

JANUARY 1-15, 2010

SCIENCE AND ENVIRONMENT FORTNIGHTLY

# Down To Earth

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Countries agreed on a plan to tackle climate change in Bali in 2007. Two years later in Copenhagen, they skipped to the convenience of a non-solution. Problem: there is only one planet

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## COPENHAGEN

# ACCORDING TO

Copenhagen climate talks were indeed historic. For their failure. In Bali in 2007, negotiators laid out the roadmap for a deal and gave themselves two years. The formula was simple and ethical: rich countries would cut emissions by 40 per cent below 1990 levels, by 2020, and put new money on the table. In exchange, emerging economies would join the effort, reducing emissions growth at home enabled by finance and technology from industrialized countries.

At Copenhagen, unfortunately, industrialized countries sabotaged all possibilities of progress. They had something else in mind. When the COP-15 (Conference of Parties) started, negotiators were barely closer to a deal than they had been in Bali. If anything there had been regression during the last one year of negotiations.

But failure was not an option. One hundred and ten heads of state were flying to Copenhagen to sign a declaration; they could not all return with their pens unused. More than that, the Nobel prize-winning US president had to emerge as a dealmaker. So in the final 48 hours, negotiators—who had laboured for years for a comprehensive deal—were brushed aside; heads of state, ministers and their top advisers took over.

Leaders started making deals in secret, in the middle of the night, in backrooms, on the fly. Carrots were offered; sticks were wielded. In the end, industrialized countries, with the last-minute complicity of India and China, penned an alarmingly weak deal—the so-called Copenhagen Accord—that appears designed to undermine the negotiations to date. Certain basic rules seem to have been changed forever. Under the captaincy of the US, historical responsibility of the developed world in creating the climate crisis has been erased. The differentiation between rich and poor countries is gone. The rich world does not want to reduce emissions, but is trying hard to stunt the development of the poor world.

The Copenhagen Accord was not officially endorsed. A few developing countries vocally opposed the document and the drafting process. But the accord—rather than any of the documents drafted through two years of multilateral negotiations—emerged as Copenhagen's only substantive outcome. It could well become the new starting point for future negotiations. This will be disastrous for the developing world.

*Down To Earth* brings you a detailed account of how negotiations unfolded, broke down, and were “saved” in Copenhagen. It is as if, in the final days, world leaders decided that climate change was too complicated, too strategic an issue to be left to transparent negotiations; they had to take it into their own hands.

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US President Barack Obama (right) in talks with European leaders

REUTERS

It took two sleepless nights to create the Copenhagen Accord. The first 11 days of formal negotiations (December 7-17) could not produce an agreement to prevent global warming. Amid walkouts and suspensions of meetings of delegates, developing countries kept trying to ready a draft deal to show to their heads of states when they arrived at the Danish capital. It did not happen. For the first time in the history of the United Nations it was left to the heads of states to write the text of the climate deal.

So on December 17 as desperation grew, leaders of some 26 countries sat down to hammer out an agreement. US President Barack Obama had not yet arrived, but some of his thoughts were relayed by US secretary of state Hillary Clinton. In the afternoon Clinton criticized China for not allowing international scrutiny of measures it took to

reduce emissions. At the same time she dangled a bait of \$100 billion to developing economies for fighting and adapting to climate change by 2020.

China, which was dead against international monitoring, review and verification of its domestically funded mitigation actions, softened its stand. At a press conference after Clinton finished her briefing, Chinese vice-foreign minister He Yafei announced his country could discuss international scrutiny with the US as long as it did not overstep its sovereignty. A little before midnight news spread about a Copenhagen draft at Bella Centre, the conference venue. Earlier in the day the Indian environment minister Jairam Ramesh had hinted at an alternative draft being prepared by the European Union.

At midnight, negotiators of the four big developing economies (Brazil, South Africa, India and China, together

referred to as BASIC) and ambassadors of Africa and G77+China disappeared behind closed doors for a quick meeting. The Indian delegation that emerged out of the meeting said it was hopeful of an agreement by 3 pm on December 18, just in time for the heads of states to announce a deal, albeit political and legally non-binding.

As the rest of Copenhagen slept on the cold December night, bleary-eyed negotiators haggled over the contents of the draft. The first agreement draft was leaked to the media at about 6 am. It still did not have a name but was called Copenhagen [X]. This draft was believed to have been prepared by leaders of a handful of countries led by British Prime Minister Gordon Brown. The Danish government, which till then was seen as helping the US, EU and Australia in steering talks towards a political deal, was now out of the picture as far as

drafting the deal was concerned. Several negotiators said the Danes had failed miserably to lead the process.

