



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on December 2, 2010

UN & Big Business Call for Global Light Bulb Ban to Save Climate

The United Nations and its corporate allies called for a global ban on incandescent light bulbs and kerosene lamps Wednesday at the COP16 global-warming summit in Cancun, claiming in a new study that “energy-efficient” lights would reduce the amount of carbon dioxide emissions.



“Among the low hanging fruit in the climate change challenge, a switch to far more efficient lighting must rank as among the lowest,” [said](#) UN Environment Program (UNEP) chief Achim Steiner. “Efficient lighting systems is one path that is literally available at the flip of a policy switch.”

According to the report released by the UNEP, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and two lighting-industry giants during a presentation at the climate summit, the move would reduce the world’s lighting-related electricity demand by about two percent. The paper also claimed a global ban would save money.

“We need to cut the use of kerosene for lighting,” [demanded](#) chief “sustainability” officer Wolfgang Gregor of Osram, one of the world’s largest lighting manufacturers, during a news conference. “OSRAM has given its firm commitment to the ... initiative, as well as to combating the use of kerosene,” he [added](#). His company, along with lighting behemoth Philips, also worked on the UN report.

Fellow traveler Harry Verhaar, the “director of energy and climate change” for Philips Lighting, offered similar remarks. [Calling](#) the anti-incandescent bulb crusade “an excellent example of a new category of public/private partnerships that will help accelerate sustainable growth in emerging and developing countries,” Verhaar said the mandatory switch to CFLs “represents a triple win for these countries and in addition this sectoral lighting approach is also a bottom-up initiative that compliments [sic] the top-down UNFCCC process.”

And the UN, in a [separate statement](#), said it would propagandize the public until more nations agree. “By promoting the tangible benefits of efficient lighting it is anticipated that a growing number of countries will be interested in engaging in transformation activities to phase out inefficient lighting systems and reduce emissions,” it said in the press release announcing the unveiling of the new study. The report focused primarily on 100 countries where governments have not yet started mandating the UN-backed changes, calculating potential reductions in CO2 emissions (also known as plant food) and wildly inflating alleged potential savings.

Then there’s the claim that this is somehow a “market solution,” made by the GEF. “For the past two decades, the GEF has championed market efforts to expand efficient lighting to developing countries throughout the world,” [claimed](#) GEF boss Monique Barbut in a UN press release, perhaps not realizing that banning the older bulbs would be in direct conflict with true market principles.



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The project, known as “[En.lighten](#)” to its corporate and government backers, “is the latest initiative funded by the GEF in partnership with UNEP and leading global lighting manufacturers to accelerate market transformation of efficient lighting technologies on a global scale,” Barbut said. “Through this initiative, we hope to build a strong partnership with the private sector to encourage innovation.”

But not everybody is excited about the prospect of a worldwide ban on traditional lighting. For one, compact fluorescent lamps, or CFL light bulbs, are made with mercury, a known neurotoxin dangerous to human health, water supplies, pets, and the environment.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency even has a complicated [12-step process](#) for dealing with broken CFL bulbs. Calling in professionals to deal with the mercury can [cost](#) thousands of dollars, too. And when the CFLs burn out on their own, the EPA [recommends](#) calling a local waste collection agency to dispose of the dead bulbs at a hazardous waste drop-off location.

The new bulbs also cost a lot more money than incandescent lights — sometimes ten times more. And [critics](#) complain that they do not produce the same amount or quality of light. They can cause headaches and numerous other problems as well, according to detractors. And most of the CFLs also produce a high amount of what is known as electromagnetic pollution, which [some experts](#) consider problematic.

But none of those drawbacks — or even common sense — has stopped busybody government officials around the world from implementing total bans on incandescent light bulbs. There are already dozens of regimes phasing them out through force, including the European Union, which has a target date of 2012 for the complete eradication of the lights throughout the bloc.

“Much like the car and the telephone caught on with everyone, I have no doubt that once Europeans start using the modern alternatives to the inefficient light bulbs, they will start to enjoy the advantages they have to offer,” [pontificated](#) former USSR Communist Party member Andris Piebalgs of Latvia, who drafted the EU light-bulb ban with help from the lighting industry while serving as the European commissioner for energy.

“Great ideas are sometimes slow to catch on,” the “former” communist [wrote](#) on his blog in response to critics of the ban, probably not realizing the absurdity of his statements. “These are understandable reactions as people are naturally resistant to change and more comfortable with what they already [sic] familiar with.”

The U.S. government has also passed [legislation](#) — signed by former President George W. Bush as part of an energy package — aimed at phasing out incandescent bulbs by 2014. Numerous other governments, from Australia and Canada to Venezuela and Cuba, have done the same. Other regimes around the world are considering similar measures.

“The world needs quick wins to show that climate change can be controlled,” the UN-backed anti-incandescent bulb coalition claimed in a [statement](#). “A global transition to efficient lighting is perhaps the easiest method. If achieved swiftly, this victory would generate the momentum needed to achieve greater CO2 reductions in other sectors and assist towards stabilizing the climate.”

Unfortunately for incandescent-bulb fans and CFL critics, this new UN/Big Business-funded study may provide rulers around the world with exactly the ammunition they need to foist the unpopular ban on the remaining hold-out populations, no matter what the true cost. But since the UN doesn’t plan to have its draft “road map” for the world ban completed before mid-2011, there is still time for people who would rather stick to Thomas Edison’s time-tested invention to stock up. For poor people around the



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world relying on kerosene lamps — no matter what the UN and CFL bulb manufacturers say — now might be a good time to buy extra gas, too.



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