

(U) UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen -- Will the Developed and Developing World Agree on Climate Change?

FROM: [REDACTED]
Deputy SINIO for Economics and Global Issues (S17)
Run Date: 12/07/2009

(U) Delegates from around the world will convene in Copenhagen from 7 to 18 December for the UN Climate Change Conference (COP-15). The event is intended to be the culmination of two years of negotiations by the international community to reach consensus on legally binding commitments to limit greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that would enter into force in 2012, when the first phase of the Kyoto Protocol on climate change expires. Over 90 world leaders, including the U.S. President, are expected to participate. In Copenhagen, these leaders will attempt to reach an agreement that both launches immediate action and ensures long-term commitments. However, it remains to be seen if an agreement will be reached or whether negotiations will break down entirely. Success or failure will have far-reaching effects in the areas of foreign policy, environmental issues, and energy security.

(U) Reaching a global climate-change agreement will not be easy for the delegates. The greatest challenge to the talks remains the North-South divide. The leaders from the North -- i.e., developed countries -- see climate change as a problem with irreversible consequences that cannot be solved without the full participation of developing countries, especially emerging market economies. The leaders from the South -- or developing countries, led by China and India -- see the climate change problem as not of their making and believe they are being asked to fix it in ways which will hamper their ability to raise their standards of living.

(U) These divisions are deep, with both sides showing few signs of compromise. During the opening session of preliminary negotiations in Barcelona last month, the 50-member Africa Group, in a show of unity, walked out, announcing that they would boycott the Kyoto Protocol talks until developed countries got serious about their climate change commitments. They ended their boycott of the talks after winning promises for more in-depth talks on how much developed countries need to reduce GHG emissions.

(U) To move the process forward, it will be necessary to bridge this divide. There are efforts underway to do this, including the Franco-Brazilian common position, which aims to reduce GHG emissions globally by at least 50 percent from 1990 levels by 2050. In a mid-November statement to the press, Presidents Sarkozy and Lula emphasized that they hoped to demonstrate that two countries with different national and regional situations can successfully adopt a joint position on climate change. Meanwhile, the Danes, as host of the event, are tirelessly engaging world leaders to garner support for their draft political agreement - which was created when it became clear that the process had run out of time to reach agreement on a legally binding treaty. Supporters of this approach hope the political agreement will subsequently be transformed into a legally binding climate treaty sometime next year.

(TS//SI//REL) Analysts here at NSA, as well as our Second Party partners, will continue to provide policymakers with unique, timely, and valuable insights into key countries' preparations and goals for the conference, as well as deliberations within countries on climate change policies and negotiating strategies. A late November report detailed China's efforts to coordinate its position with India and ensure that the two leaders of the developing world are working towards the same outcome. Another report provided advance details of the Danish proposal and their efforts to launch a "rescue plan" to save COP-15.

(TS//SI//REL) Given such large participation (with all 192 UN member states invited to attend), leaders and negotiating teams from around the world will undoubtedly be engaging in intense last-minute policy formulating; at the same time, they will be holding frequent sidebar discussions with their counterparts -- details of which are of great interest to our policymakers. While the outcome of the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference remains uncertain, signals intelligence will undoubtedly play a significant role in keeping our negotiators as well informed as possible throughout the 2-week event.