Africa and the Alliance of Small Island States were not happy with the draft—it did not have a clause limiting temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

### ENTER OBAMA

Obama's flight landed a little after 8 am. Most of the heads of states were in Copenhagen on the morning of December 18, but there was still no agreement on key issues between big players like the US and China. Postponing his morning speech, Obama dashed to meet leaders of some 20 states. China was missing from this meeting, but was reportedly represented by Ethiopia. Brazil too missed the meeting. Obama also had a separate meeting with the Chinese premier. No breakthrough yet.

After the 3 pm deadline passed many heads of states began preparing to leave. Copenhagen talks had failed, went the buzz. It was seen as a big public relations failure for the US president. The American administration had made it clear from the outset Obama's visit could not be termed a failure.

As the day wore on to evening, Obama decided to give it one more shot. He arranged to meet the leaders of the BASIC group. He arrived about 10 minutes before the appointed time. The group



*Last-minute deliberations among BASIC leaders to reach a compromise*

Even before the deal was shown to other countries Obama made a hasty exit from the meeting and announced to a few select US journalists that an agreement had been reached.

The Copenhagen Accord was a vaguely worded, three-page political document. "This was the chaotic, disastrous denouement of a chaotic and disastrous summit," said environment writer George Monbiot in a column in the British newspaper *The Guardian*.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon was cautiously optimistic. From exhorting countries to "write a different future" with a fair, ambitious and

Only Obama and BASIC leaders—Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Chinese premier Wen Jiabao, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and South African President Jacob Zuma—authored the final deal. About 25 countries were consulted later (see: *Privy parties*).

The accord was then put before the delegates as a *fait accompli*. Danish Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen, presiding over the plenary, gave delegates one hour to go over the document and sign the accord. The US delegation and UK climate change secretary Ed Miliband threatened developing countries they would not get money if they did not sign the deal.

The ALBA group of Latin American countries threatened a walkout. Venezuelan delegate Claudia Salerno Caldera said, "Mr President, I ask whether, under the eye of the UN secretary general, you are going to endorse this coup d'état against the authority of the UN." Bolivian and Cuban delegates also criticized the accord, while delegates from

## **A handful of participants drafted the accord behind closed doors, disregarding the views of the majority. It was then put forward as a *fait accompli* to be signed in an hour**

up was in a meeting but to leave him waiting outside would have been a breach of protocol, so BASIC countries let him in. "We really need a deal," Obama reportedly said. "It's better that we take one step forward rather than two steps back. I'm willing to be flexible." This interruption was not looked on too kindly by the group leaders, but they were soon sitting down to discuss the details of a face-saving deal—not a deal that would reduce emissions or prevent runaway climate change. They hoped the deal would save the Copenhagen conference and, more importantly, let them believe they had achieved something.

comprehensive agreement a few days earlier, he climbed down to say: "It (accord) may not be everything we hoped for, but this decision of the Conference of Parties is an essential beginning...The importance will only be recognized when it's codified into international law."

### A HUSH-HUSH AFFAIR

Ban's optimism could hardly paper over the clandestine manner in which the accord was drawn up by a small number of participants behind closed doors. It disregarded the views of the majority of the delegates, civil society and scientists.

### Privy parties

Representatives of India, China, Brazil, South Africa, Bangladesh, Maldives, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Papua New Guinea, Australia, Russia, Mexico, Colombia, Grenada, Algeria, Sudan, Gabon, Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Spain, US, Denmark and EU were consulted for the Copenhagen Accord



many industrialized nations and small island states urged all to back the deal.

Civil society groups were also disgusted at secretive negotiations. Entry to the conference venue for observers, NGOs and the media was severely restricted for the second week. The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) secretariat had registered over 46,000 delegates when the centre could accommodate only 15,000. On the last two days, only 300 NGOs were allowed into Bella Centre. These included only 54 representatives from environmental groups.

It helped keep criticism at bay to muscle through a weak deal the developed countries, particularly the US, wanted.

#### HOW THE TALKS WERE DERAILED

Obama could spring the wishy-washy deal in eleventh hour because formal negotiation had come to a standstill. Two working groups had been preparing the framework of the agreement at Copenhagen. One was negotiating the second phase (post-2012) of the Kyoto Protocol and the other long-term coop-

erative action. There were a lot of outstanding issues. In fact, before Copenhagen various climate analysts had given up hopes of a legally binding treaty. But no one imagined talks would break down.

Developed countries kept delaying the negotiations. The US blocked placing targets for deeper emission cuts in the group working on long-term action, while Japan and Australia blocked targets in the group working on the Kyoto Protocol.

On December 17, after the two working groups sat overnight to prepare the drafts, the Danish chair of the conference told them Denmark was readying its own drafts.

When delegates questioned the Danish proposal the chair suspended the plenary.

#### BREACH OF TRUST

Developed countries had been planning to subvert the Kyoto Protocol ever since the Bali Action Plan was prepared in 2007. The plan laid out the four-fold roadmap for climate change action—mitigation, adaptation, technology and

finance. It was essentially a mandate to finalize two things: one, the emission reduction commitments of rich countries for the second phase of the Kyoto Protocol, and two, the global goals for long-term cooperative action till 2050. These negotiations were to conclude at Copenhagen.

