A comprehensive ethical analysis of the Copenhagen Accord.

A Comprehensive Ethical Analysis of the Copenhagen Accord.

By DONALD A BROWN on January 31, 2010 7:25 PM| 5 Comments | 3 TrackBacks

I. Introduction

If climate change must be understood as a civilization challenging ethical problem, what can be said about the positions taken by governments and results achieved at the recently concluded Copenhagen conference?

To evaluate what happened in Copenhagen one must understand that the Copenhagen meeting was only the last in almost two decades of meetings that have failed to achieve a global solution to climate change. Copenhagen was the 19th meeting of governments from around the world that have been meeting every year since 1990 to forge a comprehensive climate change regime. Copenhagen was also the 15th conference of the parties (COP-15) since the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) came into effect in 1994. (UN, 1992)

For more than twenty years some nations have been taking positions on climate change that raise serious ethical concerns. Copenhagen meeting was no exception. However, as we saw in a prior ClimateEthics post, there were two issues that arose with a new force in Copenhagen. They were the intensity and frequency of calls for: (a) global justice, and (b) increased funding for adaptation programs in vulnerable developing countries. See, ClimateEthics, ***Two Climate Change Matters Move To Center Stage In Copenhagen With Profound Implications for Developed Nations: Ethics and Adaptation,*** http://climateethics.org/?p=331.

Yet, at the conclusion of the Copenhagen conference, as we shall see, little was accomplished in response to these issues or the other climate change disputes that have now plagued climate negotiations for almost two decades. Although, as we shall see, some have pointed to a few positive Copenhagen outcomes, most observers have judged COP-15 to be a disaster.

This post begins with an analysis of what actually happened in Copenhagen and contains the following sections:

• The path to the Copenhagen Accord
• Arguments about whether Copenhagen was a disaster or a positive step forward.
• Analysis of the "disaster-step forward" controversy
• Ethical analyses of the Copenhagen Accord
• Climate change ethics after Copenhagen

II. The Path To The Copenhagen Accord

The Copenhagen conference took place from December 7-19, 2009. Copenhagen was intended to be the culmination of a two-year negotiating process that was agreed to in Bali, Indonesia, in December 2007.
In 1990 negotiations began that led in 1992 to opening for signature and ratification of the UNFCCC. This treaty itself does not contain binding greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions limitations for countries but nevertheless includes numerous other binding national climate change obligations.
To understand the significance of what happened in Copenhagen, it is necessary to understand the goals and objectives for an international climate regime that were originally set out in the UNFCCC. Among other things, for instance, the parties to the UNFCCC agreed that: (a) They would adopt policies and measures to prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system, (b) Developed countries should take the first steps to do this, and (c) Nations have common but differentiated responsibilities to prevent climate change, (d) Nations may not use scientific uncertainty as an excuse for not taking action, and (e) Nations should reduce their GHG emissions based upon "equity." (UN, 1992) As we shall see, some national proposals in Copenhagen, seventeen years after the UNFCCC was agreed upon, failed to abide by many promises made by governments in the UNFCCC.

As of December 2009, the UNFCCC had 192 parties, a number that includes almost all countries in the world including the United States which ratified the UNFCCC in 1994.

The UNFCC is a "framework" convention because it has always been expected that additional requirements would be added to the framework in updates that are known as "protocols" or in annual decisions of the conferences of the parties.

The first major addition to the UNFCCC was the Kyoto Protocol which was negotiated in 1997 because the international community had been convinced by emerging climate change science that developed nations needed to be bound by numerical emissions reductions targets. The Kyoto Protocol entered into force on February 16, 2005 and currently has 190 parties. The United States is the only developed country that never ratified the Kyoto Protocol.

Under the Kyoto, Protocol, the developed countries agreed to reduce their overall emissions of six greenhouse gases by an average of 5.2% below 1990 levels between 2008-2012. The developing countries had no binding emissions reductions obligations under Kyoto.

The Copenhagen negotiations were necessary because the emissions reductions obligations of developed countries set out in the Kyoto Protocol expire in 2012.

At climate negotiations at COP-13 in Bali, Indonesia in 2007, parties to the UNFCCC agreed to replace the Kyoto Protocol with an agreement that would create a second commitment period under the UNFCCC and would include binding emissions reductions for developed countries and new programs on adaptation for developing countries, deforestation, finance, technology transfer, and capacity building. This agreement is referred to as the Bali Roadmap which also called for articulating a "shared vision for long-term cooperative action," including a long-term global goal for emission reductions.

The Bali decision also recognized that developing countries could make contributions to solving the climate change through the development of Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs), that is climate change strategies for developing countries. The NAMAs, however, would not constitute binding emissions reduction requirements for developing countries in contrast to the binding obligations of developed countries in the Kyoto Protocol that would be further developed in Copenhagen.

At Bali the parties also agreed on a two-year negotiating process to achieve the objectives of the Bali Roadmap. Under this action plan, nations would proceed on two negotiation tracks. One under the UNFCCC and the other under the Kyoto Protocol. The first track was know by the acronym "AWG-KP," standing for the Ad hoc Working Group on the Kyoto Protocol. The second track was referred to as "AWG-LCA," standing for the Ad hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action. The Bali agreement also included a deadline for concluding these negotiations in Copenhagen in December of 2009.

Intense negotiations in preparation for Copenhagen took place during the two years between Bali and Copenhagen including four separate meetings in 2009 alone. In these deliberations, many contentious issues surfaced. Among other things, these disputes included particularly strong disagreements about the magnitude of developed country emissions reduction commitments and institutional arrangements and funding amounts for financing developing country needs for technology cooperation, adaptation, reducing emissions from deforestation, and capacity building.

Although some progress was made on a few issues in the two year lead-up to Copenhagen, little progress was made on the major issues and particularly on commitments for GHG emissions reductions and funding for adaptation, deforestation programs, and technology transfer.

As Copenhagen approached, optimism about a Copenhagen deal faded although there was a short spurt of renewed hope several weeks before the conference started as the US, China, and a few other nations publicly made commitments on emissions reductions.

The Copenhagen meeting was attended by 110 heads of state, hundreds of ministers from every part of the world, as well as thousands of registrants from nongovernmental organizations, the media, UN agencies - more than 40,000 people in a facility with a capacity of 15,000. During most of the two weeks, little progress was made with many sessions memorable for acrimonious exchanges between developing and developed countries.

