

## The Copenhagen Climate Conference: Beginning of the End for Global Warming Politics?

By William Yeatman

*Summary: Green activists are appalled that last December's UN climate conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, did not produce a binding treaty obliging the world's industrial powers to limit their carbon emissions. Worse, they are aghast that U.N. officials kept them out of the negotiating process, reversing trends of the past two decades that promoted increasing participation by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) claiming to represent "civil society" apart from U.N. member states. What's the next step for the greens? Our author predicts an increase in extremist activism.*

Like most of the passengers on British Airways flight 812 (non-stop London to Copenhagen), I was traveling to Denmark to observe the United Nations Climate Conference scheduled for December 7 through 18, 2009. After the pilot announced that each of us was responsible for consuming 80 kilograms of jet fuel I guessed that he must have flown hundreds of conference attendees to Copenhagen during the previous week.

The pilot's announcement came to my mind four days later when U.N. officials decided to restrict access to the conference—after they had invited from 30,000 to 45,000 official "observers" to participate in it. As a representative of the free-market Competitive Enterprise Institute, I was one of those invited observers. We had logged thousands of miles and spewed tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere to get to Denmark only



**A Red Writer Goes To Bat For The Greens: Canadian communist Naomi Klein denounces capitalism and opposition to draconian emission controls in Copenhagen, Denmark on December 7, 2009.**

to be told our travel was in vain.

If you buy into global warming alarmism—I, for one, don't—then the Copenhagen Climate Conference, which was intended to save the environment, was an environmental catastrophe.

Ironies aside, when the United Nations shut out the representatives of nonprofits from around the world it set in motion a process that will have serious repercussions. Most

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**CONTENTS**

The Copenhagen  
Climate Conference  
*Page 1*

Philanthropy Notes  
*Page 6*

of those 30,000-45,000 invited participants were not disaffected anti-globalization riff-raff. They are the environmentalist establishment. When the U.N. denied them access to its biggest meeting on climate change policy-making it snapped a long-standing relationship with a key ally.

I witnessed this reckoning first-hand. Conference participants who had arrived in Denmark full of anticipation (“We are here! Let’s save the world!”) received a chilly welcome from conference organizers. By the second week of the conference it slowly became apparent that the world’s leaders were unwilling to sign a legally binding climate treaty. Emerging world powers like China, India, and Brazil were not about to sacrifice their sovereignty and the economic well-being of their citizens for a theory about the planet’s future climate. The breakdown of multilateral diplomatic negotiations on a climate treaty drove a wedge between the environmentalist movement and the U.N. And it is likely to push the environmentalist movement towards increasingly extremist activism.

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### **Busy work for the NGOs**

The puzzling question is: Why did the United Nations invite tens of thousands of environmentalists to an international summit for world leaders in Copenhagen? First, it’s important to note that U.N. conferences are organized around a set of mind-numbingly elaborate procedures. International negotiations on global warming are carried out under the auspices of a 1992 agreement reached in Rio de Janeiro and called the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, or FCCC. It organizes periodic meetings (called “Conferences of the Parties,” or COPs) that are supposed to prepare agreements (called “Protocols”) intended to set limits on carbon emissions. The 2009 Copenhagen Climate Conference was the 15th Conference of the Parties.

The FCCC was created just after the Soviet Union collapsed, a time when statesmen imagined that the end of the Cold War would usher in a new world order dedicated to open and transparent international policy-making. Policymakers expected issue-focused non-governmental organizations (called NGOs) to play a big role in this process.

And so the FCCC gave credentials to NGO “observers” to participate in its international negotiations. Except for a few atypical delegates like me, almost all these observers were sponsored by environmentalist groups. For instance, the World Wildlife Fund sent 123 staff members to Copenhagen.

During the first decade of COP conferences U.N. negotiators relied heavily on the environmentalist NGOs to set the climate change agenda for poor countries that did not have the money or talent to analyze the presumed impact of global warming on their societies. The NGOs’ large professional staffs provided “off budget” consulting on the latest alarmist trends thought to be affecting poor countries. They issued a torrent of reports on how global warming was melting glaciers, depleting forests, expanding deserts and lengthening

droughts around the world. U.N. negotiators came to rely on NGO advice on what they must do to stave off ecological, social and economic catastrophes.

