

Reflections of a Young Elected Official attending the United Nations Climate Negotiations

Dominic Frongillo is the youngest Councilmember in the Town of Caroline, New York. Elected in 2005 at the age of 22, Dominic now serves as Deputy Town Supervisor and leads Energy Independent Caroline, an organization dedicated to local energy independence. A graduate from Cornell University's College of Human Ecology, Dominic earned an independent degree with honors in Sustainable Community Development.

In December 2009, Dominic attended the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Copenhagen as a member of the U.S. Youth Delegation, accredited through SustainUS. The following is a compilation of his writings to over 2,000 colleagues back in the United States. These “Dispatches from Copenhagen” chronicle his journey to the U.N. summit, interactions with hundreds of international youth and government actors, and reflections on his participation and observations.

Dominic’s writings capture insights and reveal a passion unique to a new generation of international-focused youth activists for ecological restoration and economic justice. With humor and vivid storytelling, he graphically communicates both the severity of the climate crisis and an intense optimism in the power of regular, engaged citizens to create meaningful change.

The dispatches are presented in chronological order.

Dispatch from Copenhagen: UN climate talks begin

Family, colleagues, and friends,

Greetings from Denmark! The United Nations climate negotiations began yesterday in Copenhagen in a whirlwind of activity. The conference center is bustling as crowds of delegates hustle to and from plenary sessions, governments hold press conferences, reporters interview participants, and countless organizations table for their cause in what's being called the most important international talks in history.

With world attention now focused on Copenhagen, the energy inside is high. Attendance of over 110 heads of state is already confirmed, most to arrive at the end of the two weeks. Dozens of events happen every minute: simultaneous negotiation sessions, media briefings, informal meetings, side events, and approved activist actions.

It's difficult to overstate the size of the conference center here. It is beyond immense. With its cavernous corridors, endless office warehouses, and giant plenary rooms, Copenhagen's Bella Center is the largest conference center in Scandinavia -- and is still crowded. A whopping 24,000 people are expected to participate. The sheer number of people -- government delegates, non-profit reps, civil society, media, and staff -- is overwhelming.

Security is tight. When I arrived, scores of armed "politi" (police) and a huge fence surround the entire 1.3 million square-foot complex. Yesterday, lines to get in for registration were over three hours long. Street theater troops and sign-carrying activists implore delegates entering the security fence to "act now, save our lives" and "seal the deal: our future is in your hands."

CONFERENCE OF YOUTH

On Saturday, I landed in Copenhagen in time to join the Conference of Youth, a convergence of hundreds international youth attending the conference. Over 500 young people were present, networking, sharing stories, attending trainings and workshops, and organizing ourselves for the intense two weeks ahead. I met dozens of young people from as far around the world as Australia, Burkina Faso, Brazil, Papa New Guinea, Lebanon, and Indonesia.

I am so inspired by the international youth here. A total of 2,000+ youth are attending the conference, more than six times the number in Bali two years ago. In the last few years, and for the first time in history, an international youth climate movement is emerging and organizing itself on a global scale. The youth movement vision is not only to slow the deterioration of the atmosphere; its a better world for all -- where everyone has access to clean water, healthy food, and decent work without compromising our lands and air.

Just a few months ago, the UN granted the growing movement official status and a formal voice in the UN climate process. We've already delivered several statements at opening sessions calling for immediate action to secure our future.

One of these statements was delivered yesterday by Christina Ora, a small seventeen year-old girl from the Solomon Islands. She scanned the massive convention room and rows of government delegates, and said, "I was born in 1992, the year you started negotiating. Since then, my home island is now in danger of disappearing." Speaking with moral authority, she continued, "You have been negotiating my entire life. The time for talking is over. We need action now."

YOU CAN HELP

I'm working hard here in Copenhagen, and I need your help. The US will only take a strong stand on climate and clean energy when citizens at home demand it. Today before a State Department briefing, I talked with the Senior Policy Advisory for the U.S. Department of Energy, who said "What you do here in Copenhagen doesn't really matter. It's what people at home do that matters. That's where your greatest power is."

Do you want to make an impact in Copenhagen? Sign up for the US Rapid Response Team:

<http://www.powershift09.org/rapidresponse>

Look for a phone call from me or someone else from Copenhagen letting you know how you can call or write to have the biggest impact in the next two weeks and help us respond to the latest developments from here in Copenhagen.

