

WRI FACT SHEET

International Negotiations on Climate Change: *Key Questions & Answers*

The United States signed on to the most universally supported treaty on climate change, the 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which was designed to protect the world from the dangerous effects of climate change. Although the U.S. did not ratify the Kyoto Protocol, the next round of negotiations on a follow-up treaty are currently underway and the U.S. must consider how to re-engage in the international climate change process.

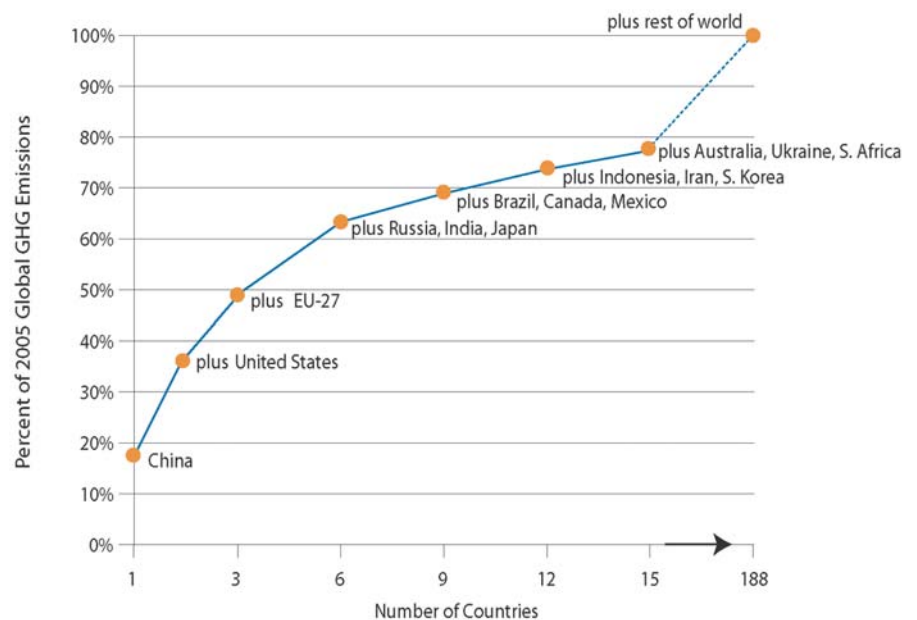
Why is an international climate agreement important?

The impacts of climate change do not respect borders — all countries will experience the impacts. It is therefore in the interest of all nations to control greenhouse gas emissions such as carbon dioxide, HFC refrigerants, and methane. It is also important for the U.S. and other wealthy countries to help emerging countries de-link rapid economic growth from greenhouse gas emissions.

Why is U.S. leadership critical?

No single country can solve the climate change problem alone. As the largest per capita greenhouse gas emitter, U.S. participation and leadership is needed to achieve meaningful global action. The type of actions taken by other countries will be influenced by the level and type of commitments taken by the United States.

AGGREGATE CONTRIBUTIONS OF MAJOR GHG EMITTING COUNTRIES FOR 2005



Sources and Notes: WRI, CAIT. Percent contributions are for year 2005 GHG emissions only. Moving from left to right, countries are added in order of their absolute emissions, with the largest being added first. Figures exclude emissions from land-use change and forestry and bunker fuels. Adapted from Figure 2.3 in Baumert et al. (2005).

As the world's technological powerhouse, the U.S. can offer innovative energy and technology solutions to help address the climate change problem. A clean energy technology revolution led by the U.S. will create opportunities for U.S. businesses in times of economic challenges, and a global climate change agreement would create new markets for U.S. products and energy solutions around the world.

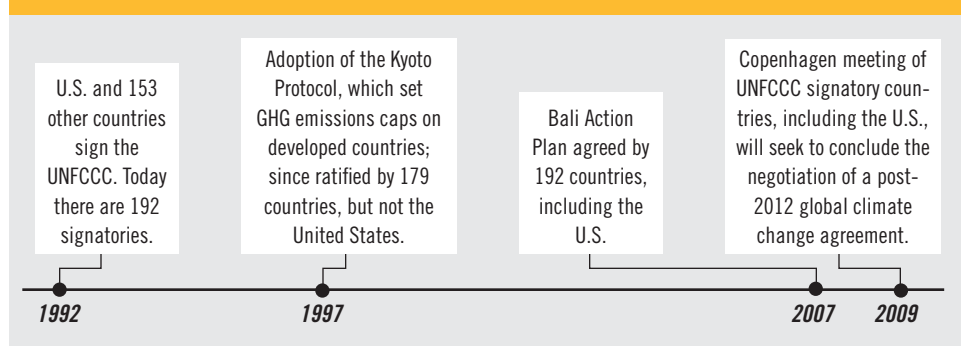
Driven by increased energy consumption, China, India and Brazil are among the top 10 emitters of greenhouse gas emissions (see graph). By 2050, developing countries will account for around eight billion of the world's projected nine billion people. An effective global climate change agreement will contribute to more sustainable development for billions of people.

