

Global Warming and Climate Change

Ten Years after Kyoto and Still Counting

Volume 2

Editor

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UNEP

Foreword

By Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and
UNEP Executive Director

Ten years after the signing of the Kyoto Protocol the momentum on the issue of climate change has never been higher.

During this tenth anniversary year, several key outstanding questions have been resolved and a new quality of consensus has been built.

Earlier in 2007 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), established by UNEP and the World Meteorological Organisation, concluded that it was "unequivocal" that the global warming being witnessed right now is linked to human activity.

This full stop behind the scientific debate has been some time in coming and others may say 'too long'.

But anyone who now believes that causes other than human activity are behind climate change is now in the ideological camp of the "Flat Earthers" who continue to view the world as flat rather than round.

Indeed one of the advancements in 2007 has been the rhetoric by world leaders with none now disputing the fact that climate change is a serious and urgent challenge.

The other feature, ten years after Kyoto, is the quality of the research on the likely impacts. Again the IPCC has produced sobering reports that underline that climate change will affect every community and every country on this planet—in many cases with profound economic and social impacts.

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Beyond Bali and Bush: The Future of Climate Policy

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In December 2007, delegates from more than 180 countries met in Bali, Indonesia to map out the future of the climate regime. Supporters of multilateral climate negotiations need a new agreement to take effect after the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol expires in 2012.¹ Unless the more technical aspects of the negotiations are concluded by 2009, the rules for how to credit action on climate change may lapse in 2012 without sufficient guidance or clarity. For those committed to this process, Bali was thus a critically important summit.

This short concluding chapter assesses the outcome of Bali and discusses the possibilities for action looking ahead.

¹ It was the 13th Conference of Parties (COP) for signatories to the original 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the third meeting of the parties (MOP) for those countries that elected to ratify the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. Whereas the former encompassed most of the world's countries by virtue of its non-binding and general character, the latter had binding commitments only for so-called Annex I advanced industrialized countries. After Australia ratified in December 2007, 176 countries and the European Economic Community had ratified the Kyoto Protocol. The UNFCCC has been ratified by 192 countries.

Bali provided familiar storylines of U.S.-European rivalry over timelines and binding emissions reductions. Despite the media hype over U.S. recalcitrance and the final compromise agreement, this outcome was neither surprising nor the most important one of the summit. With the Bush Administration still in power but winding down, the Europeans went through the motions of trying to get the Americans to commit to deep emissions reductions and the obligatory outrage when the United States failed to move. As David Sandalow of the Brookings Institution described it, "This dispute was as predictable as it was meaningless."² More significant were breakthroughs on avoided deforestation, adaptation, and recognition by developing countries that they would accept some sort of action on climate change in the next agreement.³

Notwithstanding these developments, advocates may have vaunted expectations for what is possible in a meeting of nearly two hundred countries and more than ten thousand attendees. As the *New York Times* columnist Tom Friedman wrote of the Bali deliberations, "I'm not opposed to forging a regime with 190 countries for reducing carbon emissions, but my gut tells me that both the North and South Poles will melt before we get it to work."⁴ Other smaller, multilateral fora and national and sub-national level decision-making arenas will be increasingly important in the coming years. Moreover, as governments send markets signals to price carbon, the terrain for action will, and indeed must, shift to research labs and firms where the emissions savings technologies of the future will be generated.

As long as international negotiations like Bali are seen as the most important arenas for progress, this is not good news. The real work will have to take place at a more localized level as firms and consumers respond to incentives for action.⁵ To that point, producers and consumers of energy will have those incentives (1) when the U.S. adopts a mandatory national-level carbon constraint and (2) when the major emerging emitters, including China and India, get serious about (and serious help) investing in clean energy technology.

² Sandalow 2007.

³ My pre-summit podcast anticipated much of what ultimately occurred. Busby 2007c. For a post-summit summary, see Levi 2007. These developments are also described in Pew Center on Global Climate Change 2007b.

⁴ Tom Friedman expressed a similar tone in his Bali wrap-up. Friedman 2007.

⁵ David Victor and his co-authors describe this bottoms-up process as "Madisonian" climate policy in Victor, House and Joy 2005.

BALI'S PARADOX: PARALYSIS AND PROGRESS

Bali provided some modest progress while at the same time displaying the same sort of political gridlock that plagued earlier negotiations such as The Hague in 2000.