Thank you so much for all your outpouring of support. It has been very moving.

I'll send updates from on the ground every few days as the conference develops.

With gratitude,
Dominic

Dispatch from Copenhagen: climate negotiations intensify, stakes rise

Greetings from the UN climate talks,

What a non-stop week! Copenhagen is a beautiful city with amazing rapid transit and high-efficiency district heating, but sunshine is not its strong suit. Combine this with my spending twelve-plus hours in the conference center and often staying up until 2am, and its no wonder I've only seen the sun once.

NEGOTIATIONS HEAT UP

Here in the Bella Center, the climate negotiations are intensifying and taking place at very high levels. On many issues, there is no consensus -- including those critical to agreement: temperature rise objectives and emissions targets, and long-term financial aid for developing (poor) countries to adapt to the deteriorating atmosphere and afford the clean, efficient technologies that would enable them to "leapfrog" over dirty energy sources like coal and skip straight to solar, wind, and geothermal.

Rich and poor nations remain deeply divided, with developing countries, which are already seeing worsening droughts, storms, and stress on their communities, saying the draft political agreement fails to secure the ambitious, fair, and binding legal agreement needed.

This disagreement will increase pressure and tension as the negotiations enter the second week. At the end of next week, 113 heads of state, including President Obama, are coming to Copenhagen to solidify an agreement. Senior political officials and negotiators are debating on these outstanding issues before the heads of state arrive.

PUSHBACK FROM DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

One of the most notable developments is the increasing outspokenness of countries which are being hardest-hit by deterioration of the climate. For example, Tuvalu is an island nation in the Pacific with a population of 11,000. It is four inches above sea level; rising seas are projected to sink the country in less than 50 years. Tuvalu called forcefully for immediate cuts in emissions -- saying "it immoral for the United Nations to permit one of its member states to be destroyed."

On Tuesday and Wednesday, Tuvalu caused upheaval by proposing a new process under the Kyoto Protocol for increased transparency and reducing control of rich countries.

Many developing nations rallied around Tuvalu's move -- calling for a open and transparent process, rather than a process controlled by rich countries.

Other countries like China were against it, saying "we don't have time for a new debate." After back-and-forth disagreement, Tuvalu used its power to suspend the high-level

negotiations, although numerous side negotiations continue to run simultaneously. Tuvalu's strategy is to raise the stakes early to force the richer countries to move as the negotiations enter the second week.

“SURVIVAL PACT OR SUICIDE PACT”

On Thursday, the Association of Small Island States held a press conference, surrounded by young people from around the world, where they announced they were putting forward a bold new proposal for slowing accelerating climate change. Like Tuvalu, these countries will be the first to succumb to climate change, and are not sitting back or letting more powerful countries control the agenda; instead, they are actively putting forward alternatives.

They announced their support of the latest science-based targets: to bring carbon dioxide in the atmosphere back to 350 parts per million (ppm).

CO₂ is like very hot chili pepper; tiny amounts of chili pepper in your soup can make it intensely spicy. CO₂ is only 0.039% of the atmosphere, but drives major climatic changes. James Hansen has called 350 ppm the “redline” for human civilization; it's the highest level where we avoid runaway feedbacks in the climate. Decades of burning of fossil fuels and deforestation has put us dangerously over this line – already over 387 ppm. Current “business as usual” will put carbon at over 800 ppm, which scientists say will almost certainly devastate civilization. Here's an excellent video animation explaining the feedback: <http://wakeupfreakout.org/film/tipping.html>

At their press conference, AOSIS said that even the current targets being discussed in Copenhagen will commit the world to overshooting safety of 350 ppm to 450, 550, or 650 ppm – far above what will trigger dangerous climatic feedbacks. Their lead negotiator said any agreement must “ensure the survival of all peoples and all nations.”

They said it's not just about the destruction of small island nations; such conditions will likely lead to displacement or destruction of most of the world's nations. The president of Maldives, Mohamed Nasheed, said “Our choice is between a survival pact or suicide pact. The difference is that stark.”

Walking their talk, the Maldives announced this year their goal to become the first carbon neutral country in the world – a 100% reduction in carbon emissions.