Since the Bonn meeting in March developed countries, one after another, started to abandon the Bali process, asking for a new deal at Copenhagen. By the Bangkok meeting in October it was clear they had only one agenda: kill the Kyoto Protocol (See 'Race to kill Kyoto Protocol', *Down To Earth*, November 1-15, 2009). Issues relating to binding emission cuts by rich nations and financial assistance to poor countries were completely shut out. Instead the rich nations wanted voluntary domestic commitments.

The last night in Copenhagen was the culmination of this campaign.

The Copenhagen Accord is neither fair, nor ambitious and is far from being comprehensive. If anything, it destroys the very nature of the multilateral process. The accord is not legally bind-

*Eva Morales of Bolivia and Hugo Chavez of Venezuela led the vociferous protests against secretive and undemocratic deals*



ing and contains no details on long-term cooperative action, emission targets for developed nations and nationally appropriate mitigation actions for developing nations. There is no clear promise on finance either.

"A clearer and less destructive treaty than the text that emerged would be a sheaf of blank paper which every negotiating party solemnly sits down to sign," Monbiot said. He is not the only one critical of the deal. Bernarditas de Castro Muller, a former chief negotiator for G77 and China now negotiating for Sudan, called the summit a "complete breakdown of trust among parties".

The Copenhagen Accord will erase the historical responsibility of industrialized nations to clean up greenhouse gases and blur the distinction between industrialized and non-industrialized countries when it comes to taking on commitments to reduce emissions. It will prevent science-based targets for global emissions and fatally undermine efforts to decide on second-phase targets under the Kyoto Protocol.

The accord changes the nature of environmental agreements. From the legally binding Kyoto Protocol, the world has now agreed to a political deal. While it does endorse continuing negotiations on a legally binding agreement as per the Bali Action Plan, its proposed pledge-and-review system acts as an undertow. The pledge-and-review system would commit all nations to voluntary domestic actions already on record.

What's worse, the preamble of the accord leaves enough space to bypass the principles of the UNFCCC. The accord states that the signatories will be "guided by" rather than "adhere to" the principles of the convention. This could easily allow the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities enshrined in the convention to be translated into the principle of common but differentiated responses, which could be used to dictate further action for developing nations. There is no recognition of poor countries' right to give priority to development. Despite Manmohan Singh's public statements that equitable burden-sharing should underlie any effective global climate regime, there are no formulae for equitable sharing of emission cuts or even a mention of historical responsibility in the accord. Lumumba Stanislaus-Kaw Di-Aping, the Sudanese

ambassador and G77 negotiator, called it a suicide pact to maintain economic dependence of some countries.

The accord recognizes "climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our times" but keeps quiet on ways to deal with the challenge. While it recognizes the scientific view that the increase in global temperature should be below 2°C (small island states demand 1.5°C), there is no roadmap for ensuring this goal. A leaked UN report showed the current emission cuts offered by the industrialized countries would lead to a 3°C rise in global temperatures. There

are no mitigation targets for industrialized nations, nor are there any references to these being legally binding. The proposal urges cooperation to "achieve a peaking of global and national emissions as soon as possible" but does not recognize that industrialized nations' emissions should have already peaked and should now be declining.

### THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER

On finance, the accord states, developed countries collectively commit to an additional \$30 billion through international institutions for 2010-2012 mainly for

## The accord erases industrialized countries' responsibility to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and blurs the distinction between rich and poor countries on accepting commitments

*The climate talks were frequently interrupted by suspensions and walkouts*



REUTERS



adaptation by developing nations. Industrialized countries have, however, put a rider that only those who sign the accord will be eligible to the fund. It provoked Ian Fry, the lead negotiator of Tuvalu, the island nation in the Pacific Ocean, to retort, "In biblical terms it looks like we're being offered 30 pieces of silver to sell our future. Our future is not for sale." Even the 30 pieces of silver are not yet on the table.

While calling for developed countries to provide "adequate, predictable and sustainable financial resources", the accord states "funding will come from a wide variety of sources, public and private, bilateral and multilateral, including alternative sources of finance." Developing nations have for long argued that the market is prone to failure and that any finance for adaptation and mitigation must come from public sources

and should be additional to budgeted official development assistance.

Under the accord, rich nations commit to mobilize \$100 billion by 2020 for mitigation actions by developing countries but there is no word on where the money will come from. Developing nations signing the accord commit to taking nationally appropriate mitigation actions. At present, projects that receive finance and technology from developed countries have to be measurable, reportable and verifiable (MRV). Developing countries insisted their domestic, voluntary actions should not be subjected to the MRV regime. But the US and other rich countries wanted international scrutiny. It became a sticking point.

The accord finally included provisions for "international consultations and analysis" of voluntary actions, euphemistic language for enforcing the

MRV regime for all mitigation activities.

