

Unless We Take Decisive Action, Climate Change Will Ravage Our Planet

Curious Cat Science and Engineering Blog



photo by John Hunter at [Glacier National Park](#) [1].

Tomorrow 56 newspapers, in 45 countries, are taking the unprecedented step of publishing the same editorial. [The editorial](#) [2] will appear in 20 languages, as the [United Nations Climate Change Conference](#) [3] is set to begin in Copenhagen. Unless we combine to take decisive action, climate change will ravage our planet, and with it our prosperity and security. The dangers have been becoming apparent for a generation. Now the facts have started to speak: 11 of the past 14 years have been the warmest on record, the Arctic ice-cap is melting and last year's inflated oil and food prices provide a foretaste of future havoc. In scientific journals the question is no longer whether humans are to blame, but how little time we have got left to limit the damage. Yet so far the world's response has been feeble and half-hearted.

Climate change has been caused over centuries, has consequences that will endure for all time and our prospects of taming it will be determined in the next 14 days. We call on the representatives of the 192 countries gathered in Copenhagen not to hesitate, not to fall into dispute, not to blame each other but to seize opportunity

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from the greatest modern failure of politics. This should not be a fight between the rich world and the poor world, or between east and west. Climate change affects everyone, and must be solved by everyone.

The science is complex but the facts are clear. The world needs to take steps to limit temperature rises to 2C, an aim that will require global emissions to peak and begin falling within the next 5-10 years.

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Few believe that Copenhagen can any longer produce a fully polished treaty; real progress towards one could only begin with the arrival of President Obama in the White House and the reversal of years of US obstructionism. Even now the world finds itself at the mercy of American domestic politics, for the president cannot fully commit to the action required until the US Congress has done so.

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the rich world is responsible for most of the accumulated carbon in the atmosphere â?? three-quarters of all carbon dioxide emitted since 1850. It must now take a lead, and every developed country must commit to deep cuts which will reduce their emissions within a decade to very substantially less than their 1990 level.

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The transformation will be costly, but many times less than the bill for bailing out global finance â?? and far less costly than the consequences of doing nothing.

Many of us, particularly in the developed world, will have to change our lifestyles. The era of flights that cost less than the taxi ride to the airport is drawing to a close. We will have to shop, eat and travel more intelligently. We will have to pay more for our energy, and use less of it.

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Kicking our carbon habit within a few short decades will require a feat of engineering and innovation to match anything in our history. But whereas putting a man on the moon or splitting the atom were born of conflict and competition, the coming carbon race must be driven by a collaborative effort to achieve collective salvation.

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The politicians in Copenhagen have the power to shape history's judgment on this generation: one that saw a challenge and rose to it, or one so stupid that we saw calamity coming but did nothing to avert it. We implore them to make the right choice.

Most of the newspapers have taken the unusual step of featuring the editorial on their front page. Even with the overwhelming evidence and tremendous consequences I don't expect politicians to make the right decisions. We know full well what the choices are. We just choice to avoid the unpleasant choices. To bad so many that don't get to choose are going to suffer. The politicians will be weak. They will play to those that pay them money. They will delay taking important steps now. We have chosen to elect non-leaders for quite some time. We can't really expect them to act with courage, vision, wisdom and leadership given who we elect. The politicians are responsible for their failing but we are more responsible for electing them. Some politicians, even now, do possess fine qualities but not nearly enough.

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Maybe I will be proven wrong, but I doubt it.

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