Over time, however, the NGOs’ influence began to wane. The Internet made it easy to obtain research and compare findings. Moreover, the world’s leaders fell into a habit of arriving at the climate conferences on the last day with their own proposals, discarding the weeks of agenda-setting created by the NGOs. The green NGOs lost their functional relevance to the U.N. diplomatic process, but they still kept sending thousands of “observers” to the annual conferences. It didn’t hurt that the conferences were held in places like Montreal, Marrakesh, and Bali.

At U.N. conferences from 2001 to 2008, the environmentalist movement’s principal activity was to attack President George W. Bush, who had offhandedly disavowed the entire FCCC process. Anti-U.S. attacks were tolerated by U.N. officialdom which shared the greens’ antipathy to Bush. But Bush is gone now. It must have dawned on the diplomats who worked on the climate agreement behind closed doors that they didn’t need the green “observers” anymore.

### **Mr. Obama Meets the Chinese**

Major U.N. conferences like the one in Copenhagen typically last two weeks. During the first week, every sovereign nation—193 were in Copenhagen—sends its functionaries to haggle over esoteric details in draft documents. On the second week the more important politicians and diplomats begin to arrive to tidy up the negotiations. But it is only on the final Friday, the last day of the conference, when the powerful people from the powerful countries descend upon the host city, that the real talks begin. The leaders typically discard the first two weeks’ work and agree to meet again the following year. Unfailingly, they proclaim the conference “meaningful” and “historic.” That’s

the way the first fourteen Conferences of the Parties proceeded.

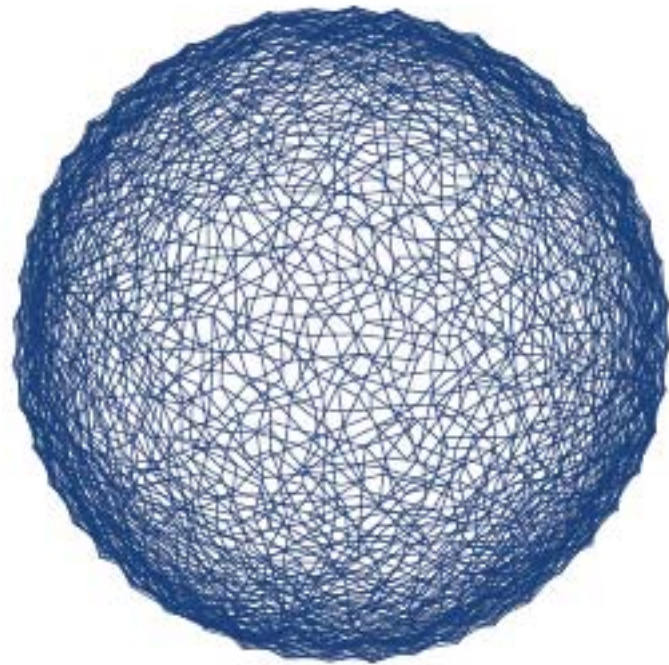
The Copenhagen climate confab was supposed to be different. The NGOs arrived expecting the diplomats to produce at long last a legally binding treaty to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions. And with the endorsement of U.S. President Barack Obama, they had every reason to expect the nations of the world to agree to it. The Danish capital actually incorporated Obama's famous campaign call for "hope" into the city's temporary title, "Hopenhagen."

Heads of state from 115 countries arrived in Copenhagen. But with each passing day, it became increasingly clear that the major powers did not take the agenda of the Copenhagen Climate Conference seriously. Every morning, U.N. officials handed out copies of the latest working text of a final agreement. After six days, there was scant progress.

According to mainstream media accounts, the recent climate conference failed because too many world leaders again punted on finalizing a treaty to fight global warming.

Why? In part, the national self-interest of the emerging industrializing powers took precedence. The New York Times reported that on the final day of the conference Chinese premier Wen Jiabao twice snubbed President Obama by sending low-level underlings to meet with him. The Chinese apparently took offense because the U.S. had questioned China's pollution reduction targets, wondering whether they were high enough and casting doubt on China's methods for reporting them.

