

Responding to Climate Change

WISSAM YASSINE, UAE NATIONAL COORDINATOR AT CARBOUN, OUTLINES WHERE WE'RE HEADED IN TERMS OF CLIMATE CHANGE, LEADING UP TO COP 18 IN DOHA

International corporation to control and mitigate climate change started at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro 20 years ago in 1992. The summit resulted in the signing of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which now has 195 parties. The ultimate objective of the UNFCCC is to “stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.”

Since then, major breakthroughs in climate change negotiations and commitments were made. Most significantly, the Kyoto protocol was negotiated in 1997 and entered into force in 2005. Recognising the wide difference in historical GHG emissions across countries, parties to the Kyoto protocol agreed that they had “common but differentiated responsibilities” toward reducing their GHG emissions. In that spirit, developed countries agreed to



reduce their emissions by an average of 5.2% below 1990 levels by 2008-2012, the first commitment period under the Kyoto protocol.

The Kyoto protocol was a major step forward; however, the 37 developed countries with binding reduction targets

under the Kyoto protocol represented only 25% of the world's global emissions. It was clear that the world needed a new treaty that brought on board the developing countries such as China, India and Brazil, whose percentage of global emissions grow significantly from what it was in 1997, the year Kyoto was negotiated. In 2005 in Montreal, parties to the Kyoto protocol and the US agreed to start negotiating a post 2012 emissions reduction commitment with the aim of reaching an agreed outcome in Copenhagen in 2009. However, the outcome of Copenhagen was a true disappointment, as the US succeeded in steering the negotiations away from a legally binding emissions reduction commitment. The alternative was the Copenhagen Accord, which calls on developed countries to commit to “economy-wide emissions targets for 2020”. The targets were discretionary and non-binding, which is why COP 15 in Copenhagen was largely seen as a step backwards in climate negotiations. **b**

