

As Week One of COP18 Comes to a Close, a Call to Action

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The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) [18th Conference of Parties](#) (COP18) is underway in Doha, Qatar. Much is at stake this year yet to a great extent, the international media has fallen silent on the coverage of the negotiations.

The future of the Ad Hoc Working Groups on Long-term Cooperative Action and the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-LCA and AWG-KP, respectively) are in question as both working groups are due to expire this year. This would not be problematic except that both AWGs have unfinished business as part of their Bali mandates. The LCA is racing to define their future under the scope of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP). Additionally, the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol ends this year. Negotiators in Durban last year agreed to a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol (Kyoto II); however, what exactly the next iteration of the KP will look like is still to be determined.

While the play-by-play of COP18 coverage may not be of interest to most, the overarching themes and their potential impact certainly is. Kyoto II could redefine emissions targets for parties to the KP (which the U.S. is not) and transform financial flows for sustainable development through new market mechanisms. The technology and financial support for new market mechanisms could mean new business opportunities throughout the sustainability industry, including green building products and services. The activities at the COP have wide implications outside of the policy world and demand sufficient global attention.

Some of this media apathy stems from the inflated expectations for the 2009 negotiations in Copenhagen. The failure to develop a robust outcome at COP15 left the majority of the world unsatisfied. Subsequent COPs have received less and less media attention as many shrugged off the negotiations as a lost cause. Ignoring the negotiations for perceived lack of progress became a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Without significant public pressure for countries to compromise, the negotiations will never progress in a meaningful way. The media and the public must tune into the negotiations and pressure our leaders to take action before it is too late. The planet does not operate under the same deadlines as the UN.

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