Throughout the two weeks in Copenhagen, attendees from poor, at-risk countries could be heard despairingly describing killer droughts and growing deserts in Africa, loss of glacier-fed water supplies on which their agriculture depends for millions in Central Asia and South America, and rising seas that are now threatening the very existence of small island states. Suffering caused by the human-induced warming that that the Earth has already experienced is now visible around the world although mostly in poor developing countries. Because warming is expected to accelerate in the years ahead, for many poor countries climate change is now understood to be an urgent matter of life and death.

As ClimateEthics explained in an earlier post, the Copenhagen meeting was different than previous COPs for the noticeable increase in attention paid to the ethics and justice dimensions of climate change and adaptation needs. See, ClimateEthics, ***Two Climate Change Matters Move To Center Stage In Copenhagen With Profound Implications for Developed Nations: Ethics and Adaptation***, http://climateethics.org/?p=331.

Yet, as we shall see, none of this appeared to motivate developed nations to make commitments to reduce GHG emissions consistent with what science claims necessary to protect those most vulnerable to climate change.

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During the Copenhagen conference representatives from poor vulnerable nations begged developed countries to: (a) commit to reduce GHG emissions to levels necessary to prevent dangerous climate change. and (b) to fund adaptation programs in developing countries that are necessary to protect the most vulnerable from climate change impacts that could be avoided and compensate for damages that could not be avoided.

Despite these pleas, not much happened during the conference to resolve the most contentious issues until US President Obama appeared on the morning of the last day, Friday, December 18, 2009. For much of that day, President Obama negotiated with Chinese premier Wen Jiabao, Brazilian president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and South African President Jacob Zuma.(Lerer, 2009) Yet, a large part of this time of these negotiations was focused on a dispute between the United States and China on whether China would agree to monitoring and verification of Chinese climate change commitments.

President Obama could not commit to anything in Copenhagen that he could not get through the US congress. Because a climate change bill that had passed the US House was very weak compared to what science says was necessary to protect the world's poorest people, the United States took a position in the lead-up to Copenhagen that continued to be the weakest of all the developed countries on emissions reductions.

Because none of the developed countries were willing to make emissions reduction commitments congruent with what science was saying was necessary to protect them, some of the most vulnerable developing countries saw the developed countries' positions as ominous, perhaps a death sentence.

The United States was not alone among developed countries in refusing to make emissions reductions commitments consistent with what science was saying was necessary to prevent dangerous climate change. In fact as ClimatEthics has explained in a previous post, no developed country made such a commitment in the lead-up to Copenhagen. See, **Ethical Failures of National GHG Emissions Reduction Proposals Approaching Copenhagen,**http://climateethics.org/?p=147.

A notable example of the acrimony between developed and developing countries during the pre-Copenhagen period were a provision that had been inserted in the negotiating text that claimed that developed countries were responsible for "ecological debt." As we shall see, this assertion was strongly rejected by Todd Stern, lead US climate negotiator, who said: "I actually completely reject the notion of a debt or reparations or anything of the like.'(Roberts, 2009) In addition, US negotiator Jonathan Pershing further said, "The donor countries have only so much largesse." This statement appeared to be premised on the idea that the United States has no obligations to developing countries for past pollution and that payments to developing countries for adaptation are simply a mater of charity.

In response to this denial of historical responsibility for climate change, Vandana Shiva, a prominent social activist for developing countries, said: "I think it is time for the United States to stop seeing itself as a donor and recognizing itself as a polluter, a polluter who must pay for its pollution and its ecological debt. This is not about charity. This is about justice." (Roberts, 2009)

President Obama personally negotiated the Copenhagen Accord during last hours of the conference. Yet, to get this deal, President Obama had to ignore many of the positions of the most vulnerable nations that were unresolved in the two negotiating documents that had been created in the lead-up to Copenhagen, the documents known as AWG-KP and AWG-LCA.

Although the United States was unwilling to acknowledge financial responsibility for climate change, President Obama was at least willing to recognize that the United States should make commitments on emissions reductions and funding, a profound change from the prior US administration. Most likely because of a potential future, but yet unrealized, new US direction, President Obama managed to obtain support from many nations including some prominent developing countries on the Copenhagen Accord, the non-binding, political statement that emerged from the Obama-led negotiations.

Despite growing scientific evidence that the world is running out of time to protect the poorest people in the world from the harsh impacts of climate change, the best the international community could do in Copenhagen was to agree on the weak, compared to what was hoped for, non-binding document, the Copenhagen Accord.

Politically President Obama's hands were tied in the negotiations because of domestic political constraints.

For domestic political reasons, the US President also wanted agreement from China and other large developing countries on transparent procedures for verifying their non-binding emissions reduction commitments.

Most observers believed that there was little hope of getting meaningful US domestic climate change legislation through the US congress without being able to argue that China was on track to make GHG emissions reductions also. And so, for domestic political reasons, moving China on climate change in Copenhagen was important.

Those opposing climate change legislation in the United States often have argued that it would be unfair to the United States if it was bound to reduce GHG emissions and China was not required to do the same. In fact, a decade earlier, when the Kyoto Accord was under consideration in the

United States, opponents of the Kyoto deal frequently ran TV commercials that argued that the Kyoto Protocol was unfair to the United States because China was excluded from emissions limitations. This argument was often made without visible critical comment in the United States even though the United States had committed itself to take the first steps to reduce emissions along with other developed countries under the UNFCCC. For instance, the Heritage Foundation argued that the Kyoto Protocol should not be ratified because the Protocol excluded developing countries from binding emissions reductions including China. (Coon, 2001).

When China became the world's largest emitter in terms of total tons of GHGs in the fall of 2008, this fact was widely publicized in the United States as if China had moved into first place in terms of global responsibility. The US press frequently announced that China had become the largest polluter, a fact that ignored that the United States emits more than four times the amount of GHG than China on a per capita basis.

Although President Obama originally negotiated the Accord with just four other countries, in the last few hours of the Copenhagen conference the United States successfully convinced most large emitting countries to support the Accord including China, India, Brazil, South Africa, U.K., France, Australia, Germany, the E.U., Japan, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Russia, Mexico, Spain, South Korea, Norway, the Maldives, Columbia, and Indonesia.

As a result, in the wee hours of Saturday mourning, the Copenhagen parties agreed to reference the Copenhagen Accord in a COP decision that "took note" of the Copenhagen. The COP "took note" of the Copenhagen Accord rather than adopting it because a consensus was not possible and decisions by a COP require a consensus. At least 25 countries that were asked by the COP President to participate in a high level meeting of the "friends of the President" eventually accepted the Accord, at least four Parties spoke out against it (Tuvalu, Sudan, Bolivia, and Venezuela). (Werksman, 2009)

The Copenhagen Accord will not solve the climate change crisis as even President Obama acknowledged because it does not contain commitments necessary to avoid dangerous climate change nor deal adequately with other issues including GHG gases coming from deforestation and adaptation issues.

