



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on December 22, 2009

Copenhagen Consequences

Parties on both sides of the global-warming debate are calling the UN Climate Change Conference at Copenhagen a failure. Instead of producing a legally binding treaty to curb greenhouse gas emissions, a majority of participating nations merely agreed to “take note” of the Copenhagen Accord, a non-binding agreement to commit to significant emission reductions by next year and to fund environmentally “vulnerable” countries.



[Euronews](#) quoted Sudanese negotiator Lumumba Stanislaus Di-Aping accusing participants of signing “a suicide pact.” He called the accord “a solution based on the values which ... channeled six million people in Europe to the [Nazi] furnaces.” [CNN](#) reported that Senator James Inhofe (R-Okla.), a leading [global warming skeptic](#) who traveled to Copenhagen to tell delegates the United States will not back cap-and-trade legislation, also said the conference was a failure.

The stalemate is a conservative victory in certain respects, but climate-change politics will continue to menace national and global economies as disappointed global-warming activists look hopefully toward next December’s UN Climate Change Conference in Mexico City for restitution. Far from admitting a Copenhagen defeat, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon [announced](#) at the close of the conference, “We have sealed the deal. This accord cannot be everything that everyone hoped for, but it is an essential beginning.”

Specifically, accord signatories agreed to work toward emissions restrictions to keep the global temperature rise below 2 degrees. They also stated their intent to establish the “Copenhagen Green Climate Fund” to channel up to \$30 billion from developed to developing countries by 2012. Notably, the accord failed to include the [Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation Program](#) (REDD), a plan for developed nations to pay for efforts to preserve jungles supposedly threatened by climate change.

Another top UN official underscored the hope that world leaders will continue working toward a legally binding treaty. “We need to be clear that [the Copenhagen Accord] is a letter of intent and is not precise ... in legal terms,” said Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary of the [UN Framework Convention for Climate Change](#) (UNFCCC). “The challenge is now to turn what we have agreed politically in Copenhagen into something real, measureable and verifiable.” The UNFCCC plans to work toward that goal in a negotiating session scheduled next spring in Bonn, Germany, as a precedent to the Mexico City conference.



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President Obama echoed UN officials' remarks at a [press conference](#) before he departed Copenhagen. He called the accord an "important milestone" in efforts to combat the supposed threat of climate change. In the last hours of the conference he made an [informal agreement](#) with China, India, Brazil, and South Africa to "set a mitigation target to limit warming to no more than 2 degrees Celsius." He also vowed to continue working with other countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and provide financing for developing nations. "A consensus [among countries] ... will serve as a foundation for global action to confront the threat of climate change for years to come," he said.

Despite the president's promises, he still lacks congressional approval of either emission reduction targets or environmental foreign aid, and a recent [Washington Post poll](#) indicates that a growing number of Americans oppose both measures. Americans may well take Obama's closing remarks as both a threat and a wake-up call. Despite the alleged "failure" of Copenhagen talks and [Climategate's](#) exposure of the dark side of climate science, global-warming skeptics have an uphill battle to fight in the coming months with [cap-and-trade legislation](#) pending in the U.S. Senate and the Obama administration's unswerving allegiance to international climate-change negotiations.

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