



CONFRONTING GLOBAL WARMING

## The Copenhagen Accord

### An Important Step Toward Effective International Action on Climate Change

#### Accomplishments in Copenhagen

A key priority for the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) is to assist the conclusion of a fair, ambitious, and binding international climate treaty that will place a mandatory “cap” on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from major emitting countries and help bring about a clean energy economy within the United States and worldwide. An important step in this direction was made in Copenhagen, Denmark on December 18, 2009, at the end of the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), when 28 countries adopted the Copenhagen Accord.

"We underline that climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time."

-The Copenhagen Accord,  
18 December 2009

The product of intense and unprecedented negotiations involving heads of state, this voluntary political agreement came about as a result of efforts by the U.S., in agreement with developing nations that are major GHG emitters: China, Brazil, India, and South Africa. In this Accord, developed and major developing nations agreed to limit their greenhouse gas emissions and invest in clean energy technologies and practices. Developed countries also pledged to provide assistance to developing nations to assist them in adapting to the effects of climate change.

As of mid-March 2010, 108 countries, accounting for over 80% of global GHG emissions, have associated themselves with the Accord. Most have submitted their respective emissions-reduction pledges for 2020 to the UNFCCC Secretariat, along with their other climate mitigation goals.

The U.S. has provisionally pledged to reduce its emissions by approximately 17% from 2005 levels, as provided for in draft U.S. legislation.<sup>1</sup> An up-to-date list of country submissions to the Copenhagen Accord can be found at: <http://unfccc.int/home/items/5262.php>.

#### National Wildlife Federation Perspectives

Achieving a comprehensive, internationally binding treaty under the auspices of the UNFCCC is essential if our planet is to avoid the dangerous consequences of run-away climate change. This international treaty must commit developed countries to deep cuts in greenhouse gas emissions such that a peak in global warming pollution will occur within this decade.

While the Copenhagen Accord falls short of this benchmark, it does represent a step forward by acquiring voluntary pledges from both developed and developing nations to make new commitments to address their emissions, allowing some third-party oversight of these actions, and providing crucial “fast start” financing to help the least developed countries that will be the most impacted by climate change. The Copenhagen Accord also marks the first time that major emitting developing countries such as China and India, have put forward pledges to the UN to reduce the future growth of their emissions.

*National Wildlife Federation Perspectives cont'd*

The legal status of the Accord remains unclear, however. Further negotiations to link this political agreement with the ongoing negotiations of the UNFCCC are needed to help pave the way for additional progress at the next COP meeting in Cancun, Mexico in December 2010. The U.S. should be a major contributor to this effort.

### Highlights of the Copenhagen Accord

Although not a legally binding treaty, this international voluntary agreement:

- ✓ Recognizes the need to prevent global temperatures from exceeding 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels;
- ✓ Captures the significant actions taken by key countries to address their emissions through a verification system involving reports to the United Nations in accordance with new transparency agreements;
- ✓ Promotes action to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation as an essential mechanism for mitigating climate change;
- ✓ Calls for U.S. \$30 billion for the 2010-2012 period from wealthy countries to jump-start efforts in the developing world to address emissions and adapt to climate change impacts;
- ✓ Sets a goal of allocating U.S. \$100 billion per year from a variety of sources by 2020 to address the needs of developing countries in adapting to climate impacts, preventing deforestation, and developing and adopting clean energy technologies;
- ✓ Calls for a new 'Copenhagen Green Climate Fund' to manage international financial pledges; and
- ✓ Calls for a scientific assessment by 2015 of progress made towards reducing global emissions.

While NWF welcomes President Obama's personal leadership in Copenhagen, we believe the U.S. can and should go further towards solidifying its current conditional emissions reduction pledge. The U.S. can help to close the enormous gap between the world's emissions reductions committed so far and the cuts in GHG emissions that science tells us are needed.

Domestic legislation to address comprehensive clean energy production and climate change can help unlock the global potential of technological innovation and investment in green jobs. Additionally, only by demonstrating a firm commitment to action within the U.S. can the level of international cooperation required to forge a binding agreement be achieved, and the lack of trust that lingers from over a decade of U.S. inaction, be overcome.