Top White House adviser David Axelrod reportedly said, "We're going to be able to review what they're doing. We're going to be able to challenge them if they don't meet the goals."

### BLOCKAGES BEGET BLOCKAGES

In addition to seeking a deal on big-ticket issues like finance and emission targets, negotiations have also been tackling a number of relatively technical topics: how should emissions from deforestation be reduced? What systems are needed to transfer green technologies from developed to developing countries? Do Intellectual Property Regime laws need to be amended? In Copenhagen, countries were supposed to reach agreement on most of these (see: *Deals lost by a whisker*).

Since incremental progress in one

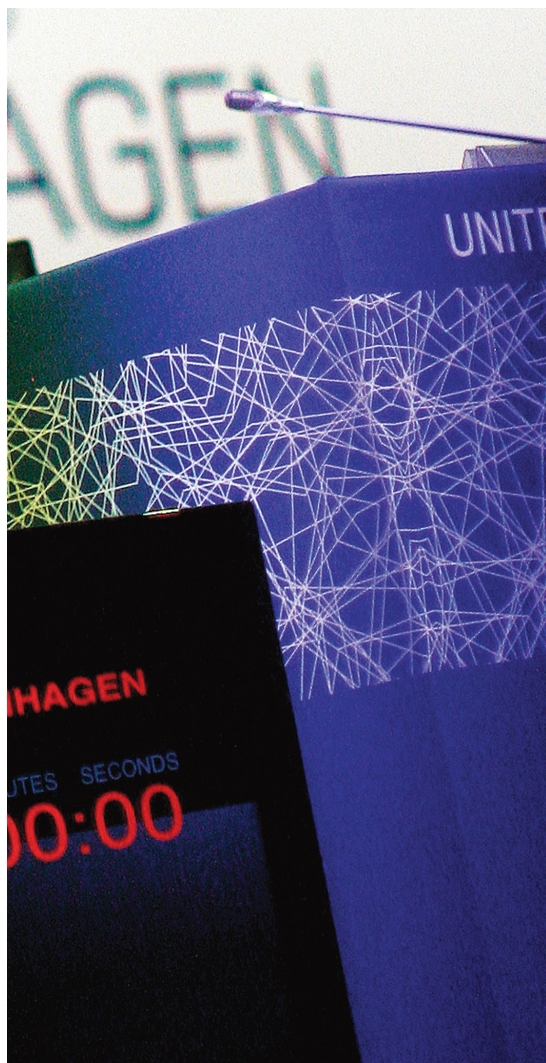
## Deals lost by a whisker

### TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER

- The only way for developing countries to reduce emissions while growing their economies is by introducing vastly cleaner technologies, quickly. Hence, technology transfer to poor countries has always been understood as essential.
- A solid proposal for establishing a Technology Action Committee (TAC) and a network of national climate innovation centres (reflecting significant input from India) was added to a draft released on December 11.
- By December 15, the TAC concept had been fleshed out—but, at the insistence of developed countries, bracketed to signal no consensus. The US also pushed back strongly on efforts to relax the Intellectual Property Regime rules.
- A working group discussed the draft well into the night of December 17. They made progress but ran aground on the question of money: should dedicated funds be made available to enable technology transfer, in addition to the dollars being discussed elsewhere? (Developing countries said yes; developed countries said no.)

### REDUCED EMISSIONS FROM DEFORESTATION (REDD)

- The facts are alluring: carbon dioxide emissions from deforestation account for 20 per cent of the global total; reducing emissions could cost as little as \$10 per tonne. Thus, REDD could offer a cheap and significant way to cut emissions, but also a free pass to industrial polluters.
- In Copenhagen, progress seemed possible on a few outstanding issues: indigenous peoples' groups were seeking legal guarantees that their access to forest resources would be retained in REDD-designated forests; environmentalists were trying to prevent industrial-scale plantations from being eligible for aid; developing countries wanted assurances that finance would be additional.
- Late in the second week, contested solutions to these controversial issues were simply deleted from the draft text, wholesale. So was any reference to a target for reducing deforestation by 2020: developing countries said they would not talk targets so long as industrialized countries refused to set new emissions targets under Kyoto.
- Yet even this final compromise draft was left hanging: the Copenhagen Accord was passed without acknowledging any progress achieved on REDD.



part of the puzzle had potential to unlock breakthroughs in another, negotiations were conducted on all these areas in parallel. At least, that was the theory. In practice, many technical issues proved just as contentious as the high-level ones. Rather than breakthroughs catalyzing breakthroughs, blockages begat blockages.

In Copenhagen, there were two high-profile casualties of the overarching stalemate on funding and targets: proposals on technology transfer, and for reducing emissions from deforestation. Heading into the negotiations, both had been star pupils, and—despite a few sticky issues—observers like the UN Secretary General were hopeful that draft texts would be turned into operational agreements.

