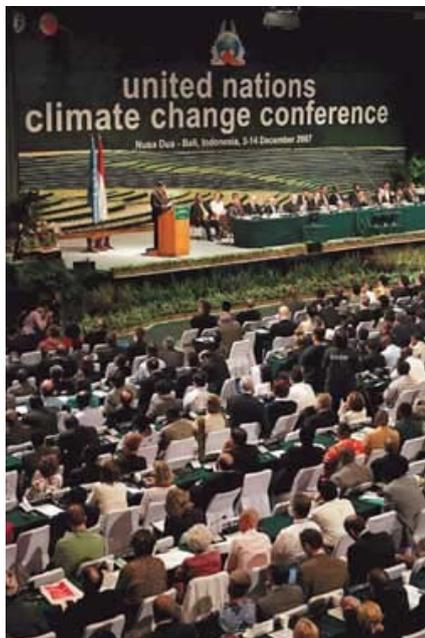


## Lead, Follow, Or Get Out

An inside look at the people and their intense exchanges as a roadmap to save the planet was drawn up at Bali

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Why has India taken a defensive posture and why has it been quiet and not supportive of the overall goals of the convention?" asked Navrose Dubash, lecturer at Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University, of a panel of Indian delegates, which included India's Minister of State for Environment and Forests, N.N. Meena. Former Ambassador and fellow at The Energy and Resources Institute, Chandrashekar Dasgupta, shook off the criticism with a broad smile, "I am delighted to hear we are quiet...usually we are told we are excessively vocal!" Malini Mehra, head of Centre for Social Markets, an Indian NGO, had a more scathing explanation. "The bureaucrats informing this process have a bunkered and defensive mentality," she said.

India's position has been consistent for the past 15 years: the subcontinent cannot take on any commitments, even voluntary ones. As a developing country with over 400 million people without access to electricity, India cannot mitigate because it must develop first. According to S.P. Sethi, principal energy advisor to the Government of India (GOI), the subcontinent's energy costs are among the highest in the world and its industrial energy efficiency levels, equal to Japan.

The US' position is equally extreme — it refuses to take on binding emission reduction unless India and China do so as well. China has softened its position on emission targets, saying developing countries should do more to reduce growth in their emissions. The Europeans are the most willing to call for deep cuts and accept that the developed world bears historical responsibility for causing climate change, and that it must be the first to reduce emissions. Canada and Japan are on a fence as they both

struggle to meet their Kyoto targets.

Developing countries have taken a bloc position called the G77 plus China, represented this year by Pakistan. On top of their agenda is funding for adaptation to climate change, technology transfer and mitigation, which they say must come from industrialised countries. The Small Island Developing States, such as Tuvalu and the Maldives, are vocal in their demands for deep global emission cuts as these nations may be submerged by rising sea levels. Interestingly, climate change negotiations seem to bring India and Pakistan closer, with both supporting the same side. When asked about the Indian position, a senior Pakistani delegate exclaimed, "I can't spy on them. They are my friends!"

### Heal The World

The science behind climate change and the urgent need to reduce emissions are no longer in question. The often acrimonious international negotiations are a struggle over who should reduce by how much, and who should pay for it.

In the first week and a half of negotiations, delegates painstakingly debated issues such as the creation of an adaptation fund, the need to simplify the clean development mechanism (CDM) process, and review the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol. The creation of the adaptation fund was an early win. However, the developing countries' demand to create a technology transfer fund was blocked by some industrialised nations. Instead, an expert group will continue to conduct assessments of technology needs. Decisions in the negotiations are taken by consensus, which gives each of the over 190 participating nations a veto over the final outcome. As the charismatic lead negotiator from Papua New Guinea put it, "This leads to the lowest common denominator decisions."

NGOs and the press played an important role in monitoring and influencing the process as well. Press conferences continued all day long. NGO observers rushed about busily, whispering in the ears of country delegates, gathering information and writing press releases to send back home. In the hallways, organisations set up a maze of booths to give out free copies of their research, and the occasional freebie to lure visitors to their table. At another beach resort close by, dozens of panels assembled to discuss the latest thinking on every imaginable topic related to climate change — from the nuances of carbon markets to the plight of the forest peoples of the Brazilian Amazon. More than 10,000 people from delegations representing over 190 countries, observer NGOs and global media, attended the Bali Summit of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).



POLAR POWER: Environmental activists hold demonstrations at the 13th conference of the UNFCCC (*Bloomberg*)

### The Other Side Of Midnight

At 2 a.m. on the final night, the conference centre was an anxious buzz of activity. The open plenary session had been suspended many hours ago as ministers, who only attended the summit during its final days, met behind closed doors. Crucial decisions were finally taking place. Holding out till the last minute is standard procedure.

