



Copenhagen Climate Conference to Create 'Huge' Carbon Footprint

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By Joshua Rhett Miller

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Talk about your global warming . . . When an estimated 16,500 delegates, activists and reporters descend upon Copenhagen Monday for the United Nations Climate Change Conference, a lot of hot air will follow.

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The U.N. estimates the 12-day conference will create 40,584 tons of carbon dioxide equivalents, roughly the same amount as the carbon emissions of Morocco in 2006.

Those greenhouse gas emissions are comprised of two parts: international travel and local emissions from hotels and transportation venues. Organizers will also reportedly lay 900 kilometers of computer cable and 50,000 square miles of carpet, along with more than 200,000 meals to be served and 200,000 cups of coffee.

The conference will leave an enormous carbon footprint, says Patrick Michaels, senior fellow for environmental studies at the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank in Washington.

"It will be huge," Michaels said of the environmental toll. "Where is video conferencing when we need it? An equally important question is what will be accomplished here?"

Approximately 140 aircraft carrying world leaders, heads of state and VIPs will land in Copenhagen, the U.N. estimates — although 95 percent of departures from Copenhagen Airport will be "green departures," which allow airplanes to climb continuously to their optimal operating level, enabling them to reach planned routes sooner than usual. The result, according to the U.N., is saved time, fuel and carbon emissions.

But Michaels wonders why attendees, particularly those in Europe, can't ride the rails into Copenhagen.

"That's the way I get to New York," Michaels said. "There's nothing new here. There's always been a lot of hypocrisy amongst the climate change political community.

"Prince Charles goes around the world in a private jet, telling everyone else they need to ration their carbon dioxide. Please."

Herb London, president of the Hudson Institute, a Washington-based think tank, acknowledged the "level of hypocrisy" regarding the conference and its emissions, but he said living in modernity mandates some sort of measurable carbon footprint. The question, he said, is if the carbon footprint left behind is desirable and efficient.

"It is ironic that you'll have all these pronouncements made and very little action," London told FoxNews.com. "What are [China and India] going to do? So what are we talking about here?"

To minimize the conference's carbon footprint, the U.N. says the main venue, The Bella Center, aims to reach a 20 percent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions. To reach that goal, delegates have been urged to use public transportation to the site, to drink water from the tap instead of plastic bottles, and to minimize paper waste. Hotel owners have been asked to offer rooms that have been certified as environment-friendly.

Despite those efforts, Michaels said he expects little if any firm proposals to come out of the conference, which aims to produce a new treaty to replace the Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012.

"It will not produce a concrete agreement on climate change, meaning a universally-accepted international agreement with targets and timetables," Michaels said. "It will, however, produce a statement that there's been a breakthrough even though

there will not have been.”

President Obama will travel to the Danish capital on Dec. 9 to offer his goal of cutting emissions 17 percent by 2020, in line with a bill passed by the House in June and slightly less than a 20-percent decrease proposed in the Senate.

“The president going to Copenhagen will give positive momentum to the negotiations,” Michael Froman, Obama’s deputy national security adviser for international economies, told reporters last month. “We think it will enhance prospects for success.”

Joined by up to seven cabinet members, Obama will also propose reducing emissions by 83 percent by 2050 and a 30 percent reduction in 2005 levels by 2025. China and India have said industrialized countries like the United States — the biggest greenhouse gas producer among developed nations — must be willing to slash carbon output 40 percent by 2020 from 1990 levels if it expects poorer economies to agree to long-term goals.

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