

UN Climate Negotiations in Poznan, Poland

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Introduction

This year's UN climate conference in Poznan, Poland, represents the halfway point in a crucial two-year negotiation on fighting global warming. The conference runs from December 1–12 and is expected to attract 8,000 participants.

The first phase of the Kyoto Protocol, the international treaty that sets targets for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from industrialized countries, runs from 2008 to 2012. Last December's UN climate conference in Bali launched the process to negotiate a global climate deal for the post-2012 period. Countries have agreed that the negotiations will wrap up in Copenhagen in December 2009.

It's hard to exaggerate the importance of reaching an ambitious and equitable post-2012 global climate agreement. Climate science tells us that global GHG emissions need to peak and start to decline before 2020.¹ The agreement to be reached in Copenhagen in 2009 will demonstrate whether or not the world is determined to reach that goal. A too-weak deal in Copenhagen could lock in drastic impacts on human health and security, the environment, and the world's economy.

The Poznan meetings need to set the stage for a successful conclusion to the negotiations in 2009. To do that, Poznan will need to be a turning point that moves countries from "talks" to full negotiations.

In terms of process, this means

- agreeing on an ambitious 2009 workplan for the UN negotiation sessions scheduled in 2009, culminating in the Copenhagen conference
- giving the meeting's chairs a political mandate to produce negotiation texts for the 2009 sessions.

In terms of substance,

- industrialized countries like Canada need to show leadership by committing to GHG targets strong enough to avoid dangerous climate change
- rich countries as a group must also commit to the principle of a dramatic scale-up in funding for poorer countries, to help them reduce GHGs and adapt to global warming; and progress must be made towards an adequate mechanism for securing this funding

¹ This is to have a chance of not exceeding 2°C of average global warming above the pre-industrial level (see p.4). For the peak date for global emissions, see Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, "Summary for Policymakers," in B. Metz et al., eds., *Climate Change 2007: Mitigation. Contribution of Working Group III to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Cambridge, UK, and New York, NY: 2007), 15. Also available online at <http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/wg3/ar4-wg3-spm.pdf>. See also UN Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2007/2008* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 49 Also available online at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2007-2008/>.

- countries must clearly state that the current economic downturn will not sidetrack them from addressing the equally urgent climate crisis.

The Poznan conference consists of six interlinked meetings with two key “negotiation tracks,” one under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and one under the Kyoto Protocol.² The key issues under negotiation in each track are outlined below.

Convention track:

- a “shared vision” for global climate action (i.e., agreement on a overall level of ambition and a fair distribution of effort in cutting emissions)
- adaptation to climate change
- the transfer of clean technologies
- provision of financial support by rich countries for addressing climate change in developing countries, including protection of forests

Kyoto track:

- targets for deeper GHG reductions by industrialized countries
- a scheduled review of the Kyoto Protocol

In recent years, the Bush administration has consistently blocked progress at the UN climate talks. In particular, its reluctance to commit to GHG reductions has been a huge obstacle, as the U.S. and China are the world’s two biggest GHG emitters by far. The Bush administration will participate for a final time in Poznan, taking part in the Convention track negotiations but not those under the Kyoto track (as the U.S. is not a party to the Kyoto Protocol). Because of the transition between presidents, it remains to be seen what approach the U.S. will take in Poznan. However, the meetings could be positively influenced by President-elect Obama’s stated intention to “once again engage vigorously in these [UN] negotiations, and help lead the world toward a new era of global cooperation on climate change.”³

Canada's track record

Canada comes into the Poznan negotiation in a unique position: we are still the only country to have accepted a Kyoto target and then decided not to try to meet it. Canada’s delegation also drew extraordinary public criticism — both from UN officials and national negotiators — for some of the positions it took at last December’s Bali climate conference.⁴

Canada has chosen to “lie low” — providing little in terms of written submissions — during the three non-ministerial UN negotiation sessions earlier in 2008. Heading into Poznan, Canada has a new Environment Minister, Jim Prentice, and the government has also appointed a new lead negotiator, Climate Ambassador Michael Martin.