Instead, it only added to the frustration of the overall outcome that even in areas where a deal seemed within reach, decisions ended up being postponed.

### SO IS KYOTO PROTOCOL DEAD?

Not yet but it is “in the intensive care unit”, Jairam Ramesh admitted. One of the few decisions the parties adopted in Copenhagen was to prolong the mandate for the working groups on the Kyoto Protocol and long-term action, until the next conference in Mexico in December 2010. Until then the question of the legal basis for a future climate change agreement will remain unresolved. After all the Copenhagen Accord has no formal or legal standing.

Now how did that happen? To understand that rewind to the last day of negotiations at Copenhagen. Since there was no consensus among nations on the accord, the chair of the conference abruptly announced the decision to “take note of the agreement” instead of formally adopting it.

ing promised for 2010, 2011 and 2012.

But what happens if, theoretically, 30 industrialized countries and one developing country sign on? Does that lucky country get the full \$10 billion?

On the morning of December 19, several developing countries that had earlier endorsed the deal (for example Pakistan) gave it a more thorough reading and qualified their support. Most of the industrialized countries and small island states said they were keen to see the accord become “operational” so that the dollars can start flowing.

The negotiator for Sudan raised the next logical question: “Where do we go from here?” She then suggested, “We could take the accord as some kind of political guidance from the leaders of major countries. We are now clear where the major groups stand. It is now

## Industrialized nations have promised to raise \$100 billion by 2020 for developing countries but there is no word on where the money will come from and how it will be distributed

Startled delegates began asking: what did it mean, in legal terms, to take note of a proposal that had not been negotiated through the UNFCCC process? No one, not even the UNFCCC adviser sitting next to the chair, had an answer.

A little away in a press briefing, a spokesperson for UN Secretary General optimistically reported that the proposal was as good as adopted. But in the meeting itself, a different picture started to emerge. It gradually became clear that no country had signed the accord before it was noted; nobody had the time. Since it had not been adopted, the countries had not collectively signed it either. The accord hence fails to achieve the status of even soft law and acts as little more than a political declaration, one with absolutely no teeth.

### WHAT NEXT?

The accord commits industrialized countries to declare voluntary emission targets for 2020 by January 31, 2010. These targets are supposed to be listed in a document that will be kept on record (without legal status) at the UNFCCC. Developing countries that sign the accord would then become eligible to receive a share of the fast-track financ-

up to negotiators to come up with universally agreed next steps.”

In other words, a majority of world leaders has finally put on paper the outlines of the deal developed countries wanted: a pledge-and-review approach to emission cuts, stringent verification of developing countries’ actions, and small amounts of financing for the poorest countries.

One of three scenarios could now play out: the Copenhagen Accord, in Ban’s words, gains “momentum” and replaces the work of Ad Hoc Working Groups (AWGs); the working groups’ texts are gradually modified so that they finally enshrine an accord-style deal in legally-binding language; or the deal fizzles and negotiations refocus on the AWG processes.

If, by virtue of continued political support from heads of states, the accord succeeds in muscling out of the AWG negotiations, then the UNFCCC process could be undermined. This is the biggest issue the world faces in 2010: countries that want to replace UN negotiations with a pact among the largest emitters now have a foot in the door. How much further will they be able to force their way in? ■



ANAB PRATIM DUTTA / CSE



# COPENHAGEN DIARY

DEC  
07

Danish Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen officially welcomed delegates to Denmark for COP-15, and urged them to take advantage of the “unprecedented political will” to reach an agreement.

Delegates made predictable introductory remarks, except a negotiator from Papua New Guinea, who asked that the COP be empowered to take decisions by two-thirds majority because agreement by consensus condemns the parties to weak, “lowest common denominator” outcomes. COP President Connie Hedegaard deflected the issue by agreeing to hold consultations.

A film depicting a young Danish girl’s nightmare of climate change—parched Earth, rampant tsunamis and the apparent extinction of humans—was screened for the gathered delegates.

Scandal! *The Guardian* leaked a text, prepared by the Danish presidency, on a Copenhagen deal. The Danes were quick to deny the draft. But the leak fast-tracked strategy formulations and informal negotiations among parties. Rumours began doing rounds that the BASIC countries and small island states were deciding to fight fire with fire by preparing counter-proposals.

DEC  
09

There was drama both inside and outside Bella Centre. Those attending the conference were greeted by two groups of activists. A jazzy Actionaid troupe called climate change agents, dressed in red suits, held banners against rich countries. Another group called the People’s Movement

leaders to prevent global warming by more than 1.5°C. Developing countries suddenly looked divided. India and China opposed Tuvalu; small island nations and the poorest African countries supported it.

A few students stripped down to their undergarments—their way of making a plea to save the future generation from a climate disaster.

