

## Speaking Out on Copenhagen

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*Reported by Jessica Rae Patton*

From condemning to cautiously hopeful, top environmental organizations released statements following the close Friday of the U.N. Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen and the release of the “Copenhagen Accord.” Leaders from the U.S., China, India, Brazil and South Africa drew up the accord, which was formally accepted Saturday morning by the Parties to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 15). It remains to be seen how many countries will sign on to the Copenhagen Accord. Click [\(here\)](#) to read the Copenhagen Accord in its entirety.

Greenpeace International Executive Director Kumi Naidoo blisteringly called Copenhagen “a climate crime scene, with the guilty men and women fleeing to the airport in shame.” He blamed the wealthy industrialized world, and the U.S. in particular, for failing to commit to the “rapid reductions that would give us the best chance of avoiding dangerous climate change... We cannot change that science, so instead we will have to change the politics—and we may well have to change the politicians.”



Among the more scathing comments out of COP 15, Greenpeace called it a "climate crime scene."

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Center for Biological Diversity Climate Law Institute Director Kassie Siegel noted that the U.S. pledged to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by only 3% below 1990 levels by 2020. “The only hope that flows from Copenhagen stems not from [President Obama’s] hollow pronouncements, but from the birth of a diverse global movement demanding real solutions and climate justice—demands made with a collective voice growing loud enough that in short order politicians will no longer be able to ignore it.”

WWF President and CEO Carter Roberts went a little easier on the U.S. leader, who he says “outlined the building blocks of a deal and expressed his conviction that work still needs to be done. He has put an emissions target on the table and pledged his commitment to long-term climate financing—both critical pieces of a final deal.” But he noted that it’s an empty commitment without the passage of tough climate change legislation. Several other environmental leaders concurred; National Wildlife Federation CEO and President Larry Schweiger wrote on his blog, “The Senate needs to get busy and deliver the stalled climate and clean energy bill to the president to create jobs and do our share to reduce global warming pollution... We must get a climate bill passed by the U.S. Senate by Earth Day April 22, 2010. Without it, the U.S. stands to lose the global clean energy race and the world stands to leave its most vulnerable communities to face rising seas, severe water shortages, forest fires, sustained droughts and major floods.”

Sierra Club Executive Director Carl Pope also fingered the Senate: “President Obama and the rest of the world paid a steep price here in Copenhagen because of obstructionism in the U.S. Senate. That a deal was reached at all is testament to President Obama's leadership—all the more remarkable because of the very weak hand he was dealt because of the Senate's failure to pass domestic clean energy and climate legislation. Now that the rest of the world—including countries like China and India—has made clear that it is willing to take action, the Senate must pass domestic legislation as soon as possible. America and the world can no longer be held hostage to petty politics and obstructionism.”

Natural Resources Defense Council President Frances Beinecke and League of Conservation Voters President Gene Karpinski, who met with Obama shortly before COP 15, were hopeful in their assessments. “For the first time in history, the United States is joining with other major emitters to take real action against global warming,” says Beinecke. “This agreement is not all we had hoped for...But it sets the stage for further action in the months ahead...Now the Senate can take up clean energy and climate legislation in the certain knowledge that Americans won't act alone. A hopeful nation watches and waits for the Senate to pass a bill that will put Americans back to work, reduce our reliance on foreign oil and ensure a safer future for us all.” Karpinski said, “Significantly, the U.S. and China will—for the first time—both be at the table, working to tackle the historic challenge of global climate change.

“Moving forward,” he said, “it is absolutely critical that the U.S. lead by example and work swiftly to enact comprehensive clean energy and climate legislation next year.” Though highly critical of the U.S. role in the summit and resulting deal, Friends of the Earth President Erich Pica made the important point that “while the cost of solving the climate crisis rises each day we fail to act, the crisis remains one that can largely be averted. It is up to the citizens of the world—especially citizens of the United States, which has so impeded progress—to mobilize and ensure that true solutions carry the day. I firmly believe that together, we can still achieve a politics in which climate justice prevails.”

SOURCES: World Wildlife Fund; Center for Biological Diversity; Friends of the Earth; Greenpeace; League of Conservation Voters; National Resources Defense Club; National Wildlife Federation; Sierra Club.