Paralysis

The Americans came implacably opposed to making specific commitments on medium-run, binding emissions reductions while Europe and a number of developing countries demanded an ambitious set of targets and timetables for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.⁶ Proponents wanted rich countries to pledge to reduce greenhouse gas emissions below 1990 levels between 25% and 40% by 2020. The Americans for their part were having none of it; the Bush Administration was never going to agree to this. Long-time observers of the Bush Administration and U.S. climate policy were unsurprised.

Despite this replay of U.S. intransigence and, depending on your perspective, European leadership/grandstanding, the summit delivered some hopeful advances. A change in government in Australia directly preceded the summit and brought to power a new pro-Kyoto Administration led by Kevin Rudd. This left the United States isolated as the sole remaining advanced industrialized country not to have ratified Kyoto. That said, while Australia's domestic politics had become more Kyoto friendly, both Canada and Japan, faced with soaring emissions and less environmentally-oriented governments, have increasingly become more skeptical of the existing climate architecture despite having ratified Kyoto.

With the Bush Administration balking at making specific, medium-run legal commitments at Bali, climate negotiators in Bali were thinking ahead to President Bush's successor.⁷ Negotiators sought language that was strong enough to satisfy domestic constituencies and weak enough to keep the Americans engaged in the next round of negotiations. While squabbling over language nearly led to a complete breakdown, European and American negotiators found a compromise they each could half-heartedly support. The main text has no target or timetable but a footnote

⁶ The Americans were more willing to countenance a long-run target, provided comparable action by other countries, but they judged it premature to commit to specific, medium-run binding targets at the beginning of the negotiations.

⁷ The Bush Administration judged it premature to start the negotiations over the post-Kyoto period with binding medium-run targets and timetables. The U.S. administration is more supportive of a longer-run target, as long as other countries make comparable commitments.

references pages in the Third Working Group report to IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report that suggest cuts of 10-40% below 1990 levels are likely needed by 2020.⁸

Progress

Despite the deadlock over targets and timetables, the Bali conference made modest progress on a number of important areas: developing country commitments, avoided deforestation, and adaptation.

Developing Country Commitments

Bali provided the first important signal of the willingness by China, India, and other emerging economies to consider "measurable, reportable and verifiable" mitigation actions looking ahead. This new flexibility was qualified, provisional upon them receiving ample financial incentives to adopt clean energy technology.⁹ As discussed below, the appropriate way forward on technology transfer is not straightforward.

Avoided Deforestation

In addition to the new willingness by developing countries to countenance mitigation commitments, Bali also moved the agenda forward on avoided deforestation.

The Bali roadmap makes it possible for the successor agreement to the Kyoto Protocol to allow heavily forested countries to be compensated for preventing and reducing deforestation.¹⁰ Under the Kyoto Protocol, countries can be compensated for replanting after a forest has been cut down but not for preventing deforestation in the first place.

This agreement on avoided deforestation, also known as Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD), potentially marks an important breakthrough. Deforestation is responsible for about a 1/5 of the world's total greenhouse gas emissions. Deforestation and forest fires in COP-13 host country Indonesia helped make it the third largest contributor of greenhouse gases behind the United States and

⁸ See page 90 in IPCC 2007.

⁹ Among the enhanced mitigation strategies that will be part of the post-Kyoto agreement, the Bali roadmap text includes: "Nationally appropriate mitigation actions by developing country Parties in the context of sustainable development, supported and enabled by technology, financing and capacity-building, in a measurable, reportable and verifiable manner." UNFCCC 2007a.

¹⁰ The Bali meeting decided the successor agreement would include: "Policy approaches and positive incentives on issues relating to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries; and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries." UNFCCC 2007a.

China.¹¹ Paying countries to keep their forests would likely be a much cheaper way for rich countries to avoid emitting greenhouse gases than retrofitting existing industrial infrastructure or seeking a rapid change in transportation alternatives.¹² The World Bank estimates that an expanded forest protection plan could result in 1 billion tonnes in avoided emissions by 2015.¹³

At Bali, the World Bank announced that it had \$160 million in commitments from donors for an ambitious \$250 million pilot project on avoided deforestation.¹⁴ Interestingly, the Bush Administration, despite professing support for the initiative, did not contribute to the Bank's pilot project. Though he received commitments from other governments, the new president of the Bank, Bob Zoellick, failed to get any money from his own, the richest country in the world.¹⁵

Some big issues on avoided deforestation remain for the Bank to iron out as it implements the pilot project: (1) the accounting procedure for how to track emissions reductions from avoided deforestation; (2) the compensation mechanism – will proceeds go to governments, local communities, or get captured by large commercial interests,¹⁶ and, (3) should there be a fund to support this or market mechanisms.¹⁷

Adaptation

In Bali, the parties also reached agreement on an Adaptation Fund. 2% of the proceeds from transactions through the Clean Development

¹¹ Wright 2007. Other countries with large forest reserves include Brazil and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

¹² Pacala and Socolow 2004 outline fifteen potential options, including avoided deforestation, for reducing emissions over the next half-century. Each option reduces emissions by about 25 billion tonnes. Pacala and Socolow 2004.

