



## 'The Climate Change Blame Game'

That's how the ever alert Guardian labeled the COP 19 conference recently organized in Warsaw by the UN. The Polish government fuelled a lot of controversy by allowing a summit conference on coal to take place at the same time. Poland is a big coal producer and generates almost 90% of its electricity from coal, a major carbon-emissions culprit.



The COP19's eleventh-hour agreement may not satisfy everybody, but it did break the feared deadlock and opened some new perspectives. How could there be anything different than a small step forward? Imagine more than 10.000 people from 189 countries debating during two weeks a subject of such immense complexity and colossal political impact as Earth's climate. Can we then reasonably expect a clear and concise agreement that satisfies everybody? Of course not. We should probably be happy that they are talking at all.

Because, you see, the concerns are vastly different for, say, the USA and Europe on one hand and, for instance, a tiny nation like Tuvalu. This independent Polynesian island, somewhere between Hawaii and Australia, has a population of only 11.000 and counts just a few more square meters than the Vatican. It is the 189<sup>th</sup> and flattest member of the UN, elevated on average only two meters above sea level. That makes it one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change. Imagine how their delegate sees the conference!

In spite of convincing scientific evidence, there are still influential people who do not believe in global warming. They will loudly declare it at best 'an unproven theory' and often 'a myth' or 'a hoax'. What is irrefutable, however, is the rising carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere. True enough, carbon dioxide is not the only greenhouse gas, but it is a potent one and one we can manage for a more sustainable world. And its concentration is measurably rising fast.

Let me just quote from Wikipedia and make a point: *"The concentration of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in Earth's atmosphere determines its contribution to the greenhouse effect (. . .). The concentration has increased markedly in the 21st century, at a rate of 2.0 ppm/yr during 2000–2009 and faster since then. It was 280 ppm in pre-industrial times, and has risen to 392 ppm in 2013 (with a daily average at Mauna Loa recording 400 ppm as of 10 May 2013) with the increase largely attributed to anthropogenic sources. About 57% of the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions go to increase the atmospheric level, with much of the remainder contributing to ocean acidification. (. . .). Despite its relatively small overall concentration in the atmosphere, CO<sub>2</sub> is an important component of Earth's atmosphere because it absorbs and emits infrared radiation, thereby playing a role in the greenhouse effect. The present level appears to be the highest in the past 800,000 years and likely the highest in the past 20 million years . . ."*

Scientists say there may be just enough time to reverse that trend and narrowly avoid cataclysmic climate change by the end of this century. That's when our grandchildren and their kids will be around. Politicians do sometimes have grandchildren, do they not?

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