The Copenhagen Accords is a three page document whose most significant elements are:

o **Long-Term Goals:** The parties agreed that deep cuts in global emissions are required according to science and as documented by the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report, with a view to reducing global emissions in order to limit the increase in global temperature to below 2°C. The agreement also calls for an assessment of the implementation of the Accord to be completed by 2015 including examining whether the long-term goal should be a temperature rise of 1.5°C.

o **Adaptation**: The document states that adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change and the potential impacts of response measures is a challenge faced by all countries, and that enhanced action and international cooperation on adaptation are urgently required in developing countries, especially in the least developed countries, the small island states, and Africa. The parties to the Accord also agree that developed countries shall provide adequate, predictable and sustainable financial resources, technology and capacity building to support adaptation.

o **Financing For Poor Nations**: The document provides that developed countries shall set a goal of mobilizing jointly $100 billion a year by 2020 to address the needs of developing countries and that the funds will come from a wide variety of sources, public and private, bilateral and multilateral. An annex carries the following short-term financing pledges from developed countries for 2010-2012: EU - $10.6 billion. Japan - $11 billion. United States - $3.6 billion

o **Emissions Reductions**: The document provides for countries to voluntarily commit to GHG mitigation plans in two separate annexes, one for developed country targets and the other for the voluntary pledges of major developing countries. The developed countries committed to implement individually or jointly quantified emissions reductions targets for 2020 to be submitted by 31 January 2010. The developing countries may identify commitments that will be included in the annex to the Copenhagen Accord. Neither developed nor developing country commitments under the Accord are legally binding.

o **Verification of Climate Change Promises.** A sticking point for a deal, largely because China refused to accept international controls, the section on monitoring of developing nation pledges is one of the the agreement's most significant provisions. The document provides that emerging economies must monitor their efforts and report the results to the United Nations every two years, with some international checks to meet Western transparency concerns but "to ensure that national sovereignty is respected."

o **Forest Protection.** The accord "recognizes the importance of reducing emission from deforestation and forest degradation and the need to enhance removals or greenhouse gas emission by forests," and agrees to provide "positive incentives" to fund such action with financial resources from the developed world.

III. Arguments For and Against Conclusions That Copenhagen Was A Disaster or A Positive Step Forward.

The Copenhagen Accord has triggered serious disputes among world leaders, academicians, journalists, and participants as to whether it was an unmitigated disaster or a positive step toward finally dealing with climate change.

For instance, sharply negative assessment of the Copenhagen has been made by John Sauven, executive director of Greenpeace UK, who said at the conclusion of Copenhagen: "The city of Copenhagen is a crime scene tonight, with the guilty men and women fleeing to the airport. (BBC, 2009).

James Curran, the director of science at the one of the Scottish government's top advisors on climate change said "It really couldn't be any more serious," and "It's staggeringly frightening and deeply disappointing that Copenhagen has failed. This is extremely dangerous for Scotland and the world." (Herald Scotland, 2009)

Yet, even though almost all commentators that have drawn positive conclusions about the Accord have also expressed some reservations about this agreement, some have concluded that on balance it was a positive step.

For instance, Andrew Light of the Center for American Progress said about the Copenhagen Accord: " The truth right now is that this agreement is not only meaningful but potentially groundbreaking." (Light, 2009)

Similarly Robert Stavins from the Harvard Environmental Economics Programs concluded that the Copenhagen Accord was probably a good thing because "leaders took the reins of the procedures and brought the negotiations to a fruitful conclusion, and because the foundation was laid for a broad-based coalition of the willing to address effectively the threat of global climate change." (Stavins, 2009)

In a like manner, David Doniger, policy director NRDC climate center, said that the Copenhagen Accord was a big step forward.

And so some environmental NGOs are split about whether the Copenhagen Accord was a disaster or a positive step forward.

On the one hand, a strong case cane be made that Copenhagen was an immense global catastrophe because the two week meeting:
o Did not produce any legally binding, enforceable global deal that met the objectives of the meeting including.

o Did not achieve greenhouse gas reductions commitments congruent with what science is now saying is necessary to protect the most vulnerable people in the world and avoid dangerous climate change.

o Allowed big countries to block a 1.5 oC atmospheric stabilization target desired by the most vulnerable developing countries. Although the text sets an unenforceable goal of 2 oC and allows for a review of whether a 1.5 oC target is necessary, this review does not take place for 5 years and most scientists argue that global emissions must peak before this to avoid catastrophic climate change..

o Abandoned much of the UNFCCC approach to climate change set process out in the architecture of the Kyoto Protocol.

o Reached no agreement on an emissions baseline year so that some nations including the United States were able to make reductions commitments from 2005 despite the fact that most of the world had agreed to 1990 as the baseline year under the Kyoto Protocol.

o Produced the Accord, an outcome that angered many developing countries whose positions were set out in detail in the texts that had been under negotiation for two years before Copenhagen.

o Did not significantly move forward on the institutional issues related to deforestation programs, technology transfer, or capacity building. Many issues in the negotiating text on these issues were ignored.

o Ignored hundreds of pages of negotiating text through the production of a three-page Accord without consulting most of the parties that had been negotiating the text.

o Put into jeopardy, the international trading flexibility mechanisms that had come into existence under the Kyoto Protocol.

o Dropped the objective of finalizing a legally binding treaty in 2010 in Mexico City

o Produced a final document, the Accord that contains no rules on how it will be governed.

o Did not achieve specific commitments for adaptation or other financing needs of developing countries.

o Made no progress on the UNFCCC promise that developed countries should reduce their emissions based "equity' to prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.

Arguments that have been made that Copenhagen Accord was a positive step forward have noted that the agreement:

o Broke through years of negotiating gridlock to achieve critical goals of a needed an international climate change agreement.

o Provides real cuts in heat-trapping carbon pollution by all of the world's big emitters.

o Establishes a transparent framework for evaluating countries' performance against their

commitments.

o Starts a new flow of financial resources to help poor and vulnerable nations cope with climate impacts, protect their forests, and adopt clean energy technologies.

o Binds emission pathways to halt warming over 2 oC. In fact, the Accord is the first international agreement to promise consideration of limiting warming to 1.5 oC.

o Achieved targets and policy announcements from big developing countries that would have been unthinkable a year ago.

o Provides a transparent way of assessing the progress of developing countries GHG commitments.

o By bringing in developing countries, enhanced the US congress's prospects to pass domestic climate change legislation.

o Made movement on a global agreement that would not have happened without the Accord because the UNFCCC process was unworkable and if the parties continued to follow it, deadlock was inevitable.

o Managed to isolate several obstructionist countries including Saudi Arabia and Venezuela who are oil producing countries.

o Made China into a major world player and made this country accountable.

o Elevated India, Brazil and South Africa to the climate change world stage.

o Although it did not get all nations to agree to an international climate regime, provided an agreement among the largest emitters.