¹³ The Bank has proposed has an ambitious Global Forest Alliance (GFA), partnering with large environmental NGOs like the Nature Conservancy to implement the program, the so-called Forest Carbon Partnership Facility. World Bank 2007b.

¹⁴ The pilot program had been blessed earlier in the year at the G8 summit hosted by Germany. Nine countries made commitments to the new initiative at Bali, including Germany (US\$59 million), the United Kingdom (\$30 million), the Netherlands (\$22 million), Australia and Japan (\$10 million each), France and Switzerland (\$7 million each), and Denmark and Finland (\$5 million each). The Nature Conservancy also pledged \$5 million. World Bank 2007a.

¹⁵ Mongabay.com 2007.

¹⁶ Some NGOs have warned of large-scale inequities over the distribution of these resources and that forest dwellers and small-scale actors may find themselves cut off, both from the funds and access to the forests. Griffiths 2007.

¹⁷ Many heavily forested developing countries favor market approaches, but Brazil, worried about sovereignty, notably has supported a fund. Other developing countries think large transfers are unlikely to be forthcoming through a fund. Bali leaves this unresolved for now.

Mechanism have been set aside to support efforts in developing countries to adapt to climate change.¹⁸ Adaptation projects include coastal defenses, water conservation, investments in drought resistant crops, and other risk reduction measures. The value of those credits was estimated to rise to between \$80 million and \$300 million a year from 2008 to 2012.¹⁹

The major source of contention at Bali on these funds was over how these funds would be administered. Developed countries wanted the fund to be run by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) at the World Bank, which already administers two other adaptation funds—the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF) and the Least Developed Country Fund (LDCF)—that have about \$200 million in commitments.²⁰ Developing countries do not much care for the GEF because they think the funds are too difficult to access and/or bound up with larger issues of World Bank conditionality. They preferred a new stand-alone institution like the Global Fund for AIDS, TB, and Malaria that would be seen less a tool of the great powers.

After much debate, the Bali conference resolved the debate by naming the GEF the administrator of the Fund but providing greater developing country representation on the Fund's sixteen-member board.²¹

Despite this progress, the scale of resources available for risk reduction is wholly inadequate. Developing countries will likely need tens of billions of dollars to protect themselves from extreme weather events and other effects of climate change.²² However, until the scale of resources for adaptation is dramatically increased (and actually starts to get spent), developing countries will remain incredibly vulnerable.

LOOKING AHEAD

Despite European leadership on climate change through their emissions trading scheme, the United States remains critical to the future of climate policy. The United States is the second largest emitter of greenhouse gases. Other countries and major emerging emitters in the developing world currently await U.S. action before making significant commitments of

¹⁸ These are the projects where companies in rich countries get emissions credits by financing emissions reductions projects in the developing world.

¹⁹ UNFCCC 2007b.

²⁰ In April 2007, for example, the LDCF had total pledges of \$115.8 million and the SCCF had pledges of \$62 million. Another \$50 million was available for the Strategic Priority on Adaptation under the GEF Trust Fund. Global Environmental Facility 2007.

²¹ My pre-Bali podcast foreshadowed this debate and result.

²² I discuss the adaptation and risk reduction policy agenda in Busby 2007b; Busby 2007a; Busby 2008, forthcoming-a.

their own.²³ Once the Bush Administration leaves office at the beginning of 2009, a new U.S. president will have an opportunity to change his or her country's policies on climate change and, in turn, those of major emitters in the developing world.

At home, the new president will have an opportunity to steer through Congress a national carbon constraint, most likely a cap-and-trade system. In December 2007, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee on a 11-8 vote sent the Lieberman-Warner cap-and-trade bill to the full Senate for consideration. As of this writing in April 2008, the bill's fortunes look bleak. The Democrats likely lack the sixty votes needed to withstand a filibuster, and even if the Senate passes the measure, President Bush will likely veto the bill.

