

# Reaching Consensus on a Global, Low-Carbon Future: The Long and Winding Road to Copenhagen



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# Structure of the presentation

1. Climate change, governance and policy
2. The political process of constructing a global, low-carbon future
3. Copenhagen 2009
4. Five key questions that will inform the Copenhagen discussions and some illustrative examples;
5. Conclusion: is the UNFCCC entrenching or renegotiating global power relations?



# Situating climate change, governance and policy

- **RESOLVE, governance and policy;**

What is the role of policy in effecting a transition to a sustainable energy economy?

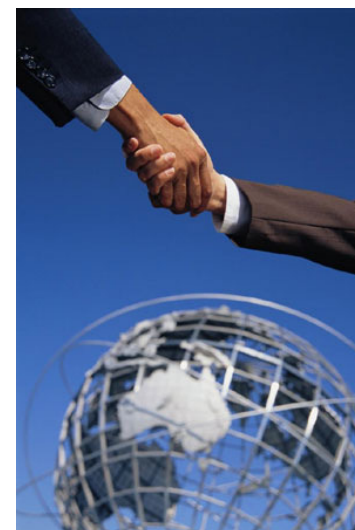
What are the implications for governance flowing from the social, psychological and cultural dimensions of energy-related behaviours explored in themes V2 and V3.

- **The political process of constructing a global, low carbon future**



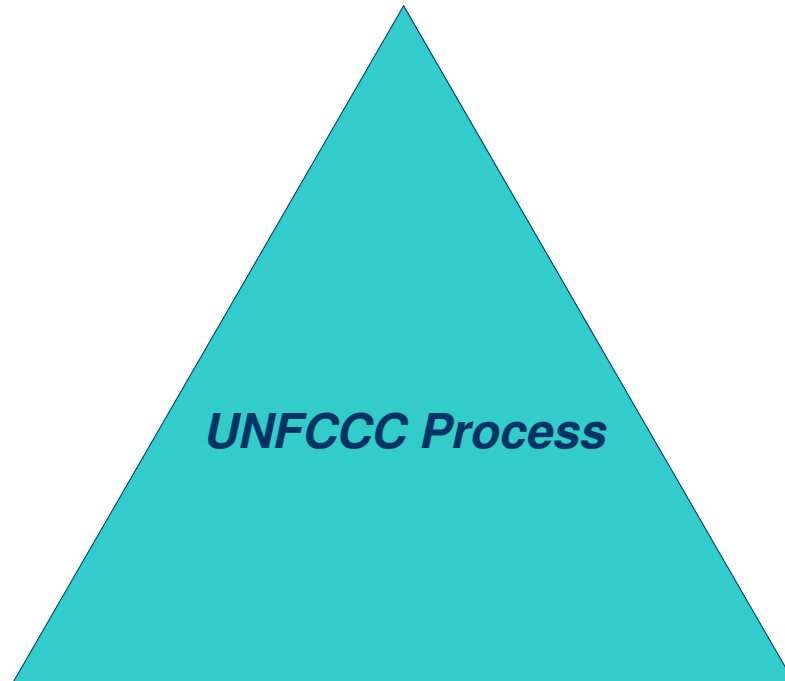
# The political process of constructing a global, low-carbon future

- **Negotiating agreement around the scientific consensus of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC);**
- **Climate change has sharpened the complex interaction which takes place between global actors, structures and contexts;**
- **From the beginning it was agreed that global discussion over climate change would proceed through ‘common but differentiated responsibilities’**
- **Copenhagen 2009 (COP 15);**



# The political process of constructing a global, low-carbon future

*Global low carbon future*



*UNFCCC Process*

*Common but differentiated responsibilities*

# The political process of constructing a global, low-carbon future

**Annex I (industrialized countries)  
40 countries and separately the EU)**

**Countries in the Annex I group are required to meet specific *targets* which were specified for them during the Kyoto treaty in regard to reducing future greenhouse gas emissions according to their 1990 baseline levels.**



# The political process of constructing a global, low-carbon future

**Non-Annex I countries (developing nations)**

**Currently avoid restrictions on indigenous growth because climate change has been politically linked to historical patterns of development and levels of pollution**



## Copenhagen 2009: the present realities

- **Global emissions have risen at a rate of 1 per cent per annum during the last decade (Connor and Green, 2009);**
- **Global energy consumption has risen at a rate of 1 – 1.5 per cent per annum over the last two decades – 90 per cent of which is fossil fuel based**
- **The US as the world's biggest polluter remains outside the Kyoto agreement;**
- **If the European lifestyle were adopted globally then we would need three planet's worth of resources to maintain existing levels of consumption and living standards (Vogler, 2008);**

