

Melting snow caps, disappearing countries, mass species extinctions, rising sea levels, and extreme weather conditions (droughts, wildfires, hurricanes, tornados) are going to continue to cause chaos around the world, especially around underdeveloped countries in Africa and Asia, making the tragic conflicts like Sudan and Somalia more common occurrences. This is the opinion recently expressed by General Anthony C. Zinni, the former head of US Army Central Command, “We will pay for this one way or another.” says Zinni, “We will pay to reduce greenhouse gases emissions today, and we’ll have to take an economic hit of some kind. Or we will pay a price later in military terms. And it will involve human lives.”

Which brings us to Copenhagen.

On December 7 through 18 the Conference of the Parties (COP15) under the United Nations’ Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) will take place in Copenhagen.

About 10,000 people representing Governments and organizations from over 189 countries will be assembling on this beautiful Danish port to try to set standards to reduce carbon emissions and accelerate the development of alternative and renewable energy.

We cannot all be at Copenhagen. But this is a golden opportunity for all citizens of the world to make sure that our voices are heard. For us to really do something about climate change, before it gets too out of control.

In other words, Copenhagen is like Kyoto 2—and probably our last chance to get it right. We cannot afford to fail at Copenhagen.

An example of why we cannot fail is the island country of Maldives. The Maldives government is not waiting for Copenhagen or the rising seas, and is currently looking for funding to relocate

its 300,000 inhabitants. In fact, a failure at Copenhagen, or a failure to halt climate change could produce 450 million climate refugees, according to The Climate Project.

As Zinni says, we are going to pay for this one way or another. But the road to Copenhagen is filled with many treacherous obstacles.

Here are three big ones: the U.S., China and India.

Let’s start here at home.

Currently there is a bill in the U.S. Congress—The America’s Energy and Security Act sponsored by Representative Henry A. Waxman of California and Representative Ed Markey of Massachusetts. The Act is a combination of cap-and-trade that incentivizes alternative energy by taxing so-called fossil fuels and using the tax to invest in alternative energy. Some of the key provisions of the bill include:

- Requiring utility companies to meet a goal of 20 percent of their electricity demand through renewable energy by 2020.
- Reducing carbon emissions by 17 percent by 2020 and 80 percent by 2050 compared to 2005 levels.
- Investing \$190 billion by 2025 in new clean energy and energy efficiency carbon sequestration, electric and other advanced technology vehicles.

OK, we know it’s not a perfect bill. It has been criticized by many environmental non-profit agencies and some European countries as being too weak. But hey, it’s a start. We spent the past eight years denying there was global warming, and now we finally have an administration that gets it. This is the first time that there is a meaningful and serious energy bill in Congress that is tackling

both climate change and renewable and alternative energy.

Which brings us to the next two big obstacles. That is China and India sitting Copenhagen out.

India and China feel they are undergoing their own industrial revolution, and any caps on their emissions may slow down their developing economies. These countries feel that Western nations have already had their industrial revolutions, and they have no right to lecture China and India (especially the U.S., which until very recently was the largest emitter of greenhouse gases).

Of course China and India are correct. But they are also part of this planet.

The Himalayas supply fresh water to more than 1.3 billion people. Himalayan snow caps are melting faster than anybody predicted. Both China and India are naturally concerned: Not only will the rapidly melting snow caps will raise the river and delta basins causing massive floods in an area already by massive floods, but where will their citizens get drinking water when all the snow has melted?

So what can Awakening Consumers do to ensure we do not fail at Copenhagen?

We do have power. We have the power to support organizations, governments, companies and brands that are doing their part to ensure that the 10,000 folks attending COP 15, succeed in Copenhagen.

We have the power here at home, to make sure that the U.S. Congress passes the Energy and Security Act now—before we go to Copenhagen. This is the most important piece of legislation that is in Congress now.

Congress needs to pass the Act now, because if and only if the U.S. has its own set of goals in place,

can it start leading by example. And only then can we pressure India and China.

And we have the power with India and China. We consume vast goods and services from both countries—their economies depend on our support. As consumers, we can make our presence felt through our purchases. That is power.

We have used that power before. That is the private sector. That's why we believe that today business is leading the way on these important issues. They know that their stakeholders are being vigilant to their actions and that Awakening Consumers will vote with their pocket books when it comes to their products and services.

We have the power to make sure that Copenhagen does not fail.

As Al Gore says: "There is a very impressive consensus now emerging around the world that the solutions to the economic crisis are also the solutions to the climate crisis. I actually think we will get an agreement at Copenhagen."

That is why while I am concerned, I am also hopeful.

Because in trying times we have always prevailed. Because together we have the power to make the right decisions. For the future of all mankind, including our soldiers, those who depend on drinking water from the Himalayas or live in the Maldives. For the future of my daughter and all the daughters of the world and their daughters. That is why we must succeed at Copenhagen.