

# GOODBYE COPENHAGEN

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Capitals compromised in the Copenhagen climate crisis conference and a confusing compromise has suspended the conflict. The compromise broadly reflects the geometry of the present geopolitics. Capitals have triumphed at the cost of this planet in peril. And sufferings of humanity have been ensured. “[O]ne of the European delegates at the Copenhagen summit ‘to save the planet’,” *The Sunday Times* (Dec. 20, 2009) reported, “clearly reached breaking point;” and told: “millions of Africans now ‘deserve’ to be incinerated.” A splendid good wishes for the coming years!

So, the world now owns a 12-paragraph political document, “a statement of intention, not a binding pledge to begin taking action on global warming—a compromise seen to represent a flawed but essential step forward”, said *The New York Times*. This compromise was essential to the capital that is finding an area for investment and a market. Moreover, there is the golden prospect that the underfed, undernourished billions in the world of the poor will pay the cost. Many delegates left Copenhagen, NYT said, “in a sour mood, disappointed that the pact lacked so many elements they considered crucial, including firm targets for mid- or long-term reductions of greenhouse gas emissions and a deadline for concluding a binding treaty next year.” The conference concluded “with a grudging agreement by the participants to ‘take note’ of a pact shaped by five major nations.” Delegates from “the developing world denounced the deal as a sham process fashioned behind closed doors by a club of rich countries and large emerging powers.” The Sudanese delegate “likened the effect of the accord on poor nations to the Holocaust.” Many of the smallest and most vulnerable nations fell in line behind the deal. They, although, expressed their reservations. But the fate they have constructed with love to the powers of the world left no choice for them. All the countries except a few including Cuba and Venezuela accepted the document. A blame game has been initiated to cover the chaotic compromise as Ed Miliband, the UK climate change secretary, wrote in *The Guardian* : China “hijacked” the climate summit by blocking a legally binding treaty.

A pledge was made by the countries in 2007 that a binding agreement would be made in 2009 in Copenhagen. But now, the treaty process has hardly moved. The gears for accelerating the process were not only in Copenhagen. A few of those also moved in capitals far away including Washington DC. But, in COP15 US was not the only determining factor. The Empire could not move alone. It also had to make concessions.

Awareness of a section of capital about the profit-prospects hidden in the climate crisis reality is reflected in a few of the developments. The section is dreaming to reap “green” profit that made it urge to make comprehensive climate deal in COP 15 and build “green” economy. The Business for the Environment (B4E) summit in Paris in end-April made the appeal. The B4E summit considered the “comprehensive deal” as “crucial for the future of business ... across the world.” “Future of business” is future of accumulation. The matured section of capital now knows that a low-carbon society carries potential for profit. It was echoed in the B4E summit manifesto: “Agreement on a new climate regime

is urgent. The global crisis requires recovery plans that provide for drastically expanded investment in clean technologies and sustainable infrastructure systems, building the Green Economy.” “Now is the time,” it said, “to remove uncertainties, enable green investment to flow, and build scalable public-private partnership...” Participants in the summit included Norwegian and Mexican ministers for environment, World Wildlife Fund director, bosses of Alcatel-Lucent, Suntech, Siemens France, and a section of NGOs. The chairman of the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations participated in the conference through video link. With support from the Business for Social Responsibility and the French business confederation MEDEF two UN agencies hosted the summit. The document said: “For business, we need increased transparency, a stronger ethical orientation and an expanded risk paradigm that includes not only traditional business and financial factors, but also relevant extra-financial issues in the environmental, social and governance realms.” “Increased transparency” is needed by business to have a better scope for competition in the emerging climate market and the “extra-financial issues” are essential elements needed for safe return of capital. An exercise has been made by capital in Copenhagen.

Climate crisis, the biggest ever challenge of the 21st century, may turn out as the biggest stimulus to the capital that is now failing to find profitable space. The atmospheric space is now its new frontier. There are markets for carbon, mitigation and adaptations, new technology, migration, and even war equipments and armaments: ships, nuclear submarines, satellite surveillance equipment, aircraft carrier, etc. The crisis is going to create major military challenges and questions, still unanswered, in the sphere of global military map. New opportunities for military investment are opening up. The Indian and the Pacific oceans will influence fates of a number of powers, emerging powers, and blocks as capital’s globalization will take new trade routes, and make new assaults and interferences. Climate powers, old and new, will engage into new deals and conflicts while frictions among climate opportunity seekers are increasing. A number of climate powers have started preparatory work for new territorial gains with the hope for exploration of mineral resources including oil and gas. All these mean new opportunities for investments. Segments of manufacturing capital have already started repositioning in the emerging complexities. News from the business world is bringing in this information. The Copenhagen contention and compromise got energy from these factors and interests.

According to *Time*, General Electric launched its Ecomagination initiative in 2005 that includes “everything from energy efficiency to wind turbines to carbon accounting.” In 2008, revenue of the group was \$17 billion, up 21 percent from the previous year. Ten percent of this revenue has been ploughed back to R&D. “Sun is the answer” to many profit seekers as capital is stepping into this “mine” of resource in the face of peak oil. But it is trying its best to seek stable, safe and long-term conditions for return higher than other opportunities. With this goal capital is designing and manipulating models, policies, and strategies by using states, the machines it has created. There is, however, difference in approach and conflict of interests in the camp of capitals with seals of national frontiers. The COP15 understanding by major players broadly reflects this conflict of interests, its effort for having arrangements mutually beneficial, shelving out the

unresolved contradictions for future fix up, expectations for future alignment, and providing time to capital so that capital can make essential reconnaissance and calculation.