In the café, delegates drank coffee or slumped over chairs for a snooze, tired after nights of sleep deprivation. The press waited steadfastly, ready to attack as soon as the doors opened. The Caribbeans played music and drank rum in the hallway to pass time. Others enjoyed drinks by the beach, caught up with old friends, and watched a meteor shower. Finally, the ministers streamed out. A deal had been reached! The plenary would meet the next morning at 8 a.m.

The previous night, many had been moved to tears by Al Gore's stirring speech. He stated in no uncertain terms, "America is primarily responsible for obstructing the negotiations." He appealed to nations to take up leadership and move forward, leaving an empty space where the US could come back to the table as a constructive partner once the Bush administration had departed. His statements were not without basis. Just the week before, the first proposed federal legislation on climate change, which would reduce US emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, had come before the floor of the American Senate for debate. According to American NGO Environmental Defense, "It is very likely that the US will enact an economy-wide cap in the next 18 months."

### Cliffhanger

The final showdown between the US and India took place on the morning of the final day of negotiations. The Chair, also the Environment Minister of Indonesia, introduced the draft text hammered out by the ministers the night before, calling for binding targets on developed countries, without specifying a range, according to their, "national circumstances." Developing countries would be required to take "measurable, reportable, and verifiable nation appropriate mitigation actions in the context of sustainable development supported by technology and enabled by financing and capacity building".

On behalf of the EU, Portugal spoke first and accepted the text. When it was India's turn next, in a refined British accent, the Indian Minister for Technology calmly asked that "measurable, reportable and verifiable actions" be placed at the end of the sentence rather than at the beginning. This change in word order would tie developing country actions more closely to compensation and technology from the West. The deal was once again balanced on knife's edge.

Then Pakistan, representing the G77, supported the proposal. Portugal accepted the changes on behalf of the EU. Bangladesh, Pakistan, Tuvalu, the Maldives, Costa Rica, Switzerland and many others rose and spoke in favour of the changes. A tense hush came over the room when the US took its turn to speak. In a firm and measured voice, Paula Dobriansky, a senior US diplomat, stated, "The US cannot accept this formulation because it does not reflect the balance that many of us have worked for in the past week." The audience erupted into boos and hisses.



NOW OR NEVER: Dutch Environment Minister Jacqueline Cramer holds a poster at a campaign event against climate change at the venue (AP)

Country after country raised its voice to condemn the US. The Indonesian President urged delegates that “the alternative to a breakthrough is not acceptable” and that “it would be a shame if the fate of the world’s climate broke down over wording”. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon asked delegates not to risk what they had achieved so far and betray the planet and its children. Japan agreed, but cleverly did not support or oppose the changes proposed by India. Canada and Australia were conspicuously silent. The delegate from Papua New Guinea bluntly told the US that if it was not willing to lead, “then please get out of the way”.

During this time, phone calls from the White House were apparently made to the delegation ordering them not to break the deal. Dobriansky spoke again and claimed that after hearing so many expressions of commitment from developing nations, she would, in the spirit of cooperation, accept the consensus. India and the developing nations had won the showdown. Everybody cheered and celebrated. The countries of the world now have a roadmap calling for an agreement on the actual targets and reductions to be decided upon by the end of 2009.

### Till We Meet Again

With its enormous population, 8 per cent growth rate and tremendous vulnerability to the impact of climate change, India has a huge stake in ensuring that this global deal is both strong and equitable. Several NGOs and academics are asking India to re-think its position in international negotiations. A PhD candidate at ANZ University noted that the situation is different now from 1992. “Developing countries are much richer. China and India cannot retain their same position.” Mehra of Centre for Social Markets demanded that India take a positive leadership role on the international stage and create a democratic consultative process on climate change policy.

K. Srinivas of Greenpeace India argued that India is not “playing its cards right” in the negotiations. Domestically, India is taking significant steps to promote renewable energy and energy efficiency, yet on the international stage India does not effectively showcase its effort or make any commitment to reduce the carbon intensity of its growth.

Furthermore, a Greenpeace study titled ‘Hiding Behind the Poor’, challenges India to walk its talk domestically on climate justice. It demonstrates that the national per capita CO2 emissions should not be the basis of Indian climate politics because the emissions by India’s own middle class are many times higher than that of India’s 800 million poor. The emissions of India’s rich are also higher than the global sustainable per capita average that the GOI insists the world converge upon. Consequently, India must both pressurise the developed world to cut its CO2 emissions and aggressively de-carbonise its economy, so that more of India’s poor can join the middle classes without threatening the viability of the planet. As the planet heats up, so will this debate. Until next year in Poland.

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