YOUTH ACTION

The activity level inside the negotiation hall is incredible. I've been working heavily with US and international youth, hustling between negotiation sessions, media events, presentations, meetings, briefings, and actions. The dedication of young people here is inspiring. Our message is clear: Our future is at stake. We need an ambitious, fair, and binding climate agreement in Copenhagen in line with the science.

In addition to creative actions both inside and outside the Bella Center, youth are working

with Avaaz.org to hold the daily “Fossil of the Day” awards, a mock award ceremony to shame the nations which did the most that day to block progress on a strong climate deal.

With a backdrop of a huge fire-breathing dinosaur skeleton and set to the Jurassic Park theme song, it gathers a huge crowd of onlookers and media every day – and youth recipients from each “winning” country give hilarious speeches to accept the award of shame. It’s not all negative attention: on the day Tuvalu gave its proposal, it won the first-ever “Ray of the Day” award for setting itself apart as a climate champion.

For more updates and pictures, check out these blogs:

<http://sustainus.org/>

<http://itsgettinghotinhere.org/>

That’s all for now. I’ll my best to keep you updated. Thank you so much again for your encouragement. It means so much to know you are supporting our efforts here in Copenhagen!

Dominic

Dispatch from Copenhagen: negotiations in critical second week

Dear friends, family, and colleagues,

Yesterday began the highly-anticipated second week in Copenhagen, when the outcome of the UN climate negotiations will be decided.

Thousands of newly-arriving government delegates and observers are pouring into the full conference center, and the corridors are now full to capacity. Hallways are like a busy metro station; hundreds of delegates in suits and carrying briefing documents rushing by every minute. People's faces express excitement and wariness. It's sometimes challenging to focus amid the bustle.

The already-tight security is tightening down even further, in anticipation of 117 heads of state arriving later in the week. Traveling in the city center today, I saw vans of police patrolling the streets and helicopters flying overhead. A high, second security fence was erected around the conference center. Secondary badges have been issued to limit the number of entrants -- including youth. There are rumors of a large protest planned Wednesday morning outside the conference center. ****see below for update****

POOR COUNTRIES WALK OUT

Inside the Bella Center, negotiations are heating up. On Monday, in full televised drama, delegates of the poor and developing countries (also known as the G-77) walked out of the plenary room during the middle of the Kyoto Protocol negotiation session. In these highly formal United Nations settings, it is unusual for government delegates to use overt protest tactics -- although developing nations are doing so with greater frequency.

The protest was aimed at rich countries, which they claim are thwarting progress on key policies. Lead negotiators for the G-77 say rich countries like the US, Canada, Japan, Australia, and members of the European Union are working to weaken key pieces of the agreement, including a vision for quickly cutting emissions, new finance mechanisms to help developing countries make the transition to clean energy, strategies to reduce forest destruction in developing nations while allowing a livelihood for farmers, and funding to help poor counties adapt to worsening droughts, storms, and crop failures.

Negotiating tracks other than the Kyoto Protocol remain in session, but the walk-out by the poor countries sent a very clear message about their displeasure with the talks' progress. Most observers clearly support the poor countries; international youth and NGOs immediately rallied to support the G-77 after the walk-out. One official said, "It is an injustice that the poorest nations are suffering the worst consequences of a problem to which they did not contribute. Rich countries must repay their climate debt."

WILL AMERICA LEAD?

Creating a fair, ambitious, and binding treaty will take extraordinary political will – and virtually everyone agrees that only the United States can provide it. On Sunday, a Canadian youth silenced a room of US youth by saying “I am a Canadian. And I’m giving up on working with Canada because Canada will only move when America moves. My country is waiting for you. The best thing I can do is help you get your government to act.”

The United States is by far the most powerful country in the world, but has been notably silent in the negotiations in Copenhagen. Despite having a huge presence, bringing over 150 negotiators and building a massive briefing center next to the plenary rooms, virtually everyone I have talked with in the Bella Center is disappointed by the lack of leadership from the US. With Bush out of office, the international community had high hopes America would lead the world -- just as America did last decade in forging a treaty to phase out CFCs which were depleting our ozone layer.

