

Fractious climate talks enter second week

December 3 2012



File picture. Activists carry a banner during a rally in Doha on December 1, 2012 to demand urgent action addressing climate change. Countries entered a second week of UN climate talks in Doha deeply divided on key issues even as fresh warnings were issued that rising greenhouse gas levels are putting our planet in peril.

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After six days of intense negotiations, observers said nations were far from agreement on extending the Kyoto Protocol on curbing emissions

of Earth-warming gases, mainly carbon dioxide (CO₂) produced from [burning fossil fuels](#).

With evidence mounting that man-made climate change is melting polar ice caps and causing sea levels to rise more quickly than feared, poor countries insist the West makes deeper, more urgent emissions cuts under Kyoto and gives more cash to help the third world adapt and cope.

The mechanisms for both remain in dispute.

"The science is clear: further delay would mean the opportunity to avert a global calamity would be irrevocably lost," the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), a grouping of 43 countries at risk from warming-induced [sea level rise](#), said on Monday.

"We begin the final week of negotiations in Doha with the sober recognition that time is running out to prevent the loss of entire nations and other calamities in our membership and around the world."

A new study warned Sunday that Earth could be on track for warming above five degrees Celsius (nine degrees Fahrenheit) by 2100—at least double the two degree Celsius limit being targeted for what scientists hope will be manageable climate change.

Other studies in the past week showed that [polar ice cap](#) melt had raised sea levels by nearly half an inch (11 millimetres) over the last two decades, and that [Arctic ice](#) had diminished at an unprecedented rate in 2012.

Yet observers say the Doha talks have become stuck, partly over a disagreement within the European Union on whether individual nations should be allowed to hold on to unused emissions quotas—so-called "hot air"—rather than scrapping them.

These left-over unused [emission allowances](#), estimated to amount to some 13 billion tonnes for all countries put together, were allotted under the first leg of the [Kyoto Protocol](#) that runs out on December 31.

EU member Poland and some other countries now insist on carrying the "hot air" over into a followup period—a move vehemently opposed by the developing world and countries most at risk of climate change-induced warming.

The surplus allowances can be sold on the carbon market.

"What were billed as mainly procedural talks are showing more controversy than expected," Greenpeace said of the talks.

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Citation: Fractious climate talks enter second week (2012, December 3) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-12-fractious-climate-week.html>

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