IV. Analysis of the "Disaster or Step Forward" Controversy

It would appear that the strongest reasons given for concluding that the Copenhagen Accord was a positive step forward are most firmly grounded on the notions that: (1) following the normal international negotiation process under UNFCCC would have led to political deadlock, and (2) the Accord brought high-emitting developing countries into an international climate change process thus helping the US with pending domestic climate change legislation.

Yet the deadlock that was evident in the lead-up to Copenhagen was largely caused by huge gaps between developed and developing world positions. Many vulnerable developing countries, for instance, called on developed countries to make aggressive, legally binding commitments to reduce their GHG emissions based upon equity and capped at levels that would protect the most vulnerable poor countries from climate change effects.

Developing countries also wanted developed countries to commit to hundreds of billions of dollars a year in new, predictable funding for adaptation, prevention of deforestation programs, and technology transfer.

In fact, as ClimateEthics has explained in a prior post, developing country demands for adaptation funding were noticeably stronger in Copenhagen than in prior COPs. See, Two Climate Change Matters Move To Center Stage In Copenhagen With Profound Implications for Developed Nations: Ethcs and Adaptation, http://climateethics.org/?p=331 As we noted in this prior post, the two-week Copenhagen negotiations were marked by many meetings and speeches devoted to the justice dimensions of climate change, particularly regarding the need for developed countries to make emissions reductions commitments congruent with what science was saying was necessary to avoid dangerous climate change and to contribute significant amount of funding for adaptation in developing countries.

It was also true that in the lead-up to Copenhagen the developing nations' positions had become more sophisticated, specific, and strongly articulated than in previous COPs. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that all positions of developing countries were justified.

However, the reluctance of developed countries to make commitments for GHG emissions reductions at levels necessary to protect the most vulnerable indicated that the developing country demands in the lead-up to and during Copenhagen were in great conflict with developed countries' ability or political willingness to act.

Consequently, since the negotiations in the two years leading up to Copenhagen made little progress in resolving huge conflicts between developed and developing countries it was not likely that the two weeks that had been set out in Copenhagen would lead to a global climate change deal and finding another approach to breaking the deadlock became an attractive option.

Yet, if developed nations were willing to follow the normal negotiating procedures and make additional commitments on emissions reductions and funding for adaptation, deforestation programs, and technology transfer, some progress greater than achieved in the Copenhagen Accord might have been achieved. As a result, since developed countries were unwilling to make binding commitments sufficient to protect vulnerable developing countries, it is disingenuous for some developed countries to assert that the Copenhagen Accord was practically necessary because of the magnitude of the gaps between developed and developing countries as the size of these gaps have been caused to a great extent by the developed countries themselves.

That is, the appeal to practical necessity to justify the Accord must be seen in light of the unwillingness of developed countries to commit to do things that would be required of them if they

agreed to be bound by duties and responsibilities to developing countries and not just narrow economic self-interest.

It is also clear that because of the nineteen year failure in the UNFCCC negotiations to produce significant GHG emissions commitments, the gaps between what is needed to protect poor developing countries and the ability of developed countries to make these commitments have grown. This is so because each time a global solution to climate change is delayed, atmospheric concentrations of GHG continue to rise and the time for preventing dangerous climate change continues to get shorter. And so as delays in achieving a meaningful global solution to climate change have continued, promises from developed countries to take steps to protect developing countries have become more difficult to make because over time the commitments need to be more ambitious after each delay. Therefore the failure to reduce emissions in the past is making gaps between developed and developing countries' positions on climate change more intractable, a fact that should be seen as an ominous development for both developed and developing countries.

In negotiating the Accord, the United States pushed issues that it needed to resolve to pass pending US climate change legislation at the expense of issues that were important to protecting the poorest developing countries from climate change. For instance,

o The US commitments on GHG emissions reductions leading up to Copenhagen had been 17% below 2005 emissions levels, which was only 4% below 1990 levels, a baseline supported by most other countries and the baseline endorsed by the Kyoto Protocol. This made the US proposal on reductions commitments the weakest among developed countries, yet consistent with a bill passesd by the United States House of Representatives. In Copenhagen, as noted above, President Obama's hands were tied by his inability to make commitments that were not likely to be enacted by US domestic legislation and therefore President Obama could not practically go beyond the commitments in the US House climate change bill. As a result of this practical constraint, when President Obama negotiated the Accord, he successfully pushed for making emissions reductions commitments from developed countries completely voluntary.

o When President Obama addressed the Copenhagen high-level segment he asserted that the US's two main requirements for Copenhagen were to: (a) set emissions reductions by large emitters; and (b) that these emissions reductions were internationally verifiable. (Guérin and Wemaere. 2009) The United States insisted on getting large developing countries to make further commitments despite the fact that it had been previously decided in Bali that developing countries could develop non-binding NAMAs. As we have seen, this US interest in additional developing country commitments was motivated by US domestic pressure to avoid emissions reductions commitments in Copenhagen unless large developing countries commit to reduce their emissions. As we shall see in the next section, the position that the United States need not reduce its emissions to its fair share of safe global emissions until others make such commitments is ethically dubious even if it reflects political reality in the United States. In addition, even if one assumes that President Obama's hands were tied by domestic political considerations, a case can be made the failure of the US president to make the case to the American people that in addition to US economic interests in climate change policies the United States has ethical obligations, duties, and responsibilities to other nations can be understood to be an ethical failure or a failure of leadership.

o Even though the United States demanded that China commit to a verification process, the United States conceded to China's demands to remove from the Copenhagen Accord provisions requiring all parties to achieve a 50% reduction by 2050, developed countries to reduce by 80% by 2050, and the 1.5 C warming target of great interest to small island states and low-lying nations that have the most to lose from rising seas. (Milliband, 2009). As we shall see in the next section, these omissions are ethically dubious.

o The Accord did not resolve an issue that put the United States at odds with many developed countries, namely whether the developed countries commitments would be integrated into an extension of the Kyoto Protocol. The United States had resisted proposals from other developed countries to build the second commitment period on the architecture of the Kyoto Protocol during the entire two year lead-up to Copenhagen because the United States had never ratified the Kyoto Protocol and saw little domestic political support for doing so.

