

A year or two ago, people expected Copenhagen to produce the equivalent of the Kyoto Protocol – a comprehensive climate roadmap for the next decade or more. It seems unlikely that the Copenhagen meeting will live up to those expectations, although there's always the chance of a last-minute surprise.

What does seem clear, however, is that progress is being made on many fronts. Within the U.S., states like California are charging ahead, the federal courts remain active, and the Obama Administration is proposing CO₂ regulations under the existing Clean Air Act. Congress is inching its way toward a federal cap-and-trade scheme, with encouraging signs of bipartisan support. Internationally, China and India are showing increased flexibility about committing to long-term mitigation efforts.

So there is reason to be optimistic looking forward, even if nothing major comes out of Copenhagen. Even Copenhagen produces surprising breakthroughs, there will be more work to come. One way or the other, Copenhagen is just one stopping point on a long road.

This posting also appears at <http://blogs.berkeley.edu/category/energy/20091008-1/>