“[T]he corporate sector,” *Time* told, “kept a low profile” in the COP 15. During the “Kyoto summit ... international business made a lot of noise—almost all of it against the idea of a global cap on greenhouse-gas emissions.” It is long known to climate crisis observers that “industrial groups with vested interests”, as the CSE, New Delhi’s Green Politics said, once continued to “generate science disputing even the fact that global warming is a threat to the world.” “According to the US Internal Revenue Service data, business groups in the US have spent millions since 1991 to persuade the public and policy makers that there is too much uncertainty about climate change to warrant action....Such views were fuelled and driven particularly by oil and automobile companies that stand to loose from any effort to curb fossil fuel use. The US-Global Climate Coalition (GCC), founded in 1989 with the American Petroleum Institute, Shell, Exxon, General Motors, and over 40 other corporations as members, has spent more than US \$13 million annually to downplay the threat of climate. The Information Council for the Environment (ICE), another US-based corporate coalition which includes the National Coal Association, the Western Fuel Association and Edison Electric Institute, has spent US \$500,000 on their campaign, encouraging scientists to discredit studies pointing to climate change.” Those forces have changed position and capital had to retreat from that position. Clean-coal is fuelling capital in its neo-journey to profit. A section of capital, moreover, has smelled profit in the world with climate crisis and in Copenhagen businesses tried to have a treaty. A WWF hosted CEO roundtable was participated by influential companies including Coca-Cola and Duke Energy. The DE, the third biggest corporate carbon emitter in the North America and 12th biggest globally, runs 17 coal plants in the US. “[I]f it were a country, it would rank 41st in the world. Carbon cap will make serious impact on it.” So, it played influential role in Washington DC and in Copenhagen sending “a message to the political leaders around the world that” they were willing to see an agreement and “are prepared to invest ... capital.... Companies like Duke Energy are helping ... and quietly showing support....It’s nice that the business world isn’t [trying] to crash the climate party at Copenhagen.” The corporate world’s karaoke of Kyoto-days are gone.

Events and outcome of the conference show the contradictions and tensions between the major players in the climate change reality, competitions for accumulation by these countries, and the state of the suffering countries, most of which are poor. Failures there in the conference are not total. “No compromise with the American way of life” is not heard any more. State of the poor is mentioned very often. The rich-poor divide in the South, especially in two major Southern climate players is also mentioned by all every now and then. The poor, it seems, has turned an effective premise that is put forward while bargaining goes on by the major players. The poor, at the same time, are deprived all the time; they are pushed to the position of bearing the burden of climate catastrophe. A shrewd opportunist posture indeed!

Most of the ruling elites in the global South are efficient with at least one act that carries the name : *subservience*. They put countries under their domination

into the bandwagon of the world warming powers, surrender bargaining positions, and expect doles while remain highly active in activities in respective countries that warm up the atmosphere: burn, pollute, destroy, indulge in luxury and corruption. Climate justice, no doubt, is the just demand of the climate space deprived. The justice should also be viewed in the perspective of disparity in distribution within the societies. Otherwise, the marginalized in the climate space deprived societies would not even have the marginal space to survive in the face of climate crisis. And, the ruling elites will lose the legitimacy they are now enjoying. Days for difficult political debates, in the context of climate crisis, are waiting in societies in the South. Climate crisis will take away the differentiating line between domestic and foreign policies, and between humanitarian and military interventions. Domestic socio-political scenario will turn hot.

Emergence of India and China in the world stage is an important factor in the climate crisis equation. Most of the ruling elites in the Global South eagerly looking forward for external aid and demanding more atmospheric space for growth are unable to prepare the rules within respective domain to face the coming crisis. Much of the space for growth being demanded by a section of the Global South is the space for growth of the capital concerned, not for the survival space for the common people. Whatever growth the Global South has attained has not even been distributed fairly. Equity and equality is not on the agenda of the ruling elites, broadly, of the Global South, especially of the dominating players from the southern sphere. To have a better and bold bargaining position the ruling elites of the suffering south should take measures favorable to the poor in respective countries, reduce, if not give up, squandering and luxurious lifestyle, and take bold step for the energy poor.

This context demands political preparations. Mobilizing the people is a part of political preparations. By nourishing the rich-poor divide, unacceptable to the poor, the majority, people cannot be mobilized for long, for facing catastrophic climate crisis. The luxury- and squandering-happy ruling elites in the poor countries, with a few exceptions, cannot bargain effectively while they depend on external aid from donors and export-oriented growth. The Copenhagen conference is the evidence. So, they had to return homes with backs bent with empty promises, faces down, and leaving behind the enthusiasm in Copenhagen that they carried while they left homes. To them Copenhagen appeared a kaleidoscope. Despite vigorous protests by the vibrant souls feeble voices muttered : "Goodbye Copenhagen".□