The U.S. reacted by setting up an evening meeting for President Obama to meet directly with Premier Wen. Obama also planned a separate joint meeting with the presidents of South Africa and Brazil and the prime minister of India, industrializing powers whose support for curbing global warming



# COP15 COPENHAGEN

UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE 2009

was deemed essential. But when Obama showed up for his scheduled one-on-one meeting with Wen, the Times reported that he was "startled" to discover the Chinese premier already meeting with the leaders of South Africa, Brazil, and India. Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had to "burst" into this meeting as it was taking place. The Times reported, "Mr. Obama said he didn't want them negotiating in secret." The Obama administration later saved face by announcing that it managed to secure compromise promises from Wen on Chinese pollution monitoring.

The climate conference ended in frustration. President Obama, back in Scandinavia to promote world peace for the second time in two weeks, announced what he called an "unprecedented breakthrough" by the nations of the world: They had committed

themselves to tackling global warming. But the truth was that rising industrial powers like China, Brazil and India dragged their feet. They were unwilling to limit their people's prosperity and their national development for the sake of a theory. By contrast, Europe, which committed itself at the Kyoto conference to mandatory reductions in carbon emissions, was stuck with promises it can't keep. And poor countries were left in limbo. They anticipated large amounts of aid to compensate them for what they were told was global warming's devastation, but were forced to be content with vague assurances of eventual assistance.

### **The Beginning of the End?**

There is much more to the story. In addition to the international gridlock, Copenhagen produced the breakup of the alliance between United Nations diplomacy and the pressure

politics of the environmentalist movement. This rift is the genuine lasting legacy of the Copenhagen Climate Conference, not the official Copenhagen Accord, a flimsy three-page agreement to meet once again.

Copenhagen marks a pivot point in the environmentalist movement's international strategy. For almost two decades, green non-profits supported the U.N. conference agenda, which was considered the roadmap that would take the world toward a climate change mitigation treaty. Green groups allied themselves with U.N. negotiators in large part because the United Nations gave them a 'seat at the table.' (For more, see the 1998 CRC monograph, *Global Greens: Inside the International Environmental Establishment* by James M. Sheehan.)

In practice, however, it turns out that green non-profits became inconsequential to the negotiations. Copenhagen changed everything. Not only did world leaders again decline to bind themselves to a climate treaty, but the United Nations began to restrict NGO participation in the proceedings.

The restrictions began when U.N. officials announced that for the second week of the conference that the number of NGO "observers" who could attend the proceedings would be limited to 7,000 participants. That caused thousands of people to wait in the Danish winter for up to nine hours in an attempt to gain admittance to the Bella Center, the exhibition and conference facility that was the site of the official conference. Even bigwigs. A colleague told me he saw Fred Krupp, head of the Environmental Defense Fund, freezing in line along with everyone else.

Early Monday evening of week two, a protest broke out. As official delegates were walking from private negotiating rooms down a central corridor towards the Bella Center's exit, a mass of NGO observers began screaming

*(continued on page 5)*

## A Copenhagen Diary

I saw my fellow climate conference "observers" everywhere in Copenhagen. Their credentials hung round their necks. They were young, hopeful, and none-too-serious. On the Saturday of my arrival in the city I noticed one topic came up again and again in conversation—the "NGO Party" to be held that night at Vega, the city's foremost discotheque.

After receiving my own U.N. "observer" credentials, I joined a vigil marking the end of a march from the Danish Parliament to the Bella Center, site of the climate conference. Everyone in the crowd cheered as a British rocker called for "revolution." Five minutes later, everyone went wild as an Indian academic urged China to reject carbon emissions targets. The crowd seemed confused but perhaps that's because they were hallucinating from drug use. A hash-peddler from Christiania, an anything-goes part of town, told me the climate conference had brought him brisk business.

The following day was Sunday and the Bella Center was closed, so I decided to walk down Stroget Street, a major thoroughfare, to the Klimaforum, an "alternative" climate conference in the city square. Along the way, amid hundreds of bustling Christmas shoppers, I noticed a group from Greenpeace, their grungy jackets announcing their affiliation. One strummed an acoustic guitar as he sang about climate change. The song's refrain was: "Do you want to kill!/No place to run/Do you want to kill!"