From these considerations it can be argued that the United States got essentially what it wanted in the Copenhagen Accord including the following:

- The Accord sets no additional obligations for the US other than what it plans to do domestically.

- The United States obtained verification of developing countries' actions and especially China, an achievement which should help the United States with its domestic legislation in light of the fact that many opposed to the US legislation objected to the lack of commitments by China.

- The United States obviated the need to join the Kyoto Protocol, a step that was politically impossible in the United States.

From the US point of view, the Copenhagen Accord was a good deal. This result is not insignificant even to other members of the international community if the concessions in the Accord from large developing countries leads to US domestic legislation because the world needs the United States to join the community of nations working to reduce the threat of climate change. For this reason, even though the Copenhagen Accord was seen as a very weak outcome by many EU countries, if the United States can now move to pass domestic climate change legislation allowing it to make legally binding commitments, then international negotiations can regroup in Mexico City to achieve some of the goals originally hoped for in Copenhagen and laid out in the Bali Action Plan.
However, from the standpoint of developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to climate change, the Accord is a potential disaster because the Accord:

- Makes no reference to a future legally binding instrument.

- Allows developed countries to commit to both emissions reduction levels and funding for developing country needs for adaptation, deforestation prevention programs, and technology transfer at any level politically acceptable to the developed country.

- Will likely lead to a 3°C or even 3.5°C increase based on current pledges from the developed countries, putting many developing countries at a very high risk, despite its 2°C long-term temperature limit as a goal of the UNFCCC.

- Does not take a decision on the future of the Kyoto Protocol. The Kyoto Protocol includes many provisions that benefit developing countries including the Clean Development Mechanisms, a baseline year for emissions reduction of 1990, and legally binding commitments of developed countries.

- Makes no progress on the requirement in the UNFCCC, that nations reduce their emissions based upon "equity."

- Gives control over future climate change policy to large emitters which is good if these big emitters reduce their emissions to levels required by justice and responsibility to developing countries. Yet because these big emitters now have more control over their emissions reductions commitment levels under the approach taken by the Accord that allows pledging of commitments without the pressure to satisfy the developing countries in a negotiated process, the large emitters are more than ever likely to adopt climate change emissions policies guided by national economic interest, not at levels that duties and obligations to developing countries would require. For this reason, the good news is that the Copenhagen Accord made the large emitters larger players in the international approach to climate change, yet the bad news is that the Accord makes the large emitters key players in the international approach to climate change, an outcome that also diminishes the power of the poor, most vulnerable nations.

All of this makes the United States domestic climate change legislation enormously important for the international community. Many nations finally agreed to the Copenhagen Accord because they were hopeful that the United States might soon pass meaningful domestic climate change legislation before the next meeting of international negotiations in November in Mexico City. An so, after over twenty years of international climate change negotiations, the world is still waiting for the United States.
What happened in Copenhagen makes US action on climate change a key to any hope that the world will finally adopt a global solution to climate change. Although bi-lateral and more regional solutions to climate change can continue, these negotiations will take place without the need to satisfy the demands of the most vulnerable developing countries. Since there is no reason to believe that in the absence of pressure from developing countries, the developed countries will reduce their emissions based upon "equity," a change in the locus of international climate change

negotiations to bi-lateral or regional levels almost guarantees that economic interests of nations will loom even larger in the future in determining their future climate change positions .

Unfortunately there is little evidence that the United States is on a track to adopt climate change policies and programs that would represent its fair share of safe global emissions. In addition, as we shall see, the US approach to the Copenhagen Accord was based on several ethically dubious assumptions.

In summary, the Copenhagen Accord must be seen as a disaster for developing countries if developed countries continue to make commitments insufficient to prevent dangerous climate change. As we shall see in the next section, there is little reason to believe that developed countries are willing to commit to actions that represent what ethics and justice would require of them. .

V. Ethical Analysis of Copenhagen Accord

In the lead-up to Copenhagen, ClimateEthics identified ethical criteria that any Copenhagen agreement would have to satisfy, see ***Minimum Ethical Criteria For All Post-Kyoto Regime Proposals: What Does Ethics Require of A Copenhagen Outcome*** http://climateethics.org /?p=50,
In this prior analysis, ClimateEthics concluded that any proposed post-Kyoto regime must as a matter of at a minimum:

- Require sufficient greenhouse emissions reductions to assure that the international community is on a greenhouse gas emissions reduction pathway that will prevent dangerous climate change harm. This is sometimes referred to as the environmental sufficiency criteria.
- Begin to base differences among national allocations on the basis of equity and justice. This is sometimes referred to as the equity criteria.

In addition to these criteria previously identified to guide ethical analysis of a post-Kyoto regime, the rise in importance in the adaptation agenda and the almost certain fact that it is too late to protect poor countries from the need to cope with adaptation issues, there is clearly a need to add additional ethical criteria for evaluating second commitment period regimes under the UNFCCC. That is, any proposed post-Kyoto regime must:

- Assure that those responsible for climate change provide adequate, predictable adaptation funding to enable developing countries and in particular the most vulnerable developing countries to do what is necessary to avoid climate change damages in cases where it is possible to take action and to prevent damages, or be compensated for climate change damages in cases where it is impossible to take protective action. We will refer to this as the just adaptation criteria

These three criteria, that is environmental sufficiency, equity, and just adaptation constitute the minimum ethical considerations that any climate regime must satisfy, they don't capture all ethical questions raised by climate change. In fact ClimateEthics has identified many civilization challenging ethical questions that the need be considered in adopting climate change policies. Yet these criteria are the minimum ethical considerations that any new climate change regime must meet.
As the world approached the Copenhagen negotiations in late summer of 2009, ClimateEthics examined the specific positions of nations and concluded that some nations were taking positions on the Copenhagen agenda as if GHG emissions reduction commitments can be guided by national interest alone and not responses to international ethical duties and obligations. For this reason, ClimateEthics concluded that the major emitters were approaching Copenhagen in a way that appeared to be avoiding their ethical obligations and acting as if narrow national economic interest is a valid justification for their climate change positions. Yet, ethics would require these nations to act in accordance with duties and responsibilities to other vulnerable nations, not self-interest alone.

