge and Review" and the wisdom of the Rio Treaty. President Obama reveals...

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