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How can climate treaty be strengthened?

Environmentalists have attacked US claims that America is doing as much to curb global warming as nations that have signed the Kyoto Treaty.



The US refuses to join the Kyoto Protocol because, they say, it is politically-motivated and would threaten economic growth.

Both sides are attending an international meeting on climate change in the Argentine capital, Buenos Aires.

Delegates from 190 countries are discussing how to tackle global warming, and to make final adjustments to the Kyoto Protocol before it comes into force next February.

Can the Kyoto Protocol be effective? Should countries be doing more to tackle climate change? What do you think of the USA's refusal to sign the treaty?

We will be discussing climate change and environmental issues in our global phone-in programme Talking Point on Sunday 12th December at 1400GMT. Our guest will Professor Sir David King, the UK government's Chief Scientific Advisor. If you would like to take part, please include a phone number with your comments. It will not appear on the page.

The following comments reflect the balance of opinion we have received so far:

Global warming is a direct result of burning fossil fuels. One barrel of oil produces nearly 500 kilograms of carbon dioxide - ask any young chemistry student. Once we remove oil from the ground it is burnt in one way or another, and, while other noxious gases may be reduced, no effort is made to reduce the carbon dioxide, nor is it economically feasible.

“ There is only one solution - to leave the oil in the ground ”

Anthony Rose, Canada

There is only one solution - to leave the oil in the ground. This means a complete lifestyle change for the industrialised world!

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Anthony Rose, Victoria, Canada

The Kyoto Protocol can be effective if America is brought on board to sign the treaty. Russia's decision to sign is definitely a step in the right direction. The Kyoto Protocol is the best safeguard we have so far to protect the environment. There has to be a clear realisation that mismanaging the climate policy could have dire consequences for our children and the generations to come.

Pancha Chandra, Brussels, Belgium

It makes me so angry to think I go to great efforts to live as sustainable a life as possible and there are people out there, some of whom have commented on this page, who are making this effort futile because they are essentially lazy idiots who couldn't give a damn about this planet and its inhabitants. We all need to make the effort. Now get to it!

Lizzie, Aberdeen, Scotland

Americans need to do more to protect and preserve the Earth. The Bush Administration has undone a lot of what had been accomplished in the last three decades or so because its policies put the highest priorities on making rich people richer at the expense of the environment, education, social programs, and even providing our troops in Iraq with sufficient equipment and protection. Disgraceful.

Janice Leilani Smith, Kingsville, Tx, USA

How about putting international sanctions on the US? The US has put sanctions on other countries for far less serious offences than helping to destroy our planet.

Sally Amis, Prague, Czech Republic

“ How about putting international sanctions on the US? ”

Sally Amis, Prague, Czech Republic

Would one of the people claiming that global warming is a proven fact, please cite a credible reference? Far from being indisputable, every cornerstone of the greenhouse theory has been debunked at some point. If you want to persuade the rest of us to err on the side of caution, you will have to learn to be honest about the "facts" that you put forward.

Ray Gray, London, England

Only Bush's America could say that they won't cooperate with something because it is politically motivated. Precisely what does any state do that is not politically motivated?!

Robin Saltonstall, Beverley/UK

Maybe we should just revert to the Stone Age? Would the environmentalists finally be satisfied?

Kevin, USA

“ Maybe we should just revert to the Stone Age? ”

Kevin, USA

Rather than wrecking their economies complying with Kyoto governments should spend more investigating what the

HAVE YOUR SAY

How can Kyoto be strengthened?

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consequences of inevitable climate change will be, and then planning how to alleviate the worst of the foreseen consequences.

John Kelleway, Spiez, Switzerland

The way to strengthen the Kyoto Protocol or any climate-control treaty is simple: the world's largest polluter and consumer of natural resources has to get involved. The same nation that holds up the worldwide ban on landmines is holding up Kyoto. As in so many things, the United States needs to take its rightful place at the head of the international community, and stop acting like the Lone Ranger.

Phil Muse, Clarkston, Georgia, USA

“ The United States needs to take its rightful place at the head of the international community ”

Phil Muse, Clarkston, Georgia, USA

I'm stunned at the outdated views some people still cling to. Climate change is based on sound science - it's no conspiracy. Pay no heed to the armchair scientists, the statistics speak for themselves. Humanity has reached a crisis point, and I'm afraid the ditherers will have blood on their hands.

