

Global Warming: Promises in Vain

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Global warming can be defined as changes observed in the temperature of air and ocean, melting of glaciers, and increasing average sea level.¹ Climate change will cause numerous variations in environmental and atmospheric factors including the amount of rainfall, humidity, and wind patterns, among other things. Transmission, distribution and incubation period of many diseases depend on many of these environmental factors. Not surprisingly, any changes in these factors may alter the virulence and epidemiology of many infectious and non-infectious diseases.²⁻⁴

It is believed that the main cause of global warming is the accumulation of carbon dioxide in the earth's atmosphere and resultant greenhouse effect. Most of these carbon dioxides are produced by industrialized countries through burn of fossil fuels.

Concerns about the global warming date back to the late 1800's.⁵ However, practically nothing had been done until early 90's when an international environmental treaty was developed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), informally known as Earth Summit, held in June 3-14, 1992, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The goal of that protocol was to keep the production of greenhouse gases to its minimum possible level that would avoid hazardous effects on human health and the environment.^{6,7}

The first United Nations Framework

Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties (COP1) took place in the spring of 1995 in Berlin, Germany. In that conference, a two-year Analytical and Assessment Phase (AAP) was established to negotiate a "comprehensive menu of actions" for countries to pick from and choose future options to address climate change which for them, individually, made the best economic and environmental sense. COP2 was held in July 1996 in Geneva, Switzerland which accepted the scientific findings on climate change. After intensive negotiations, in 1997, in Kyoto, Japan, COP3 adopted the Kyoto Protocol. Most industrialized nations and some central European economies in transition (all named as Annex B countries) agreed to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions of an average of 6%–8% below 1990 levels between 2008 and 2012. Many parties were confident that the Kyoto Protocol could have made a difference.

In 2001, George W. Bush had become the President of the US. Unlike his Democratic rival, Senator Al Gore, who had serious concern about the global warming, President Bush had rejected the Kyoto Protocol in March 2001. As a consequence, the contribution of US, one of the most important carbon dioxide emitters, to this important global movement declined to just participate in the negotiations related to the Protocol and act mostly as an observer.

Many people hoped that the outcome of COP15, commonly known as the Copenha-

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gen Summit, held at the Bella Center in Copenhagen, Denmark, December 7-18, 2009, be significant. The main objective of the COP15 was to establish an agreement for the period beginning from 2012, when the Kyoto Protocol expires.⁸ But the result of the Copenhagen Summit was disappointing—almost no important step has been taken forward.⁹

Many developed countries have polluted the air during their industrialization. Many developing nations argue that the developed world should be blamed, historically and ethically, for the accumulation of carbon dioxide in the earth's atmosphere and the global warming. Nonetheless, developing countries are often most vulnerable to the changes and have the fewest resources to help them face this situation. To solve this global situation, the developing world is requesting substantial financial support to carry out the necessary actions.

The people of the world look forward to COP16 to be held in December, 2010 in Mexico. There, all nations—developed or developing countries—must act together to come to the conclusion to do the right thing, simply because all us, regardless of our geographic place, the color of our skin, political views and our religious beliefs, are in a same boat.

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