

## **President Obama: Win it in Oslo. Earn it in Copenhagen. Real Deal Now!**

Yesterday, President Obama accepted the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo. On the same day, the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance sent him a letter:

“Dear Mr. President,

We write to you with great pride and respect for your leadership...In your inaugural address ... you affirmed your commitment to help the world’s poor by saying:

To the people of poor nations, we pledge to work alongside you to make your farms flourish and let clean waters flow ... And to those nations like ours that enjoy relative plenty, we say we can no longer afford indifference to the suffering outside our borders, nor can we consume the world's resources without regard to effect.

We take these pledges seriously...An unrelenting sun scorches our land while other areas are ravaged by storms and diseases. As the world’s largest contributor to greenhouse gas concentrations, and as the world’s wealthiest nation, the U.S. has a singular duty to ensure that Africa is kept safe from ...climate change...You must live up to the dignity of the Nobel Prize when you come to Copenhagen ... We call on the United States and other developed countries to recognize their ... responsibilities for ... climate change and to repay their climate debts to Africa and other developing countries.”

Meanwhile, a specter hangs over the U.S. negotiators at the UN Climate Summit: the Kyoto Syndrome. Conventional wisdom holds that the Clinton Administration, and Al Gore in particular, blew it by agreeing to the Kyoto Accords without building the foundation for the Senate to ratify it, which it never did. It was a “mistake” all right – for the U.S. to stand around with their arms folded while the rest of the world began to move forward under Kyoto.

The Kyoto Syndrome is a dark cloud over the talks. It handcuffs the U.S. delegation, stopping it from making clear and aggressive agreements on critical issues for fear of “getting too far ahead of Congress.” Some of these issues -- like targets and financing -- could torpedo the talks if left unresolved.

So far, Obama has been scrupulous in not “getting out ahead” of Congress on climate change. He has announced he will appear in Copenhagen on Dec. 18 to commit the United States to the goal passed by the House -- a reduction in emissions of only about 4 percent by 2020. That is embarrassingly low compared to the European Union’s goal of 20 percent and to the opinion of leading climate scientists that industrialized nations should be shooting for 40 or 45 percent below our emissions in 1990.

The world needs President Obama to step up by using his regulatory authority. Given the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lisa Jackson’s formal finding Monday that greenhouse gases endanger public health and safety, the Administration has authority to establish a goal in line with climate science, and to make sure the goal is met. President Obama should announce to Congress and to the world that his Administration intends to implement aggressive regulations that will cut U.S. greenhouse gas emissions 40-45 percent by 2020, compared to 1990.

And, Obama should instruct EPA Administrator Jackson to establish a carbon cap-and-trade system that equips the United States to participate in the global trading regime expected to emerge sooner or later from the United Nations process. The regulatory approach has been studied and recommended by groups such as the Center for Biological Diversity, which has just joined 350.org in petitioning EPA to use the U.S. Clean Air Act for aggressive cuts in greenhouse gases.

And, if it appears the Senate cannot produce the 67 votes necessary ratify an international treaty that emerges from Copenhagen or beyond, the President use an Executive Agreement which can be used much like a treaty, but does not require a Senate vote.

If the Obama Administration limits its negotiating position in Copenhagen to Congress’ comfort zone, we’re in for a long 10 days and a potentially deadly result. Now is the time for President Obama to assert himself: he can come to Copenhagen next week with a bold commitment to cutting America’s carbon pollution and creating a strong clean energy economy, help save the negotiations, and maybe even help save the world...