Vincent Flood, London, UK

I'm flabbergasted that some of you don't seem to realize how catastrophic the increase of carbon dioxide is in such a short period. Plants have needed hundreds of millions of years to reduce the quantity of carbon dioxide (and increase the quantity of oxygen) to make our planet liveable. We're reversing that process in less than a century and that's fatal for both plants and animals. Cutting and burning rain forest further exacerbates this issue. Moreover, if the USA is not prepared to cut their greenhouse gas emissions, hurricanes will hit even harder next time.

Aljosja, Brussels, Belgium

The Kyoto Protocol is a complete waste of time. The scientific community has overwhelmingly said that this is not based on real science.

The environment always changes, it never stays stagnant. The crickets of the world produce much more CO2 than humans do. The world has become 1 degree warmer, so this scare tactic/ politics that the European countries play is despicable! 95% of CO2 emissions are natural. When will the people of the world wake up and start questioning there governments instead of blaming the US for everything?

Charles, New York, USA

“ Crickets produce much more CO2 than humans do ”

Charles, New York, USA

Opposition politicians should be congratulating Tony Blair on his efforts to provide a better future for the planet and the future generations that will hopefully inhabit it, rather than turning an important Global issue in to a points scoring exercise. All we need now is a similar commitment from all the other countries before they're forced to take action by being under a hole in the Ozone Layer.

Doug Chaney, London England

The ignorance of this administration and perhaps this country is displayed once again. Yes, global warming occurs naturally, but anthropogenic sources (caused by humans) have and are increasing the rate at which the Earth's climate moves toward a warmer period. No one can argue that! The Earth was here well before humans ever evolved and never before in the history of the Earth have there EVER been so many greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere at one time, especially in the forms that we are releasing them.

By not signing the Kyoto Protocol the US has basically said that they do not care about reducing emissions on a global level. This administration and anyone who does not believe that global warming is a problem is ignorant because it is the ONLY problem facing the world right now because without the "constants" of the planet that we take for granted we have no other problems. For example, many people in the US feel that the treaty is harmful to the economy and limits business. News flash, without the luxury of relying on the fact that the world will be the same today and tomorrow THERE IS NO BUSINESS!

Mike Lanzarone, San Diego, USA

Pollution is a real threat to our air, water, land and climate. We definitely should be actively pursuing ways to reduce it. If Kyoto isn't the answer, then we need to find

“ If Kyoto isn't the answer, then we need to find another one ”

CT, USA

another one. The main problem we need to work on is overpopulation. Our economies, our livelihoods are based on a growing population. This needs to change, as more people will put more demands on the resources, and lead to more pollution. We can stick our heads in the sand and wait until the resources run out and we are left to prey on each other, or we can start taking action to create non-growing economies that focus on improving our quality of life and advancement, not mass production and wealth.

CT, USA

No one has ever said that Kyoto was the "solution" to climate change. Instead, it's only a small step in leading to a cleaner, more efficient world. It's sickening to see all the smog and pollution from the States floating up north to here in Canada, and yet the States isn't doing anything to reduce its pollutants from coal power plants and all those SUVs/trucks, while the rest of the world is doing every little bit to clean up the environment.

Eric Lam, Toronto, Canada

Anyone who has owned a tropical fish aquarium can explain to you the theory of biological filtration where pollutants are neutralised by bacteria. In the human aquarium (earth) it's no different - only trees are our 'bacteria'. We have more than enough land to grow any amount of trees to sustain our polluting ways. All we have to do is find the chemical balance and abide by it.

Ian, Lancashire, UK

Did they go on their bikes to the meeting? Why do these environmentalist junket junkies use planes to exotic places when they can conference via the internet?

Colin Harrison, England

Global warming is certainly something that is occurring based on observations. However, global temperatures have gone up and down for eons, well before man was around. There is no evidence mankind has ANYTHING to do with rising temperatures. Most of us in the upper USA and all our friends in Canada say if the climate will gradually warm up, we welcome it! With millions dying of hunger around the globe, it is hard to get excited about something we cannot do a thing about anyway and it's preposterous to think we can. Let's all get a life and find something important to worry about. Why not come over and visit us - you'll find our country extremely clean, with clear skies, clean roadsides, no smog and the best environmental situation in our lifetimes. See for yourselves!!

