Resilience and Progress in the United Nations Climate Change Negotiations

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Global climate change negotiations have endured for almost two decades. With high water marks in Kyoto 1997 (The Conference of the Parties or COP 3) and Bali 2008 (COP 13), the United Nations climate talks have made steady albeit prodding progress toward a comprehensive climate change agreement. While many observers and delegates alike were optimistic that an agreement would be reached in Copenhagen in 2010, the COP 15 sessions fell short of the goal. Delegates now look to Cancun (COP 16) for agreements on smaller issues (e.g., capacity building, forest management, and technology transfer) as a foundation for a treaty concluded at COP 17 in South Africa.

This research examines the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations, specifically since Bali forward. The discussion focuses on the negotiation discourse (both in documents and direct observation) to understand how the climate negotiators work through difficult substantive and procedural issues. The analysis draws on concepts from resilience and systems theories to explain how climate negotiations advanced and progress, even in the wake of domestic and international political and economic turmoil.

Select References