The Copenhagen Accord and the way it was negotiated does nothing to change the conclusion that most nations failed to live up to their ethical obligations in approaching Copenhagen. In fact, as we shall see, many of the considerations that seemed to be the driving forces behind the content of the Copenhagen Accord are based upon ethically problematic assumptions and premises.

a. Environmental Sufficiency Criteria.

Not only does the Copenhagen Accord fail to require sufficient GHG emissions reductions to assure that the international community is on a GHG emissions reduction pathway that will prevent dangerous climate change harm, the emissions reductions commitments that have been identified under the Accord almost guarantee that millions of poor people, plants, animals, an ecosystems will be harmed by climate change if the consensus science position turns out to be correct.

Although it is still possible that nations in the next few years will revise upward their GHG emissions reductions commitments to levels that will protect the most vulnerable people and countries, very recent science has concluded that the world is running out of time to do this.

As we have seen, the Copenhagen Accord does set a target that nations should work together to limit human caused additional heating to 2°C. There are, however, several ethical problems with this target. They include the following:

- Any additional warming from current levels is ethically problematic because current temperatures are already dangerous for some vulnerable people around the world and an additional 1 °C temperature rise is already locked in by prior emissions. Because any additional warming from current levels could have serious consequences to those most vulnerable to climate change, those who are most vulnerable should have as a matter of procedural justice rights to consent to put at risk by the additional 2°C goal adopted in the Accord. Yet, some of the most vulnerable nations in Copenhagen wanted the Copenhagen outcome to adopt a 1.5 °C goal. Although the Copenhagen Accord specifies that the 1.5 °C can be reconsidered in five years, many scientists would argue that since global peaking of GHG emissions must take place in the next few years and therefore waiting five years virtually guarantees that the 1. 5°C is unachievable.

- The Copenhagen Accord appeared to reject an idea that was under consideration in the negotiating text that world needed to set not just a temperature limit goal but needed to commit to an atmospheric GHG concentration level that would give any temperature goal practical significance. To give the warming target practical meaning it is necessary to identify an atmospheric GHG concentration goal because there is scientific uncertainty about how much warming will be produced by different levels of atmospheric GHG concentrations, a scientific issue usually referred to as the "climate sensitivity" problem. Therefore, if the international community is serious about protecting vulnerable people it must take a position on climate sensitivity by adopting a atmospheric GHG concentration goal. The negotiating text under consideration before the Copenhagen Accord contained unresolved alternative atmospheric GHG concentration goals such as 350 and 450 parts per million of CO2. Only by adopting an atmospheric GHG concentration target, can anyone analyze the sufficiency of national commitments. And so the 2°C warming limit adopted by the Accord is virtually worthless in determining whether national emissions reductions commitments are adequate to protect human health and the environment from climate change.

- There is substantial scientific evidence that even the 1.5 °C temperature limit would not be sufficient to protect those most vulnerable to climate change. For instance, a recent paper by Jim Hansen and seven other authors concluded that additional warming should be limited to 1°C warming and to do this existing atmospheric concentrations of CO2 must not only not be allowed to rise the small amount to 450 ppm of carbon equivalent but must be reduced from existing levels of 385 ppm to 350 ppm CO2. (Hansen et al 2008) According to this paper, the world has likely already shot past the level of atmospheric concentrations that will lead to dangerous climate change for many. Under this view, the world has already used up all of the assimilative capacity of the atmosphere and biosphere that has been available to buffer against dangerous climate change. Given this, a strong ethical argument can be made that all nations have a duty to try to prevent additional warming of almost any amount, while the Copenhagen Accord legitimizes an additional 2°C warming. Given that the Copenhagen Accord can also be understood to legitimize any national GHG emissions target that is proposed voluntarily, even if it is insufficient to achieve the 2°C temperature limit goal adopted by the Accord, let alone the duty to try and prevent any additional warming, the Accord is ethically problematic. Given that a case can be made that current levels atmospheric GHG concentrations are already harming or putting people and ecosystems at risk, it is difficult to make an ethically acceptable case that atmospheric GHG concentration targets higher than current levels are justified unless consent is given by those who are already being harmed by warming. Yet the Copenhagen Accord assumes that an additional 2°C warming is acceptable.The national GHG emissions reduction commitments that have been identified to be included in the Annex to the Copenhagen Accord are not sufficient to even achieve the 2°C temperature limit goal. As one commentator has explained:

1. As a group, the Copenhagen commitments for the biggest emitters, if confirmed, would imply a 28% increase of emissions above the 1990 level.
2. Compared with the business-as-usual scenario for those countries, emissions would be reduced by 21%.
3. Assuming that the rest of the world continues on a business-as-usual path, global emissions

would increase to about 48 gigatons of carbon dioxide equivalent (GT CO2-eq) by 2020. This represents a 29% increase with respect to 1990, a 5% increase with respect to 2005 and a 16% reduction with respect to business-as-usual

4. The Copenhagen declarations are clearly insufficient to control global warming below 2°C - even if they are substantial when compared with the business-as-usual scenario. What at first glance seemed like good news - the emission-reduction declarations - turns out to be bad news. The declarations are inconsistent with the 2°C temperature target, even though the target is reiterated in the Copenhagen Accord itself. (Carraro and Massetti, 2010)

For this reason, the Copenhagen Accord is ethically problematic because it appears to legitimize emissions reductions commitments that are inconsistent with its temperature limit goal.
We have also seen that the United States approached negotiations of the Copenhagen Accord as if the United States need not make emissions reductions commitments unless it could secure commitments to reduce GHG emissions from high-emitting developing countries.

A prior ClimateEthics post examined in detail whether one nation may make its emissions reduction commitments contingent upon other nations' promises to do so. See, **Ethical Issues Raised By US Blue Dog Democratic Senators' Opposition to Climate Legislation - When May a Nation Make Domestic GHG Reduction Commitments Contingent on Other Nations' Actions,** http://climateethics.org/?p=206. In that post, ClimateEthics concluded that no nation may deny its duty to reduce its emissions to its fair share of safe global emissions on the basis that others who are contributing to the harm have failed to cease harmful behavior. This is so because no nation or person has a right to continue destructive behavior on the basis that others who are contributing to the harm have not ceased their destructive behavior.

And so, if some nations are not willing to reduce their emissions to levels consistent with what justice requires of them, no nation, including the United States, can refuse to reduce its emissions to its fair share of safe global emissions levels on the basis that others won't act.