"Brad Pitt Is Saving Planet Earth in Copenhagen" was emblazoned on the side of a trailer parked further down Stroget Street. Some filmmakers were holding auditions for a movie about Brad Pitt saving the world from catastrophic climate change. I tried out for a part in Episode 8, whose plot concerned the destruction of Bangladesh.

The United Nations sanctions alarmist nonsense of this type. For instance, a short video titled "Please Help the World" was shown to kick off the first day of the conference. In it, a little girl narrowly escapes an earthquake, a tornado, and a giant tsunami. As a matter of science, none of these is causally related to rising planetary temperatures. But the video was used to set the tone for discussing climate change!

That evening, church bells seemed to ring endlessly. Later I learned they tolled 350 times as part of a stunt symbolizing the need to limit the atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases to 350 parts per million. The church bells were meant to signal support for draconian cuts in global greenhouse gas emissions, a step that would require the immediate de-industrialization of the developed world.

In retrospect, the bells symbolized something else—the unraveling of ties between the United Nations and the green movement. For whom did the bells toll? I realize now they marked the marginalization of the environmentalist establishment.

—WY

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at them. Security was caught off guard as the threatening tone of the taunts and chants clearly intimidated the negotiators. Friends of the Earth, an NGO accredited to the conference, took credit for the protest, which it called a “flash mob” to express outrage at the treatment of “Africa.”

“Africa” referred to a demand for \$200 billion a year in “climate reparations,” which some delegations said was owed their countries, insinuating that greenhouse gas emissions are the equivalent to slavery. When Friends of the Earth encouraged the mob action over these outrageous demands, the U.N. conference organizers revoked its NGO accreditation.

Alienated, the environmentalist movement escalated its protests. On Tuesday evening at 9:45 p.m. security-conscious U.N. officials announced their decision to further restrict the presence of NGO observers. As heads of state were beginning to arrive at the Bella Center, the conference organizers said the number of NGO observers in the Center would be limited to 1,000 participants on Wednesday, 300 on Thursday, and only 90 on Friday.

Pandemonium. A pressure group called Climate Justice Now! (an advocate for “system change, not climate change”) began organizing protests inside and outside the Center, which prompted security forces to remove the inside demonstrators from the Center and Danish police to arrest those outside. Activist Michael Dorsey, a professor of environmental studies at Dartmouth College and recipient of a \$300,000 Ford Foundation grant for the study of “climate justice,” interpreted the police response this way in a Climate Action Now! press release:

“The surgical removal of non governmental organizations underscores the lack of democracy inherent in these negotiations....

The only way to avoid catastrophic climate change is fully supporting and including peoples movements like the very ones illegitimately removed from this process.”

Leftist writer Naomi Klein (“We are fighting against the privatization of life”) urged protesters to stay angry. At the Klimaforum, an “alternative” climate forum outside the Center, she reminded an audience of 1,000 activists about the violent 1999 anti-globalization protests in Seattle. Without explicitly endorsing violence, she said Seattle was a legacy activists must carry forward, and she scolded the Danish people, “whose need for control is proving to be a serious problem.”

Despite these provocations, Danish police held only about 250 protesters in temporary detention. The police used wire cages they jokingly referred to as “Guantanamo junior.”

**What Next?**

The U.N. Copenhagen climate conference produced nothing of substance, which is not a bad thing. Moreover, U.N. conference officials limited the presence and influence of environmentalist NGOs and contained their protest activities, which is also not a bad thing—unless you are an alarmist global warming activist.

What happens now?

I believe the environmentalist movement has no choice but to become more radical. If the United Nations cannot deliver a climate change treaty because major industrial countries refuse to adopt carbon controls that will ruin their economies, then it won’t matter whether the U.N. lets green groups sit in the conference room when presidents and prime ministers are speaking.

Past experience suggests that the U.N. will not obtain a climate treaty binding on fast-industrializing states such as China, which surpassed the United States this year as the

world’s largest automaker. According to the International Energy Agency, cutting carbon emissions to the extent envisioned by treaty advocates—to have a 75% chance of limiting warming to two degrees Celsius— would cost \$45 trillion through 2050.

