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DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA

[Dan wants to know](#), and he is right to ask. Fortunately enough, it's a pretty easy question to answer.

As far as I can tell, the delegates agreed to negotiate a treaty some time in the future. That is diplomatic-speak for kicking the can down the road.

As I have argued for well over a year now, actual climate change policy will bubble up from the bottom, and that indeed appears to be happening. Ann has pointed out, various cap-and-trade schemes are alive and well. China has agreed to an emissions cap with lots of headroom, as promoters of an international treaty have long advocated. India has instituted a series of important initiatives concerning solar power and even carbon taxes in some circumstances. EPA is proceeding with carbon regulation under the Clean Air Act. Even Canada is making progress, mostly through provincial governments (stat of the day: Quebec gets a whopping **96%** of its electricity from renewable sources, mostly hydroelectric power, although this is nothing new).

So what exactly is gained from maintaining the Kyoto Process? What happened at Durban? Maybe nothing. But maybe what the process does is allow delegates to blow off steam (so to speak) for political consumption back home. China refuses binding caps; so does India; Canada environment minister acts like a pig; European delegates whose home governments in parliamentary systems want to forestall Green Party mobilization (or depend upon Green support in parliament) push the envelope on a treaty; the United States says all the right things and dampens justified environmentalist outrage at the ozone decision. It gives governments the political space to do things on a smaller level.

The question is whether the smaller-level actions will be enough to forestall the most devastating impacts from climate change. I'm a pessimist, so my inclination is no, but I am also a realist, so my inclination is also that it will have to be.