Dennis Kelly, New Carlisle, Ohio, USA

“ There is no evidence mankind has anything to do with rising temperatures ”

Dennis Kelly, Ohio, USA

The Planet is giving us a taste of things to come! Kyoto may not be perfect, but it is better than nothing. It is about time that the US and the other global powers took some action before it's too late.

Martyn, UK

Frankly, what is the point? Based on three facts that (a) our current activities are causing harm, (b) that the global population is set to grow, and (c) that the developing world will become increasingly industrialised then it is hard to how we can reduce the impact on our environment – now or in the future! I wish it wasn't like this but I can't see any other outcome...

G Valentine, UK

The problem is that the US - more than any other nation - relies on cheap energy to fuel its economy. Agreeing to Kyoto would slow down their growth when there may be a recession brewing. On the other hand, no time is going to be good. The US is the largest producer of CO2 emissions in the world, it is also the US alone that is arguing that the science isn't there (from the country that brought us creationism), and that the agreement is flawed. It's good to see irony alive and well in the US.

Garry Abson, London

Before jumping on the green bandwagon, people would do well to actually read the Kyoto Protocol. It is rubbish - no science whatsoever.

Something needs to be done - but this treaty is a long way short of what is required. For a start, we need a level global playing field. If we let the third world be exempt then surely it is obvious that polluting industries will move there? I would if I

“ This treaty is a long way short of what is required ”

Roger, Whitwick, England

were a polluting manufacturer. The free market world of today is a race to the bottom of the cost ladder. Accept that and move forward with realistic aims.

Roger, Whitwick, England

Those claiming there is insufficient scientific evidence of human-caused climate change, or that the risk is purely "theoretical", are either dishonest, or plain ignorant. The issue of Science for 3 December 2004 (for those who do not know, this is the premier US-published scientific journal), includes an essay, "The Scientific Consensus on Climate Change", which points out that in addition to the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), bodies including the American Meteorological Society, The American Geophysical Union, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science "all have issued statements in recent years concluding that the evidence for human modification of climate is compelling". Are all these bodies part of the anti-American conspiracy?

Nick Gotts, Aberdeen, Scotland

Perhaps the Kyoto treaty should be renamed the 'Don Quixote Treaty' - like Kyoto, he was fighting an imaginary enemy which turned out to be windmills.

Paul Biggs, Tamworth, Staffordshire

The world is an ecosystem regulated by nature's system of checks and balances, but the activities of Mankind are interfering with the workings of nature. The increasing hole in the Ozone layer (with its related increase in skin cancer) and the more rapid melting of the polar ice caps should be sufficient warning that all is not well and that we do need to take remedial action before it is too late.

Kevin Finn, United Kingdom

“ We do need to take remedial action before it is too late ”

Kevin Finn, United Kingdom

The issue of air pollution and quality is a relevant one, especially for those of us that live in densely populated areas of the world. However, with regard to the effect on global warming, having ice caps is an unnatural state for the earth to be in. Over geological history, average temperatures and sea levels have been much higher than they are today, and whilst global temperatures may have risen very slightly over the last hundred years or so, this is likely to be from the world simply reverting to the most usual state.

Chris, London, UK

A way needs to be found of bringing business onboard, as I believe this is the lobby the US government always plays up to. One way of persuading them would be to show the advantages of being non-polluting, or at least minimising pollution. For example, car manufacturers based in Kyoto-compliant countries will be turning out more fuel-efficient vehicles, which in turns means that their customers will be paying less in fuel costs. That has to be to everyone's benefit, doesn't it, whether or not they believe in global warming? There must be a myriad of similar arguments that could be used to persuade the foot-dragging US industrial lobby to

come onboard.