² The six meetings are the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP 14), the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 4), the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA 29), the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI 29), the Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties (industrialized countries) under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP 6.2), and the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-Term Cooperative Action under the Convention (AWG-LCA 4). The ad hoc working groups represent the two main negotiation tracks.

³ Office of the President-Elect, “President-elect Barack Obama to deliver taped greeting to Bi-partisan Governors Climate Summit,” news release, November 19, 2008. Also available online at http://change.gov/newsroom/entry/president_elect_barack_obama_to_deliver_taped_greeting_to_bi_partisan_gover.

⁴ For a description of Canada’s role in Bali, see Matthew Bramley, “Canada and the Bali Roadmap,” *Behind the Headlines* 65, no. 1 (2008): 25. Also available online at <http://climate.pembina.org/op-ed/1583>.

Poznan therefore represents an opportunity for Canada to restore its credibility and build goodwill with its negotiation partners. To do this, Canada's delegation must undo the damage it did in Bali by reversing its unhelpful negotiating positions and adopt constructive approaches instead. The two most significant improvements that Canada needs to make are to adopt a level of ambition for GHG reductions based on science, and to commit to adequate support for addressing climate change in developing countries.

Science-based targets, backed up by domestic policies capable of meeting them

There is now a broad consensus that more than 2°C of average global warming above the pre-industrial level would constitute dangerous climate change. The *Bali Climate Declaration by Scientists*, signed by over 200 of the world's leading climatologists, states that staying within the 2°C limit must be "the prime goal" of the global climate agreement to be reached next year in Copenhagen.⁵ The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the world's leading scientific body on climate change, has shown that to have a chance of not exceeding the 2°C limit, industrialized countries' GHG emissions must fall to **25–40% below the 1990 level by 2020** if they are to make a fair contribution to the necessary cuts in global emissions.⁶

Based on the IPCC's analysis, countries that are parties to the Kyoto Protocol agreed in Bali that this range of emission reductions by industrialized countries should guide the negotiations on the post-2012 global climate agreement.⁷ Canada did so only under protest, when it found itself publicly isolated in its opposition to science-based targets.

Unfortunately, Canada has adopted a national emissions target equivalent to just **3% below the 1990 level in 2020**,⁸ which falls far short of the range adopted in Bali and the requirements of science. And Canada has yet to commit to, let alone implement, domestic policies capable of meeting its target. In Poznan, the Pembina Institute will release an updated evaluation of Canada's federal GHG reduction policies prepared for the annual Climate Change Performance Index, which ranks countries' performance in controlling emissions. (Last year, Canada finished third from the bottom, placing 53rd out of the world's 56 top-emitting countries.)

The David Suzuki Foundation and the Pembina Institute will also release a preliminary economic analysis in Poznan demonstrating that Canada is fully capable of achieving a target consistent

⁵ Available online at <http://www.climate.unsw.edu.au/bali/>.

⁶ Sujata Gupta et al., "Policies, Instruments and Co-operative Arrangements," in B. Metz et al., eds., *Climate change 2007: Mitigation. Contribution of Working Group III to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Cambridge, UK and New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 776. Also available online at <http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/wg3/ar4-wg3-chapter13.pdf>. The IPCC's analysis applied to stabilization of the atmospheric GHG concentration at 450 parts per million of CO₂e. This corresponds to about a 50% chance of limiting average global warming to 2°C relative to the pre-industrial level. See Bill Hare and Malte Meinshausen, "How Much Warming Are We Committed to and How Much Can Be Avoided?," *Climatic Change* 75, nos. 1–2 (2006): 111. Also available online at <http://www.springerlink.com/content/g5861615714m7381/fulltext.pdf>.

⁷ UNFCCC Secretariat, *Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol on its resumed fourth session, held in Bali from 3 to 15 December 2007* (FCCC/KP/AWG/2007/5), 5. Also available online at http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/cop_13/application/pdf/awg_work_p.pdf.

