

CONTRACTION & CONVERGENCE

WHY SHOULD THE US GO FOR C&C?

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A frequently asked question on C&C is,

“the US has refused even the 7% reduction commitment it agreed to under Kyoto. Why would the US be any more likely to accept C&C, given that C&C ultimately mandates much deeper long-term global cuts?”

Here’s why.

Although GCI supports the Kyoto Protocol as a useful first step and agrees that it would be rash to throw it away precipitately, there is no getting away from the underlying truth that Kyoto is a political fudge with no real logical consistency to either the commitments or the terms of the flexibility mechanisms. Its fundamental incoherence has allowed the US to oppose it on the grounds of developing country participation, emissions trading access, no clear scientific foundation for the cuts mandated (as opposed to any other figures plucked from the air) and so on.

By contrast, C&C complies with every single one of the US’s stated principles on climate change.

- President Bush said on Monday 18 June in the White House Rose Garden that he wants a science-led approach specifically geared towards *stabilising concentrations* in the atmosphere. C&C offers this; Kyoto does not.
- At the EU summit in Gothenburg, Bush set out six principles for US participation: (1) "we must stabilize emissions"; (2) "results must be measured"; (3) "we must be flexible in our solution"; (4) "our economies can grow and at the same time, come up with climate change solutions"; (5) "we're willing to look at market-based solutions"; and (6) "the solution ought to be global" [i.e. to involve developing countries]. Once again, C&C complies with every one of these.
- On Sunday 17 June, Colin Powell said on Fox News that, "the [Kyoto] process produced a product that was flawed, and now we need to use the process to produce a product that will be successful, will be more comprehensive, make maximum use of developing technologies, and be equitable for all the nations of the world and deal with the specific problem". Once again, C&C gives the US what it wants.
- The Administration has also said on numerous occasions in recent weeks that it wants a "long term" solution – which C&C is. C&C is moreover compatible with Byrd-Hagel; with Paul O'Neill and Christie Whitman's preference for an atmospheric concentration target; with everything Sen. Robert Byrd has called for; and so on.

The US says it wants a science-based framework aimed at stabilising concentrations, including developing countries and full access to emissions trading. C&C is the only framework GCI is aware of that can do it. What other policy framework meets US calls for developing country participation, full access to emissions trading, and has environmental credibility to match?

Under C&C, the US would have full access to emissions trading (with no need for a supplementarity cap, unlike Kyoto, since the leakage problems caused by sub-global participation and the CDM would not arise). Indeed, if President Bush so desired, he could defer domestic action for two full Presidential terms by purchasing developing world surplus emissions. This would not compromise the environmental integrity of the framework since all trading would still take place within the overall global contraction budget. Such a policy would also make domestic abatement action more expensive for Bush's successor, but this consideration would probably be offset by shorter term considerations of political acceptability.

In 1998, US Congressman John Porter (then Chair of GLOBE US, the American arm of 'Global Legislators for a Balanced Environment'), said:

“Meaningful progress on confronting the challenge of climate change will only occur when countries from the North and the South are able to collaborate in issues of significant and sustainable development. Contraction & convergence and its mechanism for financing sustainable development is the only proposal so far which is global, equitable and growth-oriented”.

The same holds true today.