Some good news: last Wednesday, I sat 20 feet from Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lisa Jackson, who announced that her agency ruled carbon dioxide is a pollutant. (Speaking to US youth and NGOs, she said with measured humor, “The government finally realized CO2 endangers human health... news flash.”) The ruling allows the EPA to regulate greenhouse chemicals without new action from Congress.

However, many people wonder whether President Obama will use this authority or hold it as a bargaining chip for talks with Congress.

Unfortunately, with a clean energy bill stalled in the Senate, it appears the State Department negotiators are “greenwashing” America’s stance in Copenhagen. For example, the US has proposed a (pathetic) reduction in carbon pollution of 4% from 1990 levels by 2020 -- but actually is claiming it is a “17% reduction” (using the much more recent baseline of 2005)! Also, the government is even claiming the slight dip in emissions caused by the recession is a “sign of real commitment.” The US government strategy appears to be to take a hard line and employ fuzzy math to claim America is “bringing real commitments to the table” in order to pressure China, India, and other countries to making further commitments.

The hundreds of American youth here in Copenhagen are now calling on President Obama to live up to his campaign promise to lead on climate change. During the 2008 presidential campaign, in every speech, Obama used the phrases “planet in peril” and “the fierce urgency of now” -- alluding to our deteriorating atmosphere.

US youth are calling for Obama to hold a joint session of Congress, just as he did with healthcare – to push the Senate to adopting a strong clean energy bill. Actions are being planned for Friday when Obama arrives to remind him “You have the Power” and “Yes You Can.” Earlier this week, I joined in delivering a letter signed by one-hundred American young elected officials calling on Obama and Congress “lead once again by forging a bold, binding, and just agreement in Copenhagen that will secure a safe and

abundant world for future generations of Americans.”

Being in Copenhagen, I am reminded just how much power the United States has – and its citizens have. Last week, Tuvalu’s negotiator said the entire international negotiating process which could help the world avoid potentially catastrophic climate change “is being held up by a handful of United States senators.”

“IF THERE WAS EVER A TIME”

On Saturday, I had the opportunity to listen to Rajendra Pachauri, Chair of the Nobel-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, speak to a gathering of clean energy entrepreneurs. After discussing the economic opportunities of clean energy for jobs, security, and innovation, he switched to a somber tone as he observed “the pace of international negotiations seems not to reflect the severity and urgency of what we are seeing,” referencing the rapidly disappearing glaciers which provide water to millions of people and the rising seas which threaten coastal cities across the world.

In a marked departure from his known diplomatic neutrality, he stunned the audience by concluding, “It’s clear we cannot rely on the governmental sector on its own to act in time. World leaders are failing to respond with the urgency which the science demands. If there was ever a time for a grassroots mobilization, this is it.”

His profound statement still echoes in my ears. This past weekend, hundreds of thousands of people across the planet took place in a worldwide day of vigils and marches calling for a fair, ambitious, and binding treaty from Copenhagen. Over 3,000 events in 150 countries across the world made it one of the largest days of political action in history. In Copenhagen, international youth working inside the conference center joined an estimated 100,000 people in a climate change march from downtown Copenhagen to the Bella Center. Despite the cold, the crowd was upbeat, chanting “we want a real deal” and “blah blah blah: act now.” Here is the latest video footage:

http://action.350.org/p/salsa/web/tellafriend/public/?tell_a_friend_KEY=6139

WE HAVE THE POWER

I am continually struck by how the only way we will solve this climate crisis is by building the world of our dreams – by citizens from every nation working together across language, culture, and religion in a historically unprecedented way. If we can solve the climate crisis, we will certainly gain the moral courage to solve other global crises, such as ending poverty, malnutrition, war, and injustice.

As a high-level government leader said in the main plenary today, “while we must recognize the gravity of the worst-case scientific scenarios, we must also imagine the opportunities if we succeed: a healthy, prosperous, and sustainable world.”

Will keep you posted. Thank you so much for all your encouragement and support. Now organize 20 people to call your Representative and Senator and ask for strong action on clean energy!

****BREAKING**** I've been delayed sending this for 12 hours due to a lack of internet access. I'm writing from a public library in the city center. Due to massive protest directly outside the conference center, UN security has locked down the center and is prohibiting all non-governmental participants from entering, even with proper accreditation and secondary badges. I heard from a SustainUS delegation member who is on the inside that demonstrators outside have been tear-gassed by police. To my knowledge, everyone on our SustainUS delegation is safe either inside the center or at various points around the city.

