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## 2014 Is Key to Fighting Climate Change

By **Ned Helme**

World leaders have been talking about the problem of climate change for years. But 2014 will determine whether serious money will finally be deployed to address it.

Three key meetings next year – Green Climate Fund board meetings in February and May and a United Nations gathering of heads of state in September – will be the stepping stones to success or failure.

The policies and investments decided there will guide the allocation of billions of dollars -- and perhaps lead to stepped up climate actions across the developing world -- starting in 2015. Failure to come to terms could lead to more delay and division for years to come.

When it comes to international efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, hand-wringing has often been the norm. But the Warsaw Climate Change Conference in November produced reason for optimism. Last-minute deals kept alive the hope that a global effort could prevent what the New York Times called “a ruinous rise in temperatures” caused by air pollution.

Delegates agreed to a system for pledging emissions cuts and also backed a process that could lead to a replacement for the Kyoto Protocol. The three meetings in 2014 that will set the financial mechanism in motion are keys to making that happen.

Why be upbeat after years of false starts? For one thing, both the U.S. and **China** emerged from the meetings in Warsaw with a positive and similar view about the need for pollution abatement. In years past, the two had been at loggerheads.

Indeed, the two most important powers now appear to have the political will to tame air pollution for the good of their citizens and for the citizens of the world.

What’s more, the road map for developed countries to make pledges of financial support, and for developing countries to use that money in ways that fit their own particular needs, is now firmly in hand. All that’s needed is for negotiators with serious intent to fill in the blanks.

To be sure, skepticism is warranted given the spotty history of dealing with global warming. Cash-strapped nations, faced with competing priorities, have talked big and delivered little. Even the U.S., a leader in the fight, has been whipsawed by interests that questioned the basic science behind climate change and opposed providing assistance to developing countries.

Even the Warsaw conference almost ended in indecision. Only after eleventh-hour entreaties by the major governments did the rudiments of the 2014 process come together. Several major governments – **India** was the most prominent example – were backing away from earlier agreements to reduce emissions and are still not completely on board.

But evidence has mounted that climate change is real and menacing. Extreme weather and rising tides in a growing number of developing countries have persuaded doubters that greenhouse gas emissions must be curtailed and soon. The economic as well as the human toll from inaction has dawned on even the most reluctant participants.

In addition, a new paradigm has taken hold. Instead of a top-down dictation of abatement goals and methods, experts have begun to see the advantage of bottom-up solutions to air pollution.

At the Warsaw meeting, a partnership between Germany and the **United Kingdom** announced \$90 million in funding for Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions, or NAMAs, with more money to come in 2014. As the name implies, the programs are devised by countries as win-win businesses that both help them economically while also reducing air pollution.

One project funded in **Colombia**, South America, would make use of existing mass transit infrastructure to create vibrant neighborhoods where people can safely walk, live, work, shop and play without relying on a car. The neighborhoods will reduce air pollution by reducing urban sprawl, congestion and car usage and encouraging mass transit, biking and walking while also boosting economic activity and job growth.

More work needs to be done before NAMAs can proliferate. But the prototypes are there and the funders are willing. All that's needed now is for 2014 to play out the way it should by setting the conditions for international investment. Let's hope, for everyone's sake, that it does.

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