

# *brevíssimos cindes* 33

## Climate change in 2011: stagnated global governance\*

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July 2011

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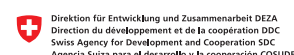
Greenhouse gas emissions grew approximately 3% during the first decade of the XXI century and energy emissions grew only 5% in 2010. According to information of the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency, the highest indexes of greenhouse gas emissions in 2010 were registered by: China, responsible for 26% of total emissions (and annual growth of 5%), United States, with 18% of total emissions (and annual growth of 0.8% with stagnation between 2008 and 2010), European Union with 14% (growing 0.3% per annum, stagnated in the period 2008-2010), India, with 8% (growing 6% per annum), Russia, with 6% (and annual growth of 5%), Brazil with 5% (growing 4% per annum until 2004, with drastic reduction between 2005 and 2009 and increase of approximately 5% in 2010), Indonesia with 4% (growing 5% per annum), Japan, with 4% (growing 0.4% per annum), Mexico with 2.5% (growing 2% per annum), Canada with 2.5% (growing 2% per annum), South Africa with 2% (growing 2% per annum) South Korea with 1.5% (growing 0.7% per annum), and Saudi Arabia with 1.5% (growing 6% per annum).

\* This text summarizes the sections dedicated to the recent evolution of global governance of climate changes, presented in the publication *Breves Cindes 54*, *The climate change in 2011: stagnated global governance and the new profile of emissions in Brazil*, available at [www.cindesbrasil.org](http://www.cindesbrasil.org)

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Those thirteen countries (considering the European Union a single unit) are responsible for more than 80% of global emissions and comprise two crucial groups of great (China, USA and European Union) and medium (other countries) climatic powers. Great powers share three relevant characteristics: first, each of them has a high proportion of global carbon emissions (at least 14%) and of gross world product; second, they have strong technological and human capital for decarbonization of the economy; and third, they have veto powers with regard to any global international agreement which intends to be effective. Great powers answer for 54% of GDP and 58% of global carbon emissions. The European Union is isolated in the defense of an effective global architecture for quick transition to a low-carbon economy. USA and China resist to a global agreement along those lines.

The relevance of medium powers is limited in terms of proportion of emissions and participation in global economy and none of them on an individual basis has the capacity to veto a global international agreement. However, their behavior affects the

dynamics of global governance on climate, as they are able to raise obstacles to or accelerate the world decarbonization. Each of them combines in a heterogeneous manner the different power criteria, and has unique characteristics which make them relevant.

There is also another relevant category of government players in the global climate dynamics, which we refer to as small low-carbon powers. Those countries (Israel, Norway, Switzerland, Singapore and Taiwan) are not significant in terms of greenhouse gas emissions or GDP, their uniqueness lies on the expressive technological density of their economy and high proportion of public expenditure oriented to science and technology. With a history of carbon intensity reduction, such small powers have the potential to offer to the rest of the world technological advances to accelerate the transition to a low carbon world.

Table 1 illustrates the complexity of the combination of elements that are part of the “climate power” at an international level.

**Table 1**  
**Climate powers and decarbonization status**

	Transportation	Electricity	Industry	Agriculture	Waste	Forests	Fertility rate
Brazil	👎👎 ↓	👍 ↔	👍 ↔	👎👎 ↑	👎👎 ↔	👎👎 ↑	👍👍 ↑
South Korea	👍👍 ↑	👍👍 ↑	👍👍 ↑	👍👍	👍👍	👍👍	👍👍 ↑
China	👎 ↔	👎👎 ↑	👎👎 ↑	👎👎 ↔	👎👎 ↔	👍 ↑	👍👍 ↑
USA	👎 ↔	👎👎 ↔	👎 ↔	👍 ↑	👍 ↔	👍👍 ↑	👍 ↑
India	👎👎 ↓	👎👎 ↓	👎👎 ↓	👎👎 ↓	👎👎 ↓	👎 ↔	👎👎 ↔
Japan	👍👍 ↔	👍👍 ↔	👍👍 ↔	👍👍 ↔	👍👍 ↔	👍👍 ↔	👍👍 ↑
Russia	👎👎 ↓	👎👎 ↓	👎👎 ↓	👎👎 ↓	👎👎 ↓	👎 ↓	👍👍 ↑
EU	👍 ↔	👍 ↑	👎 ↑	👍 ↔	👍 ↑	👍👍 ↑	👍👍 ↑

**References**

Decarbonization process status	Decarbonization process trend
👍👍 SP: Strongly Positive	↑ Moving forward
👍 MP: Moderately Positive	↔ Stable
👎 MN: Moderately Negative	↓ Moving backward
👎👎 SN: Strongly Negative	

Using as a criterion the density of climate policies, it is possible to classify the main government players of global climate governance, as follows<sup>1</sup>.

- **Strongly Reformists:** South Korea, EU and Japan, Switzerland, Norway, Israel, Singapore, Taiwan. If considered individually, Sweden, United Kingdom, Denmark, Holland, France and Germany are also important players; however, their condition of members of the EU is hereby prevalent.
- **Moderately Reformists:** China, Brazil and Mexico.
- **Moderately Conservatives:** USA, Canada, South Africa and Indonesia.
- **Strongly Conservatives:** India, Russia and Saudi Arabia.

In the multilateral arena little changed since the Copenhagen Summit in relation to the possibilities of reaching a global agreement on climate. Negotiations within the UNFCCC scope remain stagnated, to say the least – as evidenced at the Conference of the Parties (COP) on December 16 2010 and the Bangkok Summit of April 2011 and Bonn Summit on June 2011. The perspectives of change in the short and mid-term are null.

All events in 2011 lead to the conclusion that the Kyoto Protocol will cease to exist as an emission containment mechanism in 2012, placing even more doubts on the capacity of the UN system to provide an answer to the climate issue. A new treaty – comprehensive and legally binding – is practically impossible if the USA fails to approve a Climate Law binding the companies to quantified reductions of emissions. Given the current political dynamics – in an optimistic scenario –, such an approval is unlikely to happen before 2013-2014, assuming the reelection of the President in November 2012, a democratic victory in both houses of Congress and the decision of the

reelected Obama to give priority to the climate law at the beginning of the second term of office.

Such deep changes to American politics – hard to occur as it is – would have to be complemented with a stronger commitment on the part of China to the decarbonization of the economy – another condition which is unlikely to be complied with. In this sense, another significant factor impacting the perspectives of an important global agreement is the tension between USA and European Union, on the one hand, and China, on the other hand, due to China's opposition in relation to an expressive Yuan revaluation.

The economic and safety dimensions of the international system have a decisive impact on the climatic dimensions and it is necessary to take them into account as a priority in any realistic analysis on the future of climatic negotiation. A preponderant dynamics of moderate increase of conflicts in the international system in future years will suffice to prevent any progress towards a new international treaty on climate, even if a consistent climate law is approved in the USA in 2013. In this context, the world transition to a low-carbon economy will be extremely slow and one of its main international instruments shall be the establishment of trade barriers for carbon-intensive products.

If a world movement towards cooperation and depolarization is observed in the following years and in case Obama is reelected in 2012, it is possible to have the USA changing from a conservative position to a reformist approach with regard to a global agreement on low carbon. Also, an alliance with the European Union, Japan, Canada, South Korea, Brazil, Mexico and South Africa might be the leverage required by the USA to persuade China, Russia and India to establish peaks of emission and differentiated years for stabilization of emissions – prior to 2020 for China and Russia and between 2025 and 2030 for India.

<sup>1</sup> In this policy assessment, the domestic and international behavior of each country in relation to climate issues is considered, and policy trends or flow in this situation are emphasized.