⁸ The Government of Canada expresses its 2020 target as 20% below the 2006 emission level (see Environment Canada, *Turning the Corner: Regulatory Framework for Industrial Greenhouse Gas Emissions* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2008), iii). This target can be re-expressed relative to the 1990 level based on emissions data from Environment Canada's *National Inventory Report*.

with climate science (25% below the 1990 level by 2020) if it moves quickly to implement ambitious policies.

However, Canada's March 2008 submission to the UN negotiation process — the most recent that it has made on national GHG targets — shows that Canada continues to resist the idea of using scientific assessments to set climate targets. The submission instead stated that: “Consideration of these issues will need to be informed not only by what science is advising but also by what is technologically achievable, guided by the need to balance environmental protection with economic prosperity in particular national circumstances.”⁹ The notion of “balance” is wholly misleading in this context, as it ignores the enormous economic costs that would result from failing to meet science-based targets.

Support for climate action in developing countries

Heading into the Bali conference in 2007, Canada's position was that “all large emitters,” including developing countries like China and India, must take on “absolute binding emission reductions targets.”¹⁰ This met with widespread criticism, because the international community has agreed in the UNFCCC that developed countries must take the lead in tackling climate change. In fact, in Bali, developing countries including China moved significantly by agreeing to consider “nationally appropriate mitigation actions” — i.e., actions to reduce their emissions — as long as they are “supported and enabled by technology, financing and capacity-building” from developed countries.¹¹

Clearly, developing countries cannot be expected to agree to take more aggressive action than the U.S. The Bush administration's refusal to commit the U.S. to meaningful GHG reductions prevented developing countries from moving even further in Bali.

Developing countries' position in Bali nonetheless represented a welcome development, as avoiding dangerous climate change will require them to significantly reduce their emissions relative to “business-as-usual” by 2020.¹² The developing countries' condition for doing this — financial support from developed countries — is also clearly outlined in the UNFCCC; the convention creates an obligation on developed countries to provide financial resources and to transfer technology to developing countries, and also to assist them with meeting the costs of adaptation to climate change.¹³

(It is worth noting that, despite its rapid industrialization, China's per-capita emissions of carbon dioxide — the most important greenhouse gas — are three times lower than Canada's; China's per-capita GDP is seven times lower than Canada's.¹⁴ The disparities are even greater in the case of India.)

⁹ UNFCCC Secretariat, *Views and information on the means to achieve mitigation objectives of Annex I Parties: Submissions from Parties — Addendum* (FCCC/KP/AWG/2008/MISC.1/Add.1), 3. Also available online at <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2008/awg5/eng/misc01a01.pdf>.

¹⁰ John Baird, “Un effort planétaire,” *La Presse*, December 6, 2007.

¹¹ UNFCCC Secretariat, *Decision 1/CP.13 — Bali Action Plan* (FCCC/CP/2007/6/Add.1) paragraph 1(b)(ii). Also available online at <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2007/cop13/eng/06a01.pdf#page=3>.

¹² Analysis shows that developing countries' emissions will need to peak by 2020 to have a chance of limiting average global warming to 2°C relative to the pre-industrial level. See UN Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2007/2008*.

¹³ UNFCCC articles 4.3 and 4.4.

¹⁴ Data for China and Canada are as follows:

Climate science has long recognized that the impacts of climate change will hit the world's poor first and hardest, although they have done the least to create the problem. The costs of adaptation — avoiding the worst through disaster response systems, and “climate-proofing” infrastructure and people — will run into the tens of billions of dollars per year, according to the published estimates.¹⁵ Developing countries pushed hard in Bali to have these needs recognized, and adaptation has now moved to the top of the negotiators' agenda, alongside targets and actions to reduce emissions.

Getting a deal in 2009 will require agreement on a mechanism to provide the additional funding that poorer countries need both for reducing emissions, including protection of forests, and for adapting to climate change. This mechanism must generate funds in a predictable, fair and transparent manner, and the funds must be above and beyond the dollars that developed countries already commit to international aid.