Although the United States is well within its rights to obtain promises of other nations to contribute to solving the climate change problem, it may not as a matter of ethics condition its willingness to reduce its emissions to levels required by justice on other nations' behavior. That is, although it may be in everyone's interest if the United States encourages others to make GHG emissions reductions commitments, the United States may not refuse to reduce its emissions to its fair share of safe global emissions on the basis that others have not acted. The United States could ethically link non-obligatory climate change actions on other's participation in climate change solutions but must agree to do what ethics requires of it in reducing emissions without regard to the actions of others.

Therefore, from the standpoint of the environmental sufficiency goal, the Accord fails to satisfy the requirement that any post-Kyoto regime must assure that the international community is on a greenhouse gas emissions reduction pathway that will prevent dangerous climate change harm.

b. Equity Criteria

The second minimum ethical criteria that all Copenhagen proposals must meet is the requirement that emissions reduction proposals must be consistent with what "equity" and "justice" demands of them. In a prior post on this matter, ClimateEthics explored in detail what the equity criteria would require of nations in any second commitment period climate regime. See, **Nations Must Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions To Their Fair Share of Safe Global Emissions Without Regard To What Other Nations Do**,http://climateethics.org/?p=37. Summarizing a much longer analysis on equity in this prior post, equity requires that each nation reduce its emissions to its fair share of safe global emissions. And so, each nation's emissions reduction levels should be based upon what distributive and retributive justice demands, not on national self-interest. Although there are different theories of distributive justice that lead to different national allocations, many justifications for national GHG emissions allocations fail to satisfy any ethical scrutiny. In other words, it is not necessary to know what perfect justice requires to conclude that some proposals for national GHG allocations are unjust. One such common approach to national GHG emissions reductions commitments that fails to satisfy any ethical scrutiny is the claim that all nations must reduce emissions by the same amount without regard to whether a nation is a large or small contributor to the climate change problem, an approach often referred to as 'grandfathering' or equal reductions from existing emissions levels. It would appear that some of the national commitments that will be included in the Accord are based upon grandfathering emissions reductions from existing levels.

Since most nations entered the Copenhagen negotiations as if national interest rather than global responsibility to others was an adequate basis for national climate change policies, the Copenhagen Accord has failed to satisfy equity criteria. In fact, in the lead-up to Copenhagen, most of the justifications for national commitments that had been announced by countries to reduce emissions were exclusively focused on whether they met global goals to reduce GHG emissions unadjusted by equity considerations

There have been several proposals discussed by the international community about second commitment period frameworks that would expressly incorporate equity into future GHG emissions reductions pathways. Two such frameworks are known as "Contraction and

Convergence" (C&C, 2009) and "Greenhouse Development Rights" (GDR) (Bear and Athanasiou, 2009) frameworks. In the lead-up to Copenhagen, all major GHG emitting nations ignored the C&C or GDR frameworks or any other comprehensive framework that took equity into account. In fact, the Copenhagen Accord allows each nation to identify its emissions reduction commitment based upon voluntary national considerations without regard to equity.

Therefore, the Copenhagen Accord is a complete failure in satisfying equity criteria.

c. Just Adaptation Criteria

The third minimum ethical criteria for judging any second commitment period under the UNFCCC is that it must provide adequate funding to support adaptation programs in developing countries given that some developing countries have done nothing to cause climate change and must take steps to avoid harsh impacts.

As ClimateEthics reported previously, in Copenhagen there was a huge blossoming of interest in adaptation to climate change and the linking of the adaptation agenda to everything else. All of a sudden the world has awoken to specific adaptation questions such as: (a) Who is going to pay for climate change damages?, (b) How should these monies be administered?, (c) To whom should they go?, (d) How to set priorities among adaptation needs, and (e) How much money will be made available for growing adaptation needs? From the standpoint of the poorest developing countries, adaptation issues have been a high priority for some time but now these issues are high on the negotiating agenda for all because every day it is becoming more difficult to prevent climate change damages. In fact, for some parts of the world adverse climate change impacts are not a future threat but a present reality

Over the last several years, developing countries have pushed the adaptation agenda to center stage in international climate change negotiations. In Bali, a decision was made to create a new adaptation fund as part of the UNFCCC climate change architecture and to put adaptation on an equal footing with mitigation. For the last few years, adaptation has been growing in importance in international climate change negotiations, yet the energy, force, manner, and specificity with which the adaptation agenda is being negotiated is new.
For instance, for the first time some developing countries succeeded in getting the words "ecological debt" into the negotiating text. One proposed paragraph provides:

The guiding principles of the Convention should support subparagraphs (b) and (c) above, in terms of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, historical responsibilities in greenhouse gas emissions and the related historical ecological debt generated by the cumulative greenhouse gas emissions since 1750 and the most recent scientific information. (UNFCCC, doc 14, page 17)

The negotiating text leading up to Copenhangen called adaptation "urgent" and provides that the "polluters shall pay" through "mandatory" contributions for "new, predictable, and additional sources of funding" for:
• vulnerability assessments,
• adaptation planning,
• adaptation implementation,
• short-term shocks and long-term climate shifts,
• special funding amounts for particularly vulnerable countries including small island states and African countries affected by desertification, droughts and floods,
• disaster readiness and relief,
• creation of a new international body under the UNFCCC to monitor and determine adaptation needs, assess capacity building needs of developing countries, oversee the creation of adaptation funds, and creation of national adaptation funding,
• creation of regional adaptation centers, and
• creation of new international adaptation committees that collect, analyze, and disseminate information on adaptation.

Yet, it was the amount of the adaptation funding agenda identified in the negotiating text that has profound historical significance for developed countries. According to one provision in the proposed negotiation text, funding for adaptation should be in the range of $70 to $140 billion per year until 2020 and then updated after. Another proposal calls for mandatory adaptation in the amount of 0.5 % of GDP for developed countries.

As we have seen, the Accord acknowledges that enhanced action and international cooperation on adaptation are urgently required in developing countries, especially in the least developed countries, the small island states, and Africa. The Accord also states that that developed countries shall provide adequate, predictable and sustainable financial resources, technology and capacity building to support adaptation. Yet, as we have also seen, the United States expressly denied that this funding is a duty or responsibility but a matter of "largess."

Although short- and long-term funding amounts for a variety of developing country climate change needs are also recognized in the Accord, this document does not acknowledge that this funding is in fulfillment of national responsibilities and in fact may be satisfied from 'public and private' sources.

In the Accord, the developed nations only promised to take steps to mobilize funding from a variety of sources, not provide dedicated funding sources.