DEC  
10

The British newspaper *Daily Telegraph* reported the organizers anticipated 140 private jets to fly in and out of the city during the conference. About 1,200 limousines are already ferrying the rich and the powerful. But Chinese negotiators were seen using the metro service.

Déjà vu! In the Kyoto plenary, Tuvalu demanded a hearing on its proposal to amend the Kyoto Protocol to strengthen targets for industrialized countries and force leaders to prevent global warming by more than 1.5 °C. Tuvalu was supported by other island nations, but

strongly opposed by large developing countries. Connie Hedegaard suspended the meeting to hold consultations on the way to proceed.

DEC  
11

The day witnessed some peaceful protest at the Nyttov Square at the centre of Copenhagen. The protesters wanted to stop any corporate deal on climate.

Small island states were stoking the fire Tuvalu started a day earlier. They produced a counter-proposal to the unseen Danish draft, repeating the demand for the 1.5°C cap. Developing countries were also angry with the European Union. At the EU summit in Brussels, European countries could cobble together just \$3 billion to provide quick-start funding to the least developed countries. The EU became the sec-



Surprisingly, some in the audience applauded the rather syrupy propaganda film. Some rolled their eyes.

Outside, more than a thousand people attended the opening ceremony of Klimaforum, a meeting place for anyone interested in climate change.

DEC  
08

Bella Centre was slowly getting crowded. But the queue at the registration did not get any shorter. Outside, the streets were wet from an overnight drizzle. The right weather for the vendor under the elevated metro tracks to give free coffee to a motley group of activists. The coffee is made using wind-produced electricity. Not all activists are campaigning for emission reductions. One group wanted people to shun meat products, while another group had camped outside for justice for Aung San Suu Kyi.



ARNAB PRATIM DUTTA / CSE



PRADIP SAHA / CSE

against Climate Change went around in circles beating bamboo sticks and demanding a people’s agreement.

Inside Bella Centre the tiny island nation of Tuvalu became a household name. Its chief negotiator Ian Fry demanded a hearing on its proposal for a new protocol that would strengthen industrialized country targets and force



ARNAB PRATIM DUTTA / CSE

ond runner-up for today's Fossil of the Day award, announced by the Climate Action Network, for failing to come up with higher numbers as well as failing to raise more money at the Brussels meet. Canada was the winner as well as the first runner-up because it wanted replacement of the Kyoto Protocol.

India's minister Jairam Ramesh reached the conference and got busy with bilaterals, while the chief negotiator, Shyam Saran, left for India to brief the prime minister on negotiations.

DEC 12

About thirty five thousand people of all stripes—farmers, children, grandmothers, climate activists, social justice activists, concerned citizens—marched through the cold Copenhagen streets, demand-

and prioritize registration by country delegates and press. Thousands of NGO observers were left standing outside in the freezing cold for up to 10 hours to register, then told to go home. There was no provision of food, toilets, etc.

Inside Bella Centre, African countries led G77 into a five-hour walkout from talks. They were protesting that ministers meeting on the weekend spent 80 per cent of their time talking about developing countries' actions and long-term targets, and just 20 per cent talking about new targets for industrialized countries. The issue was sort of resolved when the COP president agreed to spend an equal amount of time on the two issues.

DEC 15

Queues for registration outside Bella Centre grew longer. In mid-morning the UN suddenly announced it would not register any more NGO delegates. Friends of the Earth and Avaaz, two particularly vocal NGOs, found their officially sanctioned badges did not work, and complained they were being intentionally excluded from Bella Centre to mute their voices.

Negotiations proceeded at a snail's pace though today was the deadline for reaching an agreement on texts. Nonetheless, the high-level segment of the conference opened, with speeches by Prince Charles and Nobel Laureate Wangari Maathai.

After the high-level segment, negotiations resumed; industrialized countries used bureaucratic tactics to block progress on Kyoto targets; negotiations on other issues continued into the early morning, but the number of brackets signalling disagreement increased.

Arnold Schwarzenegger made a cameo appearance to add star power.

DEC 16

Fresh protests erupted outside as activists shut down a couple of Metro stations and marched up to Bella Centre. Protestors were first pepper-sprayed and then beaten mercilessly. At noon, a few



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ANNA PRATIM DUTTA / CSE

ing that world leaders take strong, concerted action to stop global warming. News channels focused mostly on the few arrests made at the end of the rally.

Many delegates are waiting for heads of state to arrive next week. Hedegaard invited a select group of ministers and top negotiators from about 30 countries, including India, China, the US, Ethiopia, Australia, Japan, Mexico and Saudi Arabia, for informal consultations over the weekend.

DEC 13

Bella Centre was closed but the by-invitation-only ministerial continued, along with informal discussions in hotels across Copenhagen.

DEC 14

Oops! Bella Centre's ID badge machines broke down. About 15,000 new delegates arrived for the second week of the conference. The UN, in consultation with the Danish hosts, was forced to do triage



PRACHI BUCHAR

observers marched out of Bella Centre in solidarity with those who were not granted passes to enter. The drama was no more restricted to the negotiating floor. During the day, official proceedings were taken up by speeches, speeches, and more speeches by world leaders.

