Can the Kyoto Protocol work if the developing countries don't participate? [1]

Opponents of the Kyoto treaty in the U.S. have repeatedly insisted it "won't work" because developing countries "don't participate." This assertion is based on a distortion of the Framework Convention and ignores the prior agreements that led to the Kyoto Protocol. All nations that signed the Convention must inventory their domestic emissions, create pilot programs to limit them, and participate in the international efforts to reduce global emissions. Most developing countries have done these things. In 1996 it became clear that the industrialized nations’ 1992 agreement to reduce greenhouse emissions voluntarily wasn’t working. That year in Berlin, all parties, including the U.S., accepted the principle that agreeing to binding reduction targets for the industrialized nations should come first, and then limiting emissions from the developing nations would follow.

U.S. per capita energy use is about twice that of Western Europe and Japan, 12 times that of China, and 20 times that of India. Since 1990, China's and India's emissions remained about the same while U.S. emissions increased over 15 percent. Simple justice requires industrial nations, and the U.S. in particular, to take the first steps to slow global warming. It is the U.S., not the developing nations, that is failing to keep its agreements, and it is the U.S. whose participation will be essential if goal of reducing greenhouse emissions on an equitable basis is to be reached. Let us begin to remove the plank from our own eye so we can see more clearly how to help our neighbors consider the speck of sawdust in theirs.

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