Why should the U.S. act when other major polluters are not?

There is a common misconception that emerging countries, including China – whose total greenhouse gas emissions are now beginning to mirror those of the U.S. – and India, are not concerned about climate change and are unwilling to curb their domestic emissions. In fact:

- Despite the fact that it is a rapidly growing country with substantial poverty, China reduced energy use per unit of GDP by 20% from 2006-2011 and almost reached its goal of 10% renewable energy by 2011. In 2007, China shut down around 1000 cement plants and many other polluting factories.
- India and Brazil published national climate plans in 2008, and Brazil has also enacted an oil tax.
- Mexico initiated a program on climate change in 2008 and South Korea will set a greenhouse gas reduction goal in 2009.

International Climate Change Processes: A Timeline



Where are we in the international negotiation process?

In 2012, the first phase of the Kyoto Protocol will be concluded. In the next two years a follow-on treaty will be negotiated. This process was started in earnest in Bali in 2007, with the agreement of the Bali Action Plan, and will conclude in Copenhagen in December 2009. The Bali Action Plan makes provisions for developing countries to take nationally-appropriate mitigation actions that will help advance their national development goals while addressing climate change. The Plan also adds that developed countries will provide technology, finance, and capacity to support their mitigation actions. Determining how these actions and support will be measured, reported and verified is a key part of the current negotiations.

What can we do to encourage the rest of the world to reduce their GHG emissions?

Developing countries are seeking partnerships and assistance for climate change adaptation, mitigation, technology and financing. The UNFCCC already coordinates international action in these four key areas, making U.S. participation through this channel an easy option:

- **Mitigation (Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions):** The Bali Action Plan agreed to by the U.S. created the negotiating space for developing and developed countries to take nationally-appropriate mitigation actions to reduce greenhouse gases. It provides a framework for technology transfer, capacity building and financial assistance to support

developing country actions to mitigate fossil fuel emissions. The U.S. can take a lead in turning these agreements into action.

- **Technology:** Developing countries such as China and India seek climate-friendly technology to meet their growing needs for energy. The UNFCCC technology funds are available to help countries move toward low carbon economies through developing and deploying renewable, non-fossil fuel technologies such as wind and concentrated solar power. The U.S can play a major role in helping to deploy such technology through innovative public-private sector partnerships. This provides an opportunity for the U.S. to be the leader in low carbon use around the world.
- **Financing:** Developing countries need financial support to implement programs to deploy technology and investment in low carbon infrastructure, technology development and adaptation. Aid channels already exist, as described above. However, only a small fraction of what is needed has been pledged.
- **Adaptation:** Adaptation funds managed by the Global Environment Facility and the World Bank channel aid to developing countries to pay for specific activities to reduce their vulnerability to climate change (for example, coastal management planning). These are grossly under-funded and need U.S. leadership.

If the U.S. would release the \$1.6 billion promised to the World Bank for clean technology development and adaptation programs, it would support developing countries in reducing their greenhouse gas emissions. These funds could also help stimulate private sector investment and can be leveraged by businesses around the world. By taking advantage of technology development and partnership opportunities, the U.S. can recapture international leadership on clean technology development and production while helping emerging economies reduce their emissions.

Notes and Sources:

1. *Key Elements of a Global Deal on Climate Change*, Sir Nicholas Stern, 2008: 3.
2. *US Metro Economies: Current and Potential Jobs in the US Economy*, US Conference of Mayors, October 2008.
3. The Convention enjoys near universal membership, with 192 countries having ratified. http://unfccc.int/essential_background/convention/items/2627.php.

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WHAT WRI IS DOING – RELEVANT PUBLICATIONS, TOOLS & DATA

Climate Analysis Indicators Tool (CAIT)

CAIT is an information and analysis tool on global climate change developed by WRI. <http://cait.wri.org/>

Corporate Accounting and Reporting Standards (Corporate Standard)

www.wri.org/publication/greenhouse-gas-protocol-corporate-accounting-and-reporting-standard-revised-edition

A Comparison of Legislative Climate Change Targets in the 110th Congress

www.wri.org/publication/usclimatetargets

Growing in the Greenhouse: Protecting the Climate by Putting Development First

www.wri.org/publication/growing-in-the-greenhouse

Sustainable Development Policies and Measures Database

<http://projects.wri.org/sd-pams-database>

Slicing the Pie: Sector-based Approaches to International Climate Agreements

www.wri.org/publication/slicing-the-pie

Weathering the Storm: Options for Framing Adaptation and Development

www.wri.org/publication/weathering-the-storm

Correcting the World's Greatest Market Failure: Climate Change and the Multilateral Development Banks

www.wri.org/publication/correcting-the-worlds-greatest-market-failure

Leveling the Carbon Playing Field: International Competition and U.S. Climate Policy Design

www.wri.org/publication/leveling-the-carbon-playing-field