David Hazel, Fareham, UK

It amazes me how many people have swallowed the 'global warming' myth. They talk matter-of-factly about 'greenhouse gases' and 'saving the planet', yet if we

“ It amazes me how many people have swallowed the 'global warming' myth ”

John, Manchester, England<

get down to the real science, there is hardly a shred of evidence showing that CO2 is a greenhouse gas, or that the world is warming at anything other than a natural rate. The 'sudden rise' has turned out to be the product of junk science and wishful thinking. However, there is plenty of evidence to show that the modest warming is just part of a natural cycle and also that the doom-myths are being circulated by hysterical greenies and governments keen to exploit the situation for their own ends. The trillions (yes, trillions) of Dollars likely to be poured into fighting this imaginary menace is desperately needed to help fight disease and poverty in the Third World.

John, Manchester, England

It's amazing that the US administration has convinced so many people that Kyoto is some sort of anti-US tool. The scientific facts are there for all to see. Mind you, this is a country where some schools aren't allowed to teach evolution, so we shouldn't expect scientific awareness to be too advanced.

Dominic Tristram, Bath, UK

The Kyoto protocol will not make any difference. On the contrary, it only provides some do-good feelings and activism for people who have understood nothing of the harsh physical realities of a round planet with limited resources. The fact is that climate change is under way and unstoppable. This because we have released and are still releasing greenhouse gases into our air for the past 300 years. We can not reasonably hope to recapture this carbon. Not by nature nor by technical means. If we really wanted to avoid the worst we would reduce our scale of production and consumption by up to 80 per cent. We must restructure our society into localised economies with a minimum of material-throughput and transportation to achieve what we all basically aim for: happiness and love in a safe and healthy environment.

Helmut Lubbers, Geneva, Switzerland

The ignorance, wilful, or otherwise, of some on this board, is astounding. The suggestion that there is 'no evidence' for man-made climate change is a lie. There is a large body of evidence that man-made climate change is occurring, and that the earth is warming far faster than at any time in the past. This evidence is accepted by every major scientific body in the world, including the US National Academy of Sciences, which is the highest academic body in the US. Even Bjorn Lomborg, who disputes the usefulness of Kyoto, accepts that man-made climate change is a reality. US politicians say the treaty is politically-motivated rather than based on science. In fact, the reverse is true. US opposition to the treaty is politically

motivated in the face of overwhelming scientific evidence.

Dr James Davey, Atmospheric Chemistry, University of Leeds, UK

The fact that a country of USA's size, power and apparent global influence refuses to sign up to such a treaty when they are

responsible for using 20% of the worlds resources is a farce. Without their name first on the list the incentive for other countries to sign up will be reduced and ultimately the protocol will be doomed to fail. The world's attitude towards fossil fuels, or indeed any natural resource - take what you can while there's still time - is childish and is the cause of many of today's most pressing global problems. It is time for us to realise the truth: That we do not own the planet but we are borrowing it from our children as they are from theirs.

George, London, England

“ Ultimately the protocol will be doomed to fail ”

George, London, England

There is no point in looking to governments for leadership in this matter. The onus rests with us as individuals, to make the small changes to our lifestyle and to fight the 'what difference can I make?' blinkered apathy. Drive a more efficient car. Switch off lights in empty rooms and use energy-efficient light-bulbs. Recycle. Switch to renewable energy. All these tiny efforts help if enough people make them, and they certainly can't do any further harm.

Daniel, London, UK

Global warming or not, it can only be a good thing to cut down emissions anyway, if for no other reason than health.

Gerry Noble, Salisbury, UK

I think Britain should use its special relationship to our advantage for once and tell America to sign or lose the best friend they have in the world. Even if we aren't

Russia we still carry some clout in the world and George might listen.

Tom, Sheffield, UK

“ I think Britain should use its special relationship to our advantage ”

Tom, Sheffield, UK

Looking at these green evangelists, it should be clear to see that this is a plain old medieval scare story. The real question here is which risk do we take: The risk of needlessly destroying the greatest civilisation in history (The West) lest our climate changes a little more, or a little faster than it would anyway; Or, on the other hand, do we carry on as we are, towards an affluent, free society with democracy and capitalism as a global norm, and risk being the first civilisation ever to collapse by having too much freedom, and not enough faith in scare stories?

Alex , England

Kyoto is another feel good measure that is meant to make industrialized countries feel virtuous. However, unless third-world countries, where many companies move manufacturing

facilities due to the low environmental standards, are not held to the same high standards as industrialized countries, then it will have no effect on green house gases. After NAFTA, chemical manufacturers moved from the USA to Mexico which has practically no environmental policy, or one that can be easily circumvented.