Passage of U.S. domestic legislation that also supports our international commitments is an essential prerequisite for progress at the next treaty negotiation. The U.S. can emerge a leader in the new global green economy by playing a leadership role in securing a global deal on climate change that includes:

- **Adaptation assistance to support the world's poorest nations.** Climate change has a disproportionate impact on the world's poorest countries, which have contributed the least to global warming pollution. Providing developing countries and at-risk communities with the means to build climate-resilient ecosystems and infrastructure, and adapt to climate impacts, is critical to international and national security.
- **Mitigation measures including investments in tropical forests.** Forest protection and restoration are essential in the fight against climate change. In order to significantly reduce global carbon emissions, a system of financial incentives is needed that values intact forests, protects biodiversity, and safeguards the interests and rights of indigenous peoples and local communities.
- **New Technology investments.** If the world is to avert dangerous global warming, we must reduce existing emissions from industrial sources, help the many millions of people who are energy poor to implement clean technologies, and invest in new clean energy markets.
- **Effective Finance systems that are smart and transparent.** In order to ensure successful and equitable delegation of mitigation and adaptation financing, funds from developed countries must be measured, reported, and verified based on universal standards adopted by the COP.



## What U.S. and other major emitting country commitments in Copenhagen will mean for reducing global warming pollution

The United States' pledge at Copenhagen to reduce emissions has played a key role in encouraging large-emitting developing countries to make their own pollution reductions pledges:



**The U.S.** – In its acknowledgement of the Copenhagen Accord, the U.S. committed to economy-wide emissions reductions of 17% below 2005 levels by 2020, in conformity with anticipated U.S. energy and climate legislation (formal commitment is pending the enactment of a domestic climate bill). Pending U.S. climate legislation, the U.S. would also commit to the long-term goal of reducing emissions 83% by 2050.<sup>2</sup>



**China** – China has committed to “reducing carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP by 40-45% by 2020 from the 2005 level, increasing the share of non-fossil fuels in primary energy consumption to around 15% by 2020.”<sup>3</sup> China has also committed to increasing forest coverage by 40 million hectares by 2020.<sup>4</sup> **(1)**



**Brazil** – Brazil committed to a series of voluntary domestic actions including reductions in deforestation and increases in alternative energy sources that would achieve emissions reductions of 36.1% to 38.9% below “the projected emissions of Brazil by 2020”.<sup>5</sup>



**India** – India has proposed a voluntary reduction in “the emissions intensity of its GDP by 20%-25% by 2020 in comparison to the 2005 level”.<sup>6</sup> **(2)**



**South Africa** – South Africa has committed to a “nationally appropriate mitigation action” that would achieve a 34% reduction below its “business as usual” emissions growth trajectory by 2020 if provided support in the form of financial resources, technology transfer and capacity building.<sup>7</sup>

"[W]e shall, recognizing the scientific view that the increase in global temperature should be below 2 degrees Celsius, on the basis of equity and in the context of sustainable development, enhance our long-term cooperative action to combat climate change."

-The Copenhagen Accord,  
18 December 2009

- (1) **Note on China:** Variable projections for economic growth in developing countries make it difficult to calculate carbon intensity reduction pledges in terms of emissions reductions from a baseline year. Since GDP projections for China for 2020 vary widely, this pledge could mean either a modest decrease or a significant increase in emissions by 2020, compared with 1990 levels.
- (2) **Note on India:** GDP projections for India for 2020 vary, but it is anticipated that its carbon intensity reduction pledge would mean a dramatic increase in emissions by 2020, compared with 1990 levels.



## A First Step: 'Fast-start' Funding from the U.S.

Only by pledging adequate and transparent international climate financing can the U.S. play its part in protecting communities, ecosystems and wildlife. It is anticipated that the impacts of climate change will be disproportionately felt by the world's poorest communities and most vulnerable wildlife and habitats. In Copenhagen, wealthy countries pledged to create a fund to help developing nations get started on solutions to climate change while a new international agreement is being worked out. To meet a fair share of this pledge, the White House has released its proposed federal budget for FY 2011, which calls for 'fast-start' funding of \$1.4 billion.<sup>8</sup> This will provide needed investments in developing countries to help them adapt to the impacts of climate change, shift to a clean energy future, and invest in reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation ("REDD-plus"). Pledges made in Copenhagen to finance adaptation through the Copenhagen 'Green Climate Fund' will help increase the resiliency of the world's most vulnerable populations and natural areas and help developing countries adapt to climate change. This early financial contribution will strengthen the U.S. commitment to the Copenhagen Accord.