Boom! Hedegaard resigned as the president of the COP, so Prime Minister Rasmussen could take over. Before leaving, she announced Denmark planned to table a *new* draft text for a possible Copenhagen outcome. Many developing country delegates, having stayed up all night to draft a deal, were livid. They asked for assurances that the Danish draft would not displace the texts they

had been working on. Rasmussen decided to suspend the plenaries to consult on a way forward.

Blackmail! At night, a group of youth began a sit-in, refusing to leave Bella Centre until a fair deal is reached. The UN and the Danes threatened that no NGO delegate (instead of a fiercely negotiated quota of 300) would be allowed in on Thursday and Friday if the youth did not desist.

The youth dispersed reluctantly. ■





# STREET POLITICS OF CLIM



PHOTOGRAPHS: PRADIP SAHA / CSE

“This is what democracy looks like,” chanted a chorus of young activists, arrested on December 16, when they tried to break into Bella Centre, the site for official UN climate negotiations. The young activists were handcuffed and made to sit in rows that ran deep, on a wet, muddy field in freezing temperatures. The chant was meant for the international television crew present in great numbers.

When asked by a television journalist why they were being arrested, a young woman commented, “I don’t know, I was just trying to get into a shopping mall, and they arrested me.”

That was the exact mood among the international activists outside the negotiating process. They looked at Bella Centre—a former garbage dump turned into a swanky convention centre where official negotiations took place—as a trade negotiation centre completely controlled by business interests.

COP 15 in Copenhagen will remain an extraordinary event for the sheer scale at which people outside the official

negotiating process were mobilized. No other climate conference had such large protests or a full-fledged alternative forum for activists gathered from all over the world. These activists had no faith in the official negotiating process. In fact, activists had predicted the negative outcome of the conference from the very beginning.

## A PARALLEL PROCESS

Five km from Bella Centre, just behind the Copenhagen Central station, the people’s summit took place in a sports complex. Klimaforum, or Climate Forum was a network of 32 Danish and 63 international organizations (many of them from the South) coming together to exchange and promote values of a

*The people’s summit under Klimaforum met five km from the COP venue*





# ATE CHANGE

new economy and survival strategy. The declaration of Climate Forum clearly stated, "We DON'T represent vested interests such as bureaucrats, politicians, business or civil servants. We DO represent scientists, grassroots activists, academics, writers, artists and people from all walks of life." The most important factor in this people's summit was that most of the organizing groups as well as participants were not 'climate' activists or experts. They represented a vast social network of farmers, fishers, industrial workers, forest dwellers, women, youth and community groups. There was an agreement between the activists from both the North and South that the official negotiators had nothing to do with the voices of the people.

In a grand opening of the forum, Nnimmo Bassey, the chair of Friends of The Earth International thundered, "Polluters must be held accountable and policy makers must start listening to the people." COP 15, in fact marked the end of the inclusive and democratic process that was supposed to be central to any UN process. Within the official negotiation, poorer and smaller countries were kept outside the loop, in which a few

rich countries and their friends consulted behind closed doors. Activists and civil society partners, even the pre-registered ones were kept waiting outside Bella Centre for hours in freezing temperature, and finally, entry of observers was restricted to only 300 people!

## EXCLUSIVE SYSTEM

Klimaforum asked for completely new thinking in managing climate change. It asked for 'system change'. Speakers called for a retreat from the current production and distribution system. La Via Campesina, the international peasant movement, called for an end to free market-based farming by transnational companies. They pointed out that this system marginalizes small farmers and the ecology. Henry Saragih, general



were there in full gear to tell their governments that they wanted a change in the system.

## "OUR FUTURE"

It is understandable why youth groups are prominent in the climate debate. They feel old politicians with national and self interests care little for the future

**The politics of the world has to change. All the politicians discussing the world in 2050 will be dead by then. They have no interest in the future**  
**—Giorgio, 22, Italian student in Copenhagen**

coordinator of the movement said, "Climate change is already seriously impacting us. It brings floods, droughts and the outbreak of pests that are all causing harvest failures," and called for a complete overhaul. "Small farmers hold the key to the climate solution," he pointed out.