Ellen, New York, NY

Climate change, whether it occurs 'naturally' or through human action, is not completely spontaneous. Changes must occur in the atmosphere for one reason or another. And this is undoubtedly happening.

Regardless of whether natural reasons or human activity is mainly responsible, do we really want to help the process along? There is so little to lose and so much to gain by reigning in our fossil fuel usage and funding greener alternatives - so what is the problem?

Katherine, London, UK

“ There is so little to lose and so much to gain by reigning in our fossil fuel usage and funding greener alternatives ”

Katherine, London, UK

To: Katherine, London, UK... I'm interested to hear that you think the world's economy is so little a thing to lose. 'It's only money' is a very popular cry, but if the entire world economy collapses the death rate would be beyond belief.

Chris, UK

Who said protecting the planet would be cheap? Of course there's going to be a price to pay. When will the world wake up to the fact that our planet is an asset in which we ALL must invest for the future.

Eddie, Sydney Australia/ex UK

There isn't any science behind Kyoto. The theory behind it can be called an educated guess at best. The US government would be foolish to spend billions of dollars complying with it based guess work. The EU is acting very arrogantly in insisting that the US sign this treaty while providing zero evidence that it will work. I believe that Kyoto is more about slowing down the US economy than it is about the environment. There is no other logical explanation for the EU's close-minded approach to a theoretical topic.

Anthony, USA

We need high level treaties to kick governments into action to do something about the climate crisis. Most environment plans are long term and governments will not see the benefits within their stay of power. It's not a vote winner - and only by making it illegal to pollute will something be done. However, the most powerful force in today's world is the consumer and if the consumer demanded more environmentally products, and used their purchasing power to buy more fuel efficient cars then things would change much more rapidly

Sarah M, Germany

Have the 'Greens' shot themselves in the foot over global warming? They have campaigned long and hard against the

only credible alternative - nuclear power, yet fail to mention this aspect at this moment in time...

Jim, Preston, UK

Arguing over economic consequences and politics doesn't alter the fact that the earth's climate is changing more rapidly than ever before because of human activity, such as burning fossil fuels. Are there no far-seeing politicians who realize that economic concerns should not be outweighed by concerns for the world we are bequeathing to our children, grandchildren? We have to assume some responsibility for stewardship of our beautiful planet.

Marilyn Hanson, Los Angeles, USA

We have been given a gift of life and a world filled with rich beauty, but ever since the industrial revolution we had pumped billions of tons of unnatural gases into our breathing air. We have to reduce the pollution levels. It's not a question of politics or economy, it's a question of morality. We as humans have a moral obligation to preserve this world. Otherwise what other purposes do we have.

Doug, Sweden

Do we really have that much control over the earth's climate cycles? There was an ice age once, and it melted before we were even here...I have to wonder.

GG, Portland, USA

“ Do we really have that much control over the earth's climate cycles? ”

GG, Portland, USA

Kyoto solves nothing. It will change nothing. Climate change is a gradual process that takes decades to happen and will do so without human intervention. The earth will grow warmer despite any human activity or lack of it. What we have to understand is that humans are not essential to the existence of the earth, nor were the dinosaurs. Look where they are now.

Martyn, Stratford upon Avon. UK

I haven't noticed any major changes in climate recently, in fact we had more extreme weather in the 1970s than we do now. I think we need to get the facts straight before a plan can be formulated, scientists seem to contradict one another on this subject on a weekly basis.

Jon Perrin, Lincoln, UK

To those that want to put sanctions on non-signatories, or make non-signatories liable for damages caused by climate change here's a dose of reality: First, sanctions won't work against the US. because this would lead to a trade war where we sanction the EU. Inevitably this would cause a global recession.

Second, signatories can't just "make" sovereign countries liable for damages. This expansion of international law would have to be agreed upon, and that won't happen. The fact is Kyoto would be bad for the US. Since there is no effort underway to fix its flaws, we are rightly staying away from it.