## Supporting the International Climate Change Investment Act of 2009 (S. 2835)

The International Climate Change Investment Act (S. 2835) introduced by Senator Kerry (D-Mass) contains the U.S. policy elements necessary to advance a global climate agreement, while providing the foundation to meet U.S. commitments to the UNFCCC and the Copenhagen Accord. This Act would establish an Interagency Board to implement a monitoring and evaluation plan that would oversee the effective and efficient delegation of international climate funds. Supporting this bill would establish necessary programs to address the global security risks of climate change and protect decades of U.S. investments in poverty reduction, development, and conservation, promote U.S. economic competitiveness through a clean energy deployment program, and support global emissions reductions by protecting forests and reducing deforestation.

**"We recognize the crucial role of reducing emission from deforestation and forest degradation and the need to enhance removals of greenhouse gas emission by forests and agree on the need to provide positive incentives to such actions through the immediate establishment of a mechanism including REDD-plus..."**

*-The Copenhagen Accord, 18 December 2009*

## U.S. Commitments in Copenhagen will Help Protect Vital Forests

Tropical forest conservation has been highlighted as one of the most cost-effective ways of mitigating the effects of climate change on communities and biodiversity. In Copenhagen, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced that the U.S. would contribute \$1 billion over the next three years for early actions in developing countries that build capacity for reducing deforestation and enhancing conservation ("REDD-plus").<sup>9</sup>

***U.S. Commitments in Copenhagen will Help Protect Vital Forests cont'd***

Forests and other natural ecosystems play an essential role in regulating our global climate, by acting as carbon "sinks" that absorb carbon dioxide from our atmosphere and store carbon as biomass. The loss of our planet's tropical forests and peat lands accounts for approximately 15% of annual carbon dioxide emissions--sending more of heat-trapping greenhouse gas into the atmosphere than all the world's cars, trucks, planes, and other transportation-sector emitters combined. A successful REDD-plus program could provide important domestic economic benefits to U.S. farmers and foresters, by reducing market competition with U.S.-produced food and timber products from products illegally sourced from areas of tropical deforestation.

If carefully implemented to ensure financial transparency, rigorous measurement and environmental and social safeguards, a REDD-plus program has the unprecedented potential to bring together the interests of governments, communities and the private sector to protect our planet's forests through a collaborative and equitable system.

**For more information, visit:**  
[www.nwf.org/international](http://www.nwf.org/international)

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<sup>1</sup> United States of America. Letter of association with the Copenhagen Accord. Submitted to the UNFCCC Secretariat. 28 January 2010.

[http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/application/pdf/unitedstatescphaccord\\_app.1.pdf](http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/application/pdf/unitedstatescphaccord_app.1.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> UNFCCC. Information provided by Parties to the Convention relating to the Copenhagen Accord. <http://unfccc.int/home/items/5264.php>. Also see U.S. Climate Action Network "Who's on board with the Copenhagen Accord?" <http://www.usclimatenetwork.org/policy/copenhagen-accord-commitments>

<sup>3</sup> People's Republic of China. Letter submitted to the UNFCCC Secretariat. 1 February 2010. <http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/application/pdf/chinacphaccord.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> People's Republic of China. Letter submitted to the UNFCCC Secretariat. 1 February 2010. <http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/application/pdf/chinacphaccord.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Federal Republic of Brazil. Letter submitted to the UNFCCC Secretariat. 29 January 2010. [http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/application/pdf/brazilcphaccord\\_app2.pdf](http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/application/pdf/brazilcphaccord_app2.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> India. Letter submitted to the UNFCCC Secretariat. 30 January 2010. [http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/application/pdf/indiacphaccord\\_app2.pdf](http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/application/pdf/indiacphaccord_app2.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Republic of South Africa. Letter submitted to the UNFCCC Secretariat. 29 January 2010. [http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/application/pdf/southafricacphaccord\\_app2.pdf](http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/application/pdf/southafricacphaccord_app2.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Budget of the U.S. Government. FY 2011. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/fy2011/assets/budget.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> United States Department of Agriculture. News Release No. 1618.09. <http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal?contentidonly=true&contentid=2009/12/0618.xml>