After making only a very small contribution to addressing climate change in developing countries in recent years,¹⁶ Canada announced a further \$100 million contribution for climate adaptation in October.¹⁷ But voluntary, one-off contributions of this kind clearly won't come anywhere close to the scale of funding required. Several countries — notably Norway, Mexico, Switzerland, and the developing country Group of 77 (G77) plus China — have tabled proposals to raise the dollars required through a variety of mechanisms. In Poznan, countries must state their positions on these proposals in an effort to come to consensus; and developed countries like Canada must give an indication of the scale of support they are prepared to deliver.

Canada has yet to comment publicly on any of these proposals. However, in a submission to the negotiation process made in March 2008, Canada stated that “it will not be possible to successfully address” the question of financial support “without an understanding of what will be the measurable and verifiable emission reduction commitments by major emitters, including the emerging economies.”¹⁸ In other words, Canada was saying that developing countries had to move first before it would come to the table with financial support. Given the expectation that developed countries will show leadership in tackling climate change, this approach is unlikely to be viewed as constructive by other negotiators.

	China	Canada	Source
CO ₂ emissions from fossil fuel use and cement production (millions of tonnes, 2006)	6,230	510	Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency, Environment Canada
Population (millions, 2006)	1,320.864	32.577	UN Population Division
GDP per capita (based on purchasing-power-parity) (US \$, 2007)	5,325	38,614	International Monetary Fund

¹⁵ This includes estimates from the World Bank, the UNFCCC Secretariat, Oxfam, and the UN Development Programme.

¹⁶ Clare Demerse, *Climate Change at the G8 Leaders' Summit in Hokkaido, Japan (July 7–9, 2008)* (Drayton Valley, AB: The Pembina Institute, 2008), 7. Also available online at <http://climate.pembina.org/pub/1662>.

¹⁷ Office of the Prime Minister, “Prime Minister Harper Calls Francophonie Summit a Success for Canada and the International Organization of La Francophonie,” news release, Oct. 19, 2008. Also available online at <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=2286>.

¹⁸ UNFCCC Secretariat, *Views regarding the work programme for the Ad-Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention: Submissions from Parties — Addendum* (FCCC/AWGLCA/2008/MISC.1/Add.2), 13. Also available online at <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2008/awglca1/eng/misc01a02.pdf>.

Conclusion

To understand what's at stake in Poznan and in the countdown to Copenhagen, picture the atmosphere as a bathtub with the taps turned on. Like water in a bathtub, GHG emissions don't just drain away: they can persist for anywhere between decades and thousands of years after they're released. Over the past 150 years, we've filled the bathtub almost to the top, and most of the "water" came from the world's developed countries.¹⁹ The water is already splashing over the edge, and if the taps aren't turned off soon, the whole bathroom floor could collapse.

The UN negotiations on GHG targets are about how to divide up the last inch of bathtub space between the nations of the world. The discussions about funding for technology transfer are about helping developing countries avoid turning the taps fully on the way the developed countries did (instead, with financial support to cover the extra costs, they can turn down the taps by moving directly to cleaner energy). And the adaptation discussions are about the best ways to protect the people who get flooded each time the bathtub overflows.

Canada's track record on the issues under discussion in Poznan has been very poor. At present, Canada is running far too much water into the bathtub: our emissions are in the world's top ten in both absolute and per capita terms.²⁰ Our current GHG target for 2020 is essentially a plan to keep using more than our fair share of the dwindling "space" in the atmosphere, and we have yet to announce meaningful plans to help developing countries reduce their emissions or adapt to climate change. In Poznan, Canada must seize the opportunity to restore its lost credibility en route to making a positive contribution to a successful climate deal in Copenhagen next year.

¹⁹ Between 1850 and 2000, industrialized countries accounted for 78% of global cumulative carbon dioxide emissions from burning fossil fuels. Between 1950 and 2000, industrialized countries accounted for 53% of global cumulative carbon dioxide emissions from burning fossil fuels and deforestation. See *Climate Analysis Indicators Tool (CAIT) Version 5.0* (Washington, DC: World Resources Institute, 2008), <http://cait.wri.org/>.

²⁰ In 2000, Canada was eighth in the world in absolute GHG emissions and ninth in per-capita emissions (excluding deforestation). See *Climate Analysis Indicators Tool*.