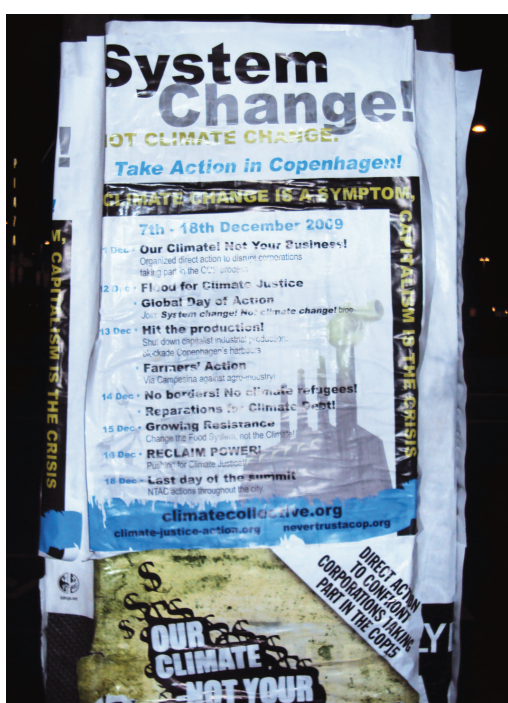
The general feeling in the forum was that Bella Centre was a big trade negotiation, where rich countries were working out ways to safeguard business interests. Naomi Klein, noted Canadian author and one of the star mobilizers at the alternative movement in Copenhagen, declared in her opening speech, "The Bella Centre is the biggest case of disaster capitalism. The deal we really need is not even on the table."

The people's summit saw the meeting of the North and the South. As southern activists pointed out the misery of the poor in the South, northern groups took pains to explain to the gathered youth from the North that time had come for them to give up space. And the youth movements in the North

and are not capable of responding to the global ecological disaster.

The largest campaign with youth participation in Copenhagen was 350.org, that is demanding that concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere be limited at 350 ppm. They have mobilized a phenomenal number of young people all over the world and have been active with awareness programmes. The group has mustered enough clout to also be present inside Bella Centre, rubbing shoulders with negotiators. Small wonder, Mohamed Nasheed, president of the Maldives came to Klimaforum in a meeting organized by 350.org to mobilize support for the demands of the small island states. The young crowd held banners proclaiming Nasheed as their global president!

It is often argued that these young groups' demand of limiting carbon concentration to 350 ppm is an unrealistic one. On the other hand, a South Asian climate activist pointed out, "These groups are being used by rich countries to push the developing world to take up







**Activists make a barricade of bicycles to stop the police**

commitments.” When this probable political naivete was pointed out to Giorgio, a 22-year-old student from Italy, he confidently said, “Politics of the world has to change, maybe we are naive according to the old world’s politics. All of the politicians and officials discussing a world in 2050 will be dead by then, they have no interest in the future”.

#### UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Copenhagen saw global groups with various interests come together. The grand rally of global day of action against climate change on December 12 looked like a carnival, with flags of all possible hues. Participants ranged from savvy environmental groups like Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth to established humanitarian organizations like Oxfam and Actionaid, from traditional leftwing workers’ parties to anti-green-capitalist Climate Justice Action, from Hare Krishnas to hardcore church activists. But almost all of them carried similar placards calling for change in the system. All of them called for an end to business interests and profits dominating climate solutions.

To manage the crowds, the Danish government had passed a law empowering police to arrest in anticipation, without a warrant. Two nights before the march, police detained almost 250 activists of Climate Justice Action in a

central Copenhagen hostel in anticipation of violence. They claimed to have found wire-cutters from them. Despite the threat of violence and of strong police action, the march had nearly 35,000 participants. Though they were all calling for change in the system, it was not clear if they had the same route.

#### RECLAIM THE POWER

The difference between routes to change the system became evident two nights before the other march on December 16 organized by Climate Justice Action, probably the first global march against capitalism sparked by climate change.

At the strategy meeting in a camp set up in Copenhagen’s Christania, a ‘liberated’ area of squatters, Naomi Klein lashed out at Oxfam and other NGOs for their campaign called Seal The Deal. She criticized that these groups were pushing for a deal that was inherently bad. She took pains to explain to the gathered activists that young people in the North must give up their space so that their brothers and sisters in the South can grow.

Climate Justice Action is an international network of more than 60 organizations from both hemispheres. Tadgio Mueller, spokesperson and strategist for the network, explained why this march needed to be non-violent. He drew conclusions from

the protest rallies in Seattle and Genoa and explained that violence has been keeping larger populations out of the anti capitalist movements. The objective of the rally, called Reclaim Power, was to march inside Bella Centre and tell the negotiators what the real people want. A number of officials and observers from Bella Centre were also to come out and join the rally.

Mueller got arrested the day before the rally as he came out of Bella Centre. The march on the 16th was truly a political rally, without anyone dressed as a polar bear or a panda. The march was joined by activists from the South as well. The marchers were not allowed to get into Bella Centre. Violent police action saw them getting beaten up, arrested, and neutralized by pepper spray.

The message was clear, street politics of climate change was not to be allowed. A bleeding activist said, “They are nervous, they are deciding on something inside Bella Centre against people’s will. I only spoke against carbon trade and they beat me up.”

No one can deny Copenhagen brought them all together. It will be interesting to see how these groups can mobilize more people and sustain the movement. One thing is clear: the inherent contradiction in managing climate change is out in the street. ■