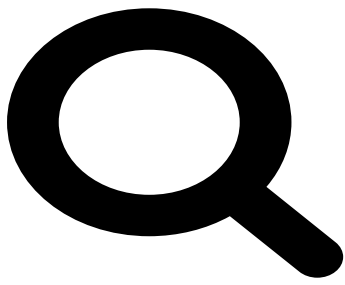


WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE CANCUN CONFERENCE ON CLIMATE CHANGE?

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The teacher [Naomi Oreskes](#) of the University of California in 2004 led a research effort to assess the degree of consensus on climate change in the international scientific community. To do this, he took a statistically significant random sample, 10%, of all the scientific articles that had been published in the last ten years on climate change. Their study, [published in the journal Science](#), concluded that among the 928 articles in the sample, only one questioned the consensus. After analyzing it in detail, it was found that it was actually more than a scientific paper, it

was an opinion article published in the Bulletin of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists by people linked to the sector.

However, around 50% of the news and articles published in the press, radio and television in that country contain opinions that question the conclusions of science. **They wrongly convey the impression that there is still a scientific debate on the basic premises of climate change.** This position of the media is skewed by pressure from **interest groups linked to the conventional energy sector**, led by Exxon Mobil, and has had a very negative impact on public opinion. Thus, in a recent opinion poll carried out by the [PEW Research Center](#) half of the US population stated that you do not believe that there is a problem with the weather or that you do not believe that it is caused by humans. In this breeding ground, the result of the North American climate policy of the last two decades has been very disappointing. Even the timid bill passed by Congress under the Obama administration has not gone ahead due to rejection by the Senate.

What the **state of the art climate science** tells us though - see [Climate Change Science Compendium 2009](#) of the United Nations- is that the alteration of the Earth's climate due to anthropogenic action poses a challenge unprecedented in history of humanity. The impacts derived from the accumulation of emissions have already altered the physical and ecological geography of the planet in a process of deterioration and degradation that has only just begun. The progressive acidification of the oceans and its negative impact on coral ecosystems, the cradle of enormous marine biodiversity. The rise in sea level, which, even with a complete elimination of emissions, will continue for centuries due to the inertia of accumulated heat. The gradual but unstoppable disappearance of the mountain glaciers located in the tropical and temperate regions of the planet (the Himalayas, for example), with its impact on the life systems and culture of hundreds of millions of people. Changes in hydrological cycles with their impact on regional climates and their associated ecosystems, with an especially dramatic incidence in the case of sub-Saharan Africa. The disappearance of the ice in the Arctic in the summer season...

These processes are already occurring and there is no turning back. The speed at which they are manifesting is higher than even the most pessimistic scenario contemplated by the Intergovernmental Panel of Experts on Climate Change (IPCC) in the 1990s. We can, however, prevent them from worsening and accelerating by preventing thresholds from being crossed that could trigger serious positive feedback effects such as the collapse of the Amazon and the thawing of the Siberian permafrost, and which would probably push the climate system into an out-of-control situation.

The red line identified by the international scientific community is the 2 degrees Celsius increase in the average temperature of the atmosphere compared to pre-industrial times, an objective endorsed at the Copenhagen summit. However, the temperature has already increased by 0.7°C and the emissions emitted in the past make a greater increase in the future inevitable. The room for maneuver is thus limited. It is specified that by 2020 the global emissions ceiling will be reached and, from there, they will decrease progressively until they are reduced by approximately half in 2050. However, recent reports from the Dutch Environment Agency ([NEAA](#)) conclude that greenhouse gas emissions are not only not contained but are being speeding up.

In this context, the **Cancún climate summit** began. The international community is trying to drag

its feet towards a treaty to replace the Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012. The probability of reaching that date without a binding agreement involving the world's main emitting countries is unfortunately very high. high.

Europe is the only region that in the last 20 years has made an honest effort to progressively decarbonise its economy, reducing its greenhouse gas emissions beyond what was committed in the Kyoto Protocol - 14% instead of the 8% contemplated in the international agreement. Given the evolution of emissions, the current 20% reduction target for 2020 lacks strength and ambition. Making the 30% mitigation target official in Cancun would renew the leadership and commitment of the European Union and would help decisively set the course of its economy towards a low-carbon society.

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