Chris Hart, Lawrenceville, USA

China is gobbling up resources at unprecedented rates and will continue to do so with expectations of 9% growth in GDP for the next several years. This is not factored into Kyoto looking at 1990 levels, moreover China is considered "developing" and is exempt from contributing cuts or curbs. Europe says their independent nations yet when it comes to Kyoto they want to pool resources and allocate credits within the EU. Russia is in it for pure profit of emissions trading. Emissions trading seems like a total scam.

“ The US has championed many initiatives and has very active environmental policies ”

Daniel, Chicago, IL, USA

Treaties are not signed simply because friends and allies sign them. The US has championed many initiatives and has very active environmental policies. The "world" should not feign ignorance of this simply because it is spiteful that President Bush actually read the fine print before committing the USA not only to a flawed treaty but a concept which can not work because the world of today has dynamically changed since 1990.

Daniel, Chicago, IL, USA

Haifa is one of the most polluted cities in Israel, due to all the factories in its bay. Many people who live in down town Haifa, the port city, suffer from illnesses connected to the air quality. I think that reducing the amount of smoke and other gases that the factories make, is important not only to the environment of the future, but also to the present.

David Alon, Haifa, Israel

In the US we feel it is just a political ploy. The science involved makes for good science fiction stories but offers no real evidence. We also don't trust the intentions of those signing on as well. We elected Bush because he wasn't going to sign on. Let's see how this works out for those countries like Spain and Portugal over the next 5 years. I bet they generate more greenhouse gas every year than they did in the previous year.

Joe Pepe, New York City

All countries of the world should be required to participate. Wealthier nations need to invest in renewable energies within less financially stable countries to help reduce emissions in countries which largely rely on fossil fuels as an energy source. It is important to share information on new technologies and ways of sourcing energy.

Kimberley, Tauranga, New Zealand

It's about a trade off. While developed countries no longer need to burn wood for fuel, poorer countries still do. There is little that can be done to

“ It's a question of conscience ”

Kpdodo, Mauritius

change that. However, where the technology exists to reduce pollution dramatically at a low cost per unit output, or where a more efficient vehicle exists that is roughly similar, don't today's children and the children of tomorrow deserve that we

do something to preserve the Earth for them? It's a question of conscience, and of the price we are willing to make others pay for our excesses.

Kpdodo, Mauritius

The most important thing to make Kyoto more acceptable is to convince people that environmental actions and a healthy economy can co-exist. The way I see it, the US is now risking becoming economically weaker and less competitive because of its current 'high energy' policy. When I see the progress Europe is making on renewable energy and more efficient transportation, I wonder how much longer North America can remain competitive!

Gilles Fecteau, Toronto, Canada

Whatever you may think, Kyoto is a step in the right direction. At least the world is trying to do something about pollution and that counts more than pointless criticisms of the treaty with nothing better to offer in return. Soon it will be too late to argue one way or another. If we do not control our abuse, the planet will control us.

Charles, Paris, France

The vast majority of us in the world outside of the US know that America is destroying the planet through its socio-economic and political processes. For Americans to come to terms with this may prove too unsettling a challenge to the sanitised, cotton wool myths of their well-tended, comfort zones, and thus they choose to believe the platitudes of their father-knows-best administration. The sooner every day Americans wake up and take issue with those in government, forcing them to surrender this ignorant quest to destroy more human, animal, and plant life in order to squeeze out every last drop of oil in this little ball of mud we call our planet, the better the chances are for us all, for generations to come, to live in a cleaner more peaceful world.

David, (Australian), Singapore

We should be thankful that America has resisted the pressure to sign up to the Kyoto Treaty. The treaty is based on flawed data and outrageous predictions from flawed computer models. There is no real evidence to support the contention that the current, modest warming trend in the global climate - a recovery from a previous period of cooling culminating in the little ice age of the middle ages - is caused by human activity rather than being part of the natural cycle of events.

Tony Judge, Sydney, Australia

Why should it be strengthened? For heavens sake, climate change has always taken place; the earth has never had a stable environment! Nature is dynamic, not static, as some confused environmentalists believe. The Kyoto protocol is a terrible, terrible mistake. Billions will be squandered for nothing.