Predictably, the elders of the environmentalist movement are offering plenty of bad advice. Jasper Teulings, general counsel for Greenpeace International, recently wrote that he is “warming to civil disobedience after Copenhagen’s failure.” NASA scientist James Hansen, the high priest of global warming alarmism, was recently arrested for protesting coal mining in West Virginia. And Al Gore wonders aloud why there isn’t more civil disobedience on behalf the climate.

What does it say about the future of environmentalist leadership when its top spokesmen endorse illegal actions? In Copenhagen, green nonprofits were marginalized. Now, they are poised to radicalize.

Copenhagen’s successor, the 16th Conference of the Parties, will be held in Mexico City this summer. Hold onto your hats, it’s going to be a bumpy ride.

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**FW**

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Many thanks.

Terrence Scanlon  
President

# PhilanthropyNotes

By virtue of giving \$705 million to their foundation last year **Stanley F. and Fiona B. Druckenmiller** topped the list of the Chronicle of Philanthropy's 50 most generous donors in 2009. Druckenmiller was formerly the portfolio manager for **George Soros's Quantum Fund**. Second was financier **John M. Templeton** who bequeathed \$573 million to his foundation, established in 1987. Templeton died at age 95 in 2008. **Bill and Melinda Gates** came in third (\$350 million to the **Gates Foundation**), followed by New York City mayor **Michael Bloomberg** (\$254 million to 1,358 nonprofits), **Procter & Gamble** heir **Louise Dieterle Nippert** (\$185 million), and leftist George Soros (\$150 million—of which \$100 million goes to establish a “Fund for Policy Reform”). Down the list at the #26 slot is heir **Jon L. Stryker** (\$41.3 million), a member of the Soros-led **Democracy Alliance**, the donors' consortium that seeks to turn America into socialist Europe.

Private philanthropy directed to institutions of higher learning fell 11.9% last year, the largest decline in the half-century history of the **Council for Aid to Education's** annual survey. The Chronicle of Higher Education reports that from July 1, 2008, to June 30, 2009, contributions dropped by \$3.75 billion to \$27.85 billion.

The **Obama** administration wants to open to competition **Teach for America's** \$18 million noncompetitive grant, which is authorized under federal law. The nonprofit group, opposed by the teachers' unions, is acclaimed for preparing recent college graduates for teaching jobs in the nation's worst performing public schools. Teach for America was profiled in the February 2008 *Organization Trends*.

The Senate confirmed **Patrick Corvington** as chief executive of the **Corporation for National and Community Service**, which oversees **Senior Corps**, **AmeriCorps**, and **Learn and Serve America**. Corvington was a senior official at the left-wing **Annie E. Casey Foundation** of Baltimore, Maryland, which granted funding to **ACORN** during his tenure. Corvington has no known connection to ACORN, but has extensive experience in community organizing and social service activism.

The **IRS** has released the final version of its new Form 990 informational tax return that charities will file this year or in 2011. To clear up concerns the IRS said Line 2 in the form's Part VI: Governance, Management, and Disclosure section has been changed so that it “clarifies that, if two officers, directors, trustees, or key employees of the filer serve in similar positions with another tax-exempt organization, that involvement does not create a reportable business relationship between the two.” Line 15 of Part VI defines “conflict of interest” regarding compensation arrangements.

## Goldman Sachs WATCH

After harshly criticizing Wall Street for more than a year President Obama abruptly did an about-face and said in early February he would not “begrudge” multimillion-dollar bonuses to “savvy” executives at Goldman Sachs and JPMorgan Chase. The president, who is pressing for an unprecedented crackdown on the financial services sector, should be admired for his “consistency,” said White House adviser David Axelrod. “When you're dealing with an economic crisis, it's hard to achieve elegant communications.”

European Union officials have criticized Goldman for helping Greece conceal its massive debts. Greece, whose public debt equals 113% of its Gross Domestic Product, effectively received a £640 million loan without carrying it on its books after Goldman helped it treat the transaction as a currency trade. Goldman reportedly “reaped as much as £192 million in fees by entering a complex currency transaction in 2001 that helped Athens borrow cash without putting it on the books as a loan,” the Daily Mail (UK) reported Feb. 15. “The so-called ‘swap’ deal, while permitted under EU rules, helped Greece meet eurozone limits on government borrowing,” the paper reported.