

Greenpeace guide to Kyoto, Bali, APEC, the G8 and Major Emitters meeting

This year has seen many grand declarations on climate change from various high level meetings. Some of them have been useful – and some of them, like the Bush and Howard efforts at APEC and the upcoming meeting in Washington, are aimed at undermining progress to achieve what the climate science tells us we need: deep cuts in greenhouse gas emissions – and binding commitments to get there.

The UNFCCC process and Kyoto

Back in 1992, in Rio, 198 countries, including the US under President George Bush Senior, signed the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). That agreement was voluntary and did not contain any legally binding commitments to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

By 1995 the scientific evidence was clear that more needed to be done. In Berlin, countries agreed the “Berlin Mandate” which set up the two-year process to negotiate the Kyoto Protocol, the legally binding agreement which sits within the UNFCCC, where industrialized countries made clear commitments to cut their greenhouse gas emissions. The US and Australia have not ratified Kyoto, agreed in 1997.

At the **G8 in July**, George W Bush said he agreed with the UN process. However, he is trying to interpret what he agreed as leaving the door open to agree yet more voluntary commitments under the UNFCCC – not the legally binding Kyoto, which Chancellor Merkel had in mind at Heiligendamm..

Rich countries agreed to act first

In both the UNFCCC and the Kyoto agreement, countries agreed that the majority of the responsibility for current climate change was a result of developed countries emissions – and agreed that developing countries need a longer lead-in time before they start capping their own emissions. Both President George W Bush and Australian PM John Howard have continually pointed the finger at China, knowing full well that China remains in the developing country category. China, however, has now adopted legally binding targets for renewable energy and energy efficiency – which is more than the US or Australia have done (see Greenpeace briefing on China).

Kyoto is alive and well – and does not “expire”

Kyoto’s detailed mechanisms have already achieved the European Emissions Trading Regime, which allows countries to ‘trade carbon’ as a way of meeting their reduction targets, and the Clean Development Mechanism which allows for the transfer of funding from rich to poor countries for renewable energy and energy efficiency projects whilst setting the resulting emissions reductions against their own targets. It is a complex system which is up and running.

Ten years on in 2007, the urgency of the climate science is much, much stronger. We are now approaching the first phase for implementing the Kyoto Protocol, known as the “First Commitment Period”: 2008-2012.

In Vienna in August, officials from 158 countries agreed the next steps for negotiating phase two of Kyoto, which will begin in 2013. Some call this “Kyoto plus” (The US and Australia prefer to talk about Kyoto “expiring” which simply isn’t the case).

The final agreement in Vienna stated that negotiators would use a range of 25-40 per cent cuts, below 1990 levels, by 2020, to ‘guide its future work’ on setting future emission reductions targets for industrialized countries. Discussions also took place on potential further action by developing countries. These negotiations will continue in Bali.

The Sydney Distraction: APEC

The US and Australian Governments remain firmly outside of Kyoto. Their agenda is clear: take the world back to the voluntary regime that, 12 years ago, Governments agreed was not working.

In the lead-up to APEC, Australian PM John Howard announced that APEC would help set up a "new framework agreement" which would be fleshed out at President George Bush's upcoming Major Emitters meeting in Washington. This new agreement, Howard said, would sit under the UNFCCC but would be an alternative to Kyoto. "APEC overrides Kyoto" was one headline after his announcement in Sydney – his intentions were quite clear.

The Sydney Declaration (referred to by Greenpeace as the "Sydney Distraction") was evidence of this. The six-page declaration contained no mention of the word "Kyoto". The strongest statement was "We agree to work to achieve a common understanding on a long-term aspirational global emissions reduction goal to pave the way for an effective post-2012 international arrangement."

The climate needs a lot more than this sort of language. **The only "post 2012 arrangement" is Kyoto.** The developing countries at APEC were unhappy with the declaration, as evidenced by Chinese President Hu Jintao who spoke out strongly in favour of Kyoto. Developing countries are already benefiting from the Kyoto Protocol, installing renewable energy and energy efficiency programmes through the CDM.

The UN High Level Meeting

The UN High Level Meeting on Climate Change is not like APEC and the Bush meeting. This meeting has been called by Ban Ki Moon out of concern at the lack of progress on Kyoto's second phase.

A successful UN High Level meeting would support a strengthening of the Kyoto Protocol and call for a clear *negotiations mandate* to be agreed at the upcoming meeting in Bali in December this year. This mandate must put the world on track to keep global mean temperature rise as far below a 2 degree centigrade increase as possible compared to pre-industrial levels.

Greenpeace calls for industrialized countries to cut their emissions by at least 30% by 2020 - and at least 80% by 2050 - in order to prevent climate chaos. We need a global target of at least 50% cuts by 2050, which will need to include developing country action. This is what science tells us is needed now to prevent the worst impacts of climate change. (see Greenpeace briefing on the Bali Mandate).

Bush Major Economies meeting

President Bush has convened a meeting of the world's 15 leading emitters on September 27-28th in Washington, DC. Formally, this is now "a contribution" to the UN process, but in reality it is still based on his and John Howard's alternative vision, as they both remain opposed to internationally binding emission cuts.

Although initially announced as a 'meeting' it is clear from the terminology used by the US in other fora that the intention is for it to become a 'process' with an end date of 2008 and will strive to design a regime based on 'pledge and review' of voluntary targets. If this meeting does not support the Kyoto process, then it will be another distraction.

Summary. Kyoto: Just Do It!

It is clear that the Kyoto Protocol is the only game in town for cutting emissions and tackling climate change. Greenpeace calls on the world to get moving and agree, in Bali in December, to set up a two-year deadline and negotiating process for agreeing Kyoto's second phase.

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