## Copenhagen 2009: the present realities

- **Fossil fuels will remain the dominant source of energy, accounting for 83 per cent of the overall increase in energy demand;**
- **Emissions from the developing countries India, China, Brazil and South Africa are set to overtake the industrialized countries by the early 2020s where they will be responsible for about 70 per cent of the expected increase in global carbon emissions**

## **Five key issues which shape the different politics which nations and political alliances bring to the UNFCCC process**

- **Global development and equity issues;**
- **Sovereignty and global power politics;**
- **The urgency of climate change science;**
- **Conflict over scarce resources and ‘peak oil’**

# Global development issues: China

- China have been vociferous in arguing for the need to align environment and development goals more effectively;
- China's economic performance and rate of growth during two decades of reform mean that it is now a global economic player;
- China's model of growth remains characterized by massive disparities in income and wealth and growth remains carbon intensive;
- Thriving export sector illustrates the 'producer-consumer relationship with the West' and the 'responsibility' of global carbon emissions





# Sovereignty and global power politics: the United States



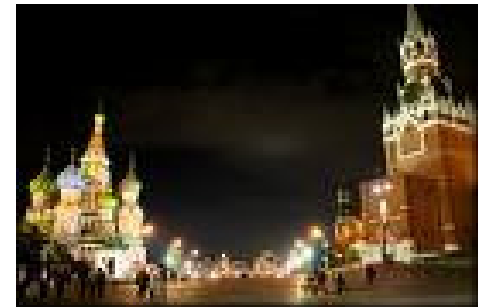
- **The US is the world's largest economy, emitting close to 25 per cent of the worlds carbon emissions: significant to an effective global climate change agreement;**
- **The carbon emissions of Texas – population 22 million – exceed the combined emissions of 120 developing countries with an aggregate population of over 1.1 billion people (Stiglitz, 2006);**
- **US actions on climate change have so far been indicative of a reluctance to change behaviour rather than a commitment to global equity;**
- **It was felt that ratifying Kyoto would impose costs on influential US industries – notably on the automobile, oil and coal sectors**

# The urgency of climate change science: Australia

- **Until 2007 the only developed country other than the US to decline Kyoto ratification;**
- **Political concern over global competitive threat to Australia's industrial base and fossil fuel export market;**
- **Greater visibility of climate change during the last few years has been politically significant;**
- **Change of government and public shift in favour of signing up to Kyoto**

## Conflict over scarce resources and a return to 'resource nationalism': Russia

- **Climate change not currently viewed as a priority by the Russian Government;**
- **Kyoto ratified only after political 'horse-trading' and entry into the World Trade Organization;**
- **Russia's status in international relations has more recently gained a higher profile due to its global bargaining position regarding reserves of natural gas and oil;**
- **This prioritization is also apparent in the OPEC countries and Venezuela, where there is a reluctance to impose environmental regulation on these activities**



# **The EU: galvanizing a more collective approach to a global, low-carbon future**

- **EU has been an active player and instigator on environmental issues;**
- **First fully functioning transnational carbon trading market;**
- **The ‘EU bubble’: negotiating a low-carbon future at the supranational level;**
- **Has tried to get its own house in order and Barroso’s 20/20/20 proposals have been seen as a further attempt to set an international example of what a global, low-carbon future would look like in practical terms**

# Yvo De Boer: four issues leading up to Copenhagen

- To what extent will the industrialized countries be prepared to reduce their emissions in a post-Kyoto settlement?
- How far will the major developing countries such as China and India now be willing to go in limiting the growth of their own emissions?
- What kind of funding mechanisms can be put in place in help poorer countries cope with the impacts of climate change?
- What should be the 'governance structure' of the future treaty?



# Conclusion: reconciling the science and the politics?

- The UNFCCC has been successful in bringing countries together to negotiate on climate change;
- Has yet to realistically specify what a global, low-carbon future will entail in line with IPCC recommendations;
- The historical process of negotiating the UNFCCC suggests that this has been the best compromise thus far;
- The urgency of climate change, and the science behind it, suggests that more robust agreement over both targets and responsibilities is now needed;



## Conclusion: is the UNFCCC the best global arrangement we can hope for?

- The risks of climate change are not yet urgent enough for collective will to override national self-interest and global power relations;
- A discussion over what ‘development’ will come to mean in the future must be part of an effective global agreement on climate change;
- This holds true both *within* the developed nations as well as within the South;
- Will the global economic recession now offer a ‘window of opportunity’ for a more effective UNFCCC process?