That said, the politics of climate change have changed in the United States, giving a new president some leeway to be able to get a modest carbon constraint passed in Congress. There is much broader bipartisan, cross-regional, multi-sectoral, faith-based, and business-backed support for a more vigorous and robust U.S. climate policy. No longer is the issue if the United States adopt controls on carbon but *when*.²⁴

Even if domestic action is increasingly likely in the United States, international supporters of climate mitigation may have outsized expectations for what the next U.S. president will do. In 2007, most of the cap-and-trade bills pending before the U.S. Senate mandated returning U.S. emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, significantly less than what Europeans suggested would be acceptable.²⁵ The next U.S. president, even if he or she wants to, will find it hard to commit to a 25% or 40% reduction by 2020. The U.S. Senate may balk at deeper short-run commitments. Since getting started has been the hardest part for the Americans, getting too hung up over the magnitude of the commitment could lead to another lost decade of no federal policy by the U.S. government.

Moreover, as discussed in my earlier chapter in this volume, it may not be especially productive to focus so much diplomatic energy on achieving breakthroughs in a 190-country conference. The collective action problems of having so many negotiating players undermine the incentives for significant action.

Looking at the Bali deliberations, so much work went into drafting elaborate rules for technology transfer but the summit reached no significant agreement on funding sources. Rich countries are reluctant to

²³ I discuss the possibilities for European leadership on climate policy in Busby 2008, forthcoming-b.

²⁴ I discuss the politics of this bill and broader energy policies in Busby 2008.

²⁵ Pew Center on Global Climate Change 2007a.

make elaborate promises to transfer technology to poor countries for a number of reasons. First, many of the technologies are in private hands so "transfer" must involve some sort of compensation mechanism by which a country's own firms have an incentive to do so. At the same time, the real possibilities for intellectual property theft—of reverse engineered versions of clean energy technology showing up soon after transfer—makes firms reluctant to sell the latest and most efficient versions of their technology. Finally, clean energy is potentially such a lucrative arena for a country's own firms that countries likely prefer not to multilateralize the process. As Michael Levi of the Council on Foreign Relations has argued:

I would give [an] incredibly small chance of a country committing to subsidize these sorts of things with any quantitative commitments as part of something that's binding, [something] that they can't alter depending on the relationship with particular countries, depending on how the world evolves, depending on how cheap, for example, these technologies become. But they may be more willing to make particular steps through unilateral measures.²⁶

Once the United States has a carbon constraint, this will make it politically possible for developing countries to make some commitments, provided advanced industrialized countries make it worth their while through technological incentives. As suggested above, the process for technological transfer may take place either through a large multilateral forum like the UNFCCC, smaller decision-making arenas like meetings of major emitters and the G8 Summit, or through unilateral approaches.

The Bush Administration's parallel efforts to convene major economies outside the UNFCCC process may have given the idea a bad name. In the first of these meetings in September 2007, the U.S. offered major emerging emitters little in the way of new technology or incentives. In the waning days of Bali, the Europeans, upset over U.S. intransigence on targets and timetables, threatened to boycott planned meetings of the major emitters in early 2008 in the lead up to the G8 Summit in Japan. This is unfortunate. A smaller meeting of major economies offers great potential to simultaneously reduce collective action problems and cover most of the world's emissions in a single gathering. By making these into sidepiece distractions rather than real opportunities for substantive breakthroughs, President Bush may have made it difficult for his successor to resuscitate the process. Nonetheless, the Japanese want to make the 2008 G8 summit a success so will likely press the Americans to join with them in some symbolic gesture.

²⁶ Levi 2007.

There will be considerable pressure on the next U.S. president to be ready for the fifteenth COP in December 2009 in Copenhagen, Denmark, where proponents would like to finalize negotiations on the successor agreement to the Kyoto Protocol. However, with less than a year to prepare and make key appointments, we should not be surprised if the new American administration is not quite up to speed by COP-15. The rest of the world will likely have to go ahead and muddle through whether or not the Americans have their act together.

More important indicators of U.S. seriousness will be when the country enacts its own carbon constraint and reaches out to China, India and other major economies to facilitate clean energy exports from American companies. Once that happens, the landscape of climate policy will be decentered. No longer will multilateral or national level decision-making be the most important arenas for progress. The action will move finally to the firm, factory, and local levels where it should, as thousands more businesses, innovators, and consumers begin to alter their behavior. That day can come none too soon.

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