Erik G, Aarhus, Denmark

“ **Nature is dynamic, not static, as some confused environmentalists believe** ”

Erik G, Aarhus, Denmark

I've read comments from several contributors to this topic and question their scientific knowledge. They seem not to have any idea of the thermodynamic properties of carbon dioxide. This gas is a major product of burning fossil fuels and if we look at the fossil fuel reserves of the Earth, especially oil, we must realise that these represent millions of years of sunlight energy falling on the Earth and being stored by plant life, which eventually is converted to oil and coal. We are now bent on burning all this fuel in a couple of hundred years and releasing all that stored energy plus the attendant carbon dioxide and expecting the effect of this to be negligible - in my opinion this is highly unlikely.

Peter, Conway USA

The solution is clear. Stop subsidizing coal, natural gas and the nuclear energy sector. Then there will be a chance that renewable energy will take off. "Traditional" energy production are dirty and damaging nature.

Dimitar, Sofia, Bulgaria

No one is arguing that climate change isn't at least in part a natural phenomenon. The problem is that it is happening at a much faster rate than it has done in the past and that is down to human activity.

Jane, Wales, UK

First we really must stop referring to this phenomenon as 'Global Warming,' because it really causes extreme weather events more than a uniform warming. The term 'Global Warming' opens environmentalists up to the charge that some areas of the Earth are not warming. Rather, it should be called 'Global Climate Crisis.'

Second, while governments must take responsibility, so must we, the average citizen. We have the power to buy energy from cleaner sources, support progressive companies such as BP, and educate ourselves about the risks. I think for this issue, the global community, rather than governments, will take the lead.

Dom Nardi, New York, USA

The theory that our CO2 emissions are changing the climate is just that, a theory. There is not even agreement on whether the world is warming, let alone agreement on why or how. The Earth has been considerably hotter than it is now, and considerably colder. The concentration of CO2 in the atmosphere is only 0.035% so is hardly the obvious culprit.

“ The theory that our CO2 emissions are changing the climate is just that, a theory ”

Tim, London

The media is utterly biased, only playing stories that "support" climate change - for instance, parts of the US had their coldest August for 100 years this year, and in places the Arctic ice is thickening but nobody reports these facts.

Tim, London

The entire matter is being grossly mishandled and

misunderstood. Kyoto is not the panacea for environmental woes. What is first necessary is a global treaty on population reduction and control. Unfettered population growth is destroying the jungles, rain forests, and other natural areas, as well as increasing the demand for use of fossil fuels by much larger amounts than any other factor.

Aggressive population growth, in many areas of the world, is what is threatening quality of life, the environment, and contributing (in the long term) the largest threat to climate. Kyoto is worthless paper, because it does not resolve that one fundamental issue.

John Holmes, Canada

While it is true that the United States generates one quarter of the greenhouse gases with just four percent of the world's population, it also generates one quarter of the world's wealth. Given its vast geographical distances and harsh climate, in light of these disadvantages, it is remarkably efficient.

People have a choice. They can act together on projects which will actually work or they can continue to talk, sign treaties, and make accusations while civilisation is destroyed by climate change.

Mark Fischer, USA

I can only shake my head when I read some of the contributions from the US. Whatever the merit is of the underlying science, isn't it the right thing to do to stop waste?

Ronald Vopel, Brussels, Belgium

I just cannot believe some of the comments here. Anyone must see that our actions are having a negative effect on the climate. Of course it's difficult to put any agreement into practice but that's no excuse for doing nothing. The result of no action will be no planet.

Brian Bailey, Winterthur, Switzerland

“ The result of no action will be no planet ”

Brian Bailey, Winterthur, Switzerland

People need to take responsibility for their actions. The States and industry have been pumping out greenhouse gases for a quick buck for the better part of a century without regard for the consequences. Inaction will ultimately prove more costly than the short term economic downturn as the climate fluctuations, and increase in extreme weather events, will push insurance costs through the roof. Kyoto is designed to be versatile and the USA can always buy carbon credits!

Chris Johnston, Harpenden UK

Few people have realised that the Earth is alive and reacting according to what we have done. The Earth will change when we change too.

Antônio Carlos Bordin, Nagoya, Japan

Signing up to Kyoto is not the same as actually taking the required actions. I think we may find that the non-signers are

simply more honest about what is possible. I fully expect the signers to start backing away sometime soon from the conditions they accepted.

