

Regulation

It's Time For International Emissions ReductionsBy **Andrew Holland**

Last week, news from the Department of Energy's Carbon Dioxide Information Analysis Center announced that 2010 was a record year for CO₂ emissions. Not only did emissions reach a record high, but the annual amount of growth was unprecedented.

This is a worrying rise. It means that emissions are exceeding the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change's (IPCC's) worst-case scenario. It means that the world could be heading for dangerous, unprecedented, and irreversible climate change.

The AP's story on this noted that "extra pollution in China and the US account for more than half the increase in emissions last year."

That statement is true, but misleading. China alone accounted for 41% of the world's emissions growth. Because of the size of the growth in Chinese emissions, the story could just as truthfully have said that China and India (9.5% of world growth) accounted for more than half of last year's increase in emissions.

This fact hints at a larger, and more important story that is buried within the numbers: the growth in emissions is no longer coming from the developed world. It is the developing world that is now the driver of emissions growth.

Emissions in the United States were still below their 2007 peak. Similarly, the EU is below 2008 levels, as are Russia, Japan, and Australia.

The reductions in emissions in these developed countries have been driven by the economic downturn stemming from the financial crisis, felt more strongly in the developed world than the developing world. However, their emissions reductions have their roots in longstanding governmental policies, like the EU's Emissions Trading Scheme or Japan's efficiency efforts. In addition, governmental policies to develop and deploy clean energy generating technology mean that these reductions could prove durable.

On the other hand, a return to energy-intensive economic growth, in large developing countries like China, India, Brazil, and Egypt--whose emissions went up by 10%, 9%, 12%, and 5%, respectively--make it much less likely that the world can stabilize emissions at a level that the IPCC says would preclude dangerous climate change.

The world needs an effective global mechanism for reducing emissions. Unfortunately, the Kyoto Protocol has not proved effective.

Kyoto's greatest fault was that it divided the world into developed and developing countries. Under the UN's Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the negotiating body for reducing emissions, the world is divided between "Annex 1" (developed) and "Non-Annex 1" (developing) countries. At a historic meeting in Berlin in 1995, two years before Kyoto, the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" was agreed to that separated the world into two. The idea was that developed countries were principally responsible for the historic emissions, so they should be principally responsible for reducing their emissions. In practice, though, this has meant that developed country signatories are responsible for reductions, while developing countries face no such constraints. The

divide between developed and developing countries was the reason that the United States Senate never ratified the Kyoto Protocol.

In 1994, the year before the principle was put into place, non-annex 1 countries accounted for 40% of the world's emissions from energy use. Since then, however, the developing world, and China in particular, have gone on a growth spurt. Today, the ratio has almost flipped, with Non-Annex 1 countries accounting for 56% of emissions, and growing fast. Of the growth in emissions measured in 2010, 68% came from non-annex 1 countries.

As the world prepares to gather in Durban, South Africa in December for another round of UNFCCC negotiations, negotiators should work towards an agreement that provides a realistic and effective way to reduce dangerous climate emissions. The current approach, embodied in the Kyoto Protocol, is clearly ineffective.

The Copenhagen Accord, agreed two years ago at the Copenhagen conference, was a step in the right direction. It asked, for the first time, that all countries submit targets for controlling emissions that would be verifiable by the UN. However, it has never been fully embraced by negotiators: European countries want a strict legally binding treaty, no matter the cost, while major developing countries continue to adhere to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

This report shows that if a new approach--one that promises to actually reduce total global emissions, not just the slowest growing subset--is not reached, the world could be in for dangerous levels of climate change.

We need an approach that shares technology and best-practices around the world, while asking all but the Least Developed Countries to take some form of measurable, reportable, and verifiable limits on their emissions. Only then will the world be able stabilize emissions. But- we must hurry; it could soon be too late.

Photo Caption: *People take part in the drilling operations on September 28, 2011 to pump water out the Tete Rousse glacier above the French Alps town of Saint-Gervais-les-Bains. The experts warned that the 65,000 cubic meters (2.3 million cubic feet) of water that has collected inside the glacier could burst, potentially destroying the 900 homes and other structures in the region.*

Andrew Holland is the Senior Fellow for Energy and Climate at the American Security Project, a bi-partisan think-tank examining the big strategic choices facing the United States. His previous articles on AOL Energy include *Fusion For The Future*.