As we have seen above, the assertion that the United States has no duties for adaptation was

made by US chief negotiator Todd Stern who said:
I actually completely reject the notion of a debt or reparations or anything of the like. For most of the 200 years since the Industrial Revolution, people were blissfully ignorant of the fact that emissions caused a greenhouse effect. It's a relatively recent phenomenon. (Revkin and Zeller, 2009)

And so, the United States's denial of responsibility for adaptation appears to be based upon lack of knowledge of harm. Although there are some interesting ethical questions about when this responsibility should start, the international community could have been put on notice of potential climate change harms on the following dates:
o In 1824, Joseph Fourier described the greenhouse effect for the first time
o In 1894, Swedish chemist Svante Arrhenius calculated that a doubling of CO2 would increase global temperatures by 5 0 C.
o In the late 1950s, direct measurements of atmospheric CO2 demonstrated rising levels in direct proportion to fossil fuel use around the world,
o In 1965, President Johnson's Scientific Advisory Committee warned that climate change was a "real concern."
o In the 1970s computer model based studies were warning the world that climate change would create adverse climate change impacts.
o In 1981, Albert Gore organized a climate change hearing on Capitol Hill.
o In 1985, scientists at Villach, Austria conference reached consensus that global warming was happening and international treaties were needed to curb emissions.
o In 1988. the UN-led Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established to assess state of knowledge on climate change.
o 1990, IPCC issued its first report concluding that climate change was a serious problem.

And so the United States cannot deny that it was on notice about the harms of climate change for many decades and certainly at the very latest by 1990. Therefore, if responsibility for harms starts upon notice of potential harm, a strong claim can be made that all developed countries have been on notice for many decades.

Because the Copenhagen Accord made no binding commitments on the part of developed countries for adaptation and provides no reliable adaptation funding mechanism, The Copenhagen Accord must be understood to fail the just adaptation criteria.

VI. Conclusions-Climate Change Ethics after Copenhagen.

The Copenhagen Accord is ethically problematic for reasons stated in this post among other reasons. In summary, the commitments made by nations in the Accord are not environmentally sufficient, distributively just, nor provide for just adaptation responses for vulnerable developing countries.

The next climate change negotiations will take place in Mexico City in November 2010. Although it is possible that developed nations will take more ethically responsible positions on an urgently needed global climate change solution, the world is running out of time to do this according to the consensus scientific view

The longer the world waits to reduce its GHG emissions, the more important and expensive will be the adaptation agenda and the steeper emissions reductions commitments will need to be to protect vulnerable developing countries. Each failure to develop a global solution to a climate change regime will make it more difficult to forge a just climate change regime.

It would appear that US domestic action on climate change is a key to success at the international level. In the months ahead there are sure to be many arguments made against US climate change legislation in the United States. If these arguments follow past patterns, they will predominantly be claims based on narrow, short-term national economic self-interest devoid of any recognition of duties, responsibilities, and obligations to others to prevent climate change If this is the case, those interested in an ethically justifiable global solution to climate change need to turn up the volume on the ethical problems with US climate change responses.

As ClimateEthics has previously pointed out, the US press has utterly failed to emphasize the ethical dimensions of climate change and as a result most Americans see little problem with judging national climate change policies on the basis of national economic interest. As a result, ethics and justice are the crucial missing elements in the US national conversation about climate change policies.

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Categories: Adaptation and Responsibility for Damages, Allocation Issues, Atmospheric Targets, Contraction and Convergence, Copenhagen, Distributive and International Justice, Economics and Cost, General Climate Ethics, Independent Responsibility to Act, Mitigation, Procedural Justice and Fair Process

Tags: climate change adaptation, climate change ethics, climate change science, copenhagen accord, equity and climate change, ethics and the environment, global ethics, global justice, international climate change negotiations, Kyoto Protocol, United States and climate change

3 TRACKBACKS

TrackBack URL: https://blogs.psu.edu/mt4/mt-tb.cgi/161526

from Greenhouse Development Rights » 01-03-2010 on March 2, 2010 6:23 PM

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5 COMMENTS

Nelson T. Enojo | January 31, 2010 8:54 PM | Reply

Good morning to you all:

We need more practical green actions on the ground, viz:

1. Turning Garbage Into Compost Into Trees - http://www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=16250&id=722418233&l=0f2012b4fd

2. Compost product in landfills going to schools for Tree Plant Nursery - http://www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=133817&id=722418233&l=27083e1ddf

3. Creating a workable target for Solidarity - http://www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=146436&id=722418233&l=912e62b9e9

The Restore Green Movement of Maasin City, Southern Leyte, Philippines lessons learned after decades of COP Meetings. More Practical Green Actions on the ground.

Prabhakar & Vijayaprabhakar | February 4, 2010 12:48 AM | Reply

we are thankful t o read your intiative of brining out coopenhegen accords.is very edcuative. we think, that it requires an united effort in groud -grassroot leves to build remdies in the field investigaiton level, by exploring the difficulties, and upgrade it by building resources. than working , under conventions, and meets.As a cooperative movement is urgently needed,with an understanding of the situation , and thse summits doesnt guide, us to faster action of GHG mitigation.planning is more urgently needed.

Nelson T. Enojo | February 20, 2010 7:57 PM | Reply

Inspired by the Copenhagen Climate Summit, I spent my whole Saturday afternoon yesterday burning PLASTIC Garbage in one of our local schools in the neighborhood at their front gate along the main street in our city.

It is definitely against policies both local & national but using the logic of the CDM, we can offset the toxic emission. Should toxic gasses is real, I would be the first to die. Without any protection, I continued burning until late in the evening under the big acasia tree to minimize the spread of toxic fumes spreading in adjacent houses.

It feels good doing the opposite and plans to continue burning non-biodegradable trash in the days to come. We only have the "darkage" technology of fire and we might as well utilized this present technology to solve our perenial garbage problem.

Our simple practical solution to the expensive bio-char production of rich nations.

Why not.

Nelson T. Enojo | February 22, 2010 9:27 PM | Reply

As a 3rd world country and one of the most depressed provinces in the Philippines, we have dengue strikes every now and then. Maybe we can utilize these plastic trash & burn it in our rooms, buildings, offices & working areas to replace expensive fumigating agents and the commercially produce mosquito killers.

We have tried this in our sleeping quarters and all the mosquitoes "run" away after burning only a can full of plastic wrappers. We use it to cook our food too.

It might be also one solution to attain zero waste in our schools.

This experiment is 3 days old and hope local enforcement agencies will not notice, hehehe...

I Love you guys, you have opened our eyes and Copenhagen will never be a failure. It inspires to act.

Chennai Social Media | July 22, 2010 12:55 PM | Reply

Very interesting post on Copenhagen Accord.

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