AI, UK

The Kyoto Protocol is a good start, but only a start. Until the biggest polluters, like the US, put economic self-interest aside and recognise that we

are all dependent on the health of our planet the slide to catastrophe will hardly be slowed. All countries need to do more. Deforestation anywhere in the world impacts on us all and until we find a collective global approach I see little hope that we can halt the damage to our environment let alone reverse it.

Lynne, New Zealand

“ All countries need to do more ”

Lynne, New Zealand

Climate change is a red herring which has been swallowed hook, line and sinker by western liberals and it sits alongside the 'first world bad - third world good' guilt trip ideology. Kyoto is meaningless and is really about, surprise surprise, politics.

Jack, Bath, UK

Nothing can or should be done, the Kyoto treaty is about crushing the US economy and sovereignty. Europe just cannot accept the fact that the US does have to answer to it and they are using this treaty for "climate control" as a Trojan horse. There is not a shred of conclusive scientific evidence that human activity causes global climate change in any meaningful way.

Colin Keesee, Moorpark, CA, USA

For as long as the Americans and Australians in particular continue to bury their heads in the sand and pretend that human-induced climate change isn't happening Kyoto remains pretty useless. However, now that Russia has come on board, is it not time that economic sanctions be placed upon those nations who wish to ignore the world's plight, not for my generation, but for the sake of our children's and future generations?

Andrew Taylor, Nottingham, UK

Reducing the world population would be a start, we all breath out carbon dioxide (CO2 a greenhouse gas) and we all use fuel and almost all fuels are carbon based

C Bennett, Swansea

“ Reducing the world population would be a start ”

C Bennett, Swansea

There are numerous reasons why our planet seems to be deteriorating. But one thing is for certain: if we, as the collective western world, must be willing to give up many of our favourite commodities. Furthermore, we must educate ourselves from the rest of the world and learn to live more at harmony with nature.

Vasco, Chile/Studying in the United States

Kyoto will have no effect - it's not only too little too late but even the signatories won't comply because it means a systemic shift that we are not prepared to make.

Stuart, Calgary, Canada

Almost 90% of greenhouse gas emissions come from natural sources (rotting vegetation and volcanoes). Even if humans reduced CO2 emissions by 50% then "total" world production would only reduce by 5%. Nobody can say that this would make any difference. Who can say that a 5% reduction would make any difference to the climate but it sure would make a difference to the world economy.

Woody, Penang, Malaysia

The province I live in thrives on the oil and natural gas industry. Even though the federal government ratified Kyoto, the provincial government has made it very clear it will not cooperate in the implementation or enforcement due to the revenue generated by fossil fuels in the province and because of the number of people that are employed in the province in the industry. Until the world become less dependant on the products that create green house gases (i.e. fossil fuels) I doubt there will be much that can be done to strengthen the agreement.

Chris, Calgary, Canada

The ability to predict climate change is beyond the grasp of current science. Has everyone forgotten the scare of the "Ensuing Ice Age" from twenty years ago? The real issue is suffering in third world countries. The Kyoto Protocol is just a feel good hype to take people's mind off of real problems.

Mike Jones, Rocky Mount, USA

“ The Kyoto Protocol is just a feel good hype to take people's mind off of real problems ”

Mike Jones, Rocky Mount, USA

Climate change could be the result of human action, but it could also be the effect of the planet's ever changing progress. More information is needed to combat global warming effectively. However, reduction in emissions and pollution is only a logical step to take to protect us from immediate problems such as smog, filth, and of course reliance on Middle Eastern oil.

Billy, Toronto, Canada

I think it is important that money is invested in safer and cleaner energy resources as an alternative to petroleum. As the highest polluting nation, the USA bears the responsibility to sign the quota protocol. Instead Bush, under pressure from oil companies, is ignoring it. As times passes pollution is going to be a more dangerous threat to humanity than Saddam was!

Vivek , Cleveland, Ohio, USA

Make all the non-signatory countries liable for damages, suffering and re-construction in countries that are affected drastically by climate change. We should also create a world fund specifically targeting these countries to pay extra when

they do not meet the Kyoto targets - even if they have not signed. Climate has no boundaries and neither should this agreement recognise national countries. The UN should enforce it. It is a global issue and national policies should not matter here.

George, Canada

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