This morning on the bus, a sweet elderly grandmother who has lived in Copenhagen all her life said she has never seen a police crackdown like this week, saying "they've brought in hundreds of police from around the world, but turned down 700 officers from [next-door] Sweden; I fear it's because they don't want to Sweden to see their aggressive tactics."

Things here are changing very rapidly, but I will do my best to stay up on latest developments. With all my best from Copenhagen,

Dominic

Final Dispatch on Copenhagen: Talks End Without Treaty

Dear friends, family, and colleagues,

Happy New Year! Hope you are enjoying the first week of 2010. After epic travel delays and visiting family, I am finally back in Caroline. As I write this, I am reliving the intensity and overwhelming pace of the climate talks Copenhagen just two and a half weeks ago. Here are the important highlights (with my reflections below):

TALKS END WITHOUT TREATY

The United Nations climate negotiations in Copenhagen ended two weeks and a half ago. It was a historic summit with the expectation of producing a binding climate treaty: over 192 countries participated, including a record 117 heads of state. Despite this momentum and intense international attention, on Friday December 18 (the final day of scheduled talks), international headlines reported the talks were "in a state of disarray" and that a "weak political statement" was anticipated.

Early on Saturday morning, after a series of closed-door sessions, the US, China, India, Brazil and South Africa released a three-page "accord" that contained no targets for emissions cuts or many other elements deemed critical for a treaty. It sets a timeline of six weeks for participating nations to "append" their targets, but offers no consequences if they fail to do so.

When the draft was released, many nations protested, claiming it side-stepped the UN process. A delegate from Bolivia, whose urban populations face water shortages as Andean glaciers melt, called the accord "anti-democratic, anti-transparent and unacceptable." Many poor nations said the accord was far short of the fair, ambitious, binding treaty they fought for. The lead negotiator for the vulnerable island nation of Tuvalu said "It looks like we are being offered 30 pieces of silver to betray our people and our future." After hours of contentious debate, the UN voted to neither adopt nor reject it – instead to "take note" of the three-page text.

The outcome disappointed many who were in Copenhagen. European Union Commission President Jose Barroso said, "I will not hide my disappointment regarding the non-binding nature of the agreement," adding, "the document falls far short of our expectations." Lumumba Di-Aping, head of the G-77 negotiation block of poor countries, was fiercely critical: "[The accord] asks Africa to sign a suicide pact in order to maintain the economic dominance of a few countries."

NGOs were just as harsh. The leader of Friends of the Earth said "Copenhagen has been an abject failure. Justice has not been done. By delaying action, rich countries have condemned millions of the world's poorest people to hunger, suffering and loss of life as

climate change accelerates.”

Here is an excellent video, capturing peoples’ reactions from inside the Bella Center:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/video/2009/dec/19/copenhagen-climate-change-deal>

OBAMA DELIVERS SPEECH

Although reports are conflicting about what took place behind closed-doors, including uncertainty over China's role, by all accounts the United States failed to deliver necessary leadership.

Many hoped President Obama’s arrival during the high-level meetings in the second week could create a breakthrough if he announced strong new commitments for funding, targets, or insistence on a binding treaty – opening space for other nations to follow suit.

On Friday, in the spotlight of international media, President Obama delivered his highly-anticipated speech. Inside the conference center, participants crowded around plasma monitors, while participants off site watched the speech on huge projection screens. As Obama walked to the podium, onlookers hushed. Obama was somber and unemotional as he addressed the assembled prime ministers and presidents. He acknowledged climate change is an urgent problem and said the time had arrived to solve it. Speaking in broad, general statements, he concluded without any mention of change in US position on any of the key issues.

The effect was immediate: deflating of hope. Throughout Friday, every person I talked with said it was profoundly disappointing. Later that evening, the situation repeated when Obama held a brief press conference before flying home to Washington. Youth crowded in front of a large projection screen, watching Obama explain he and several other world leaders had come to consensus on a non-binding agreement that he acknowledged “was a first step” and fell short of what was needed. People shook their heads in disbelief. One person booed in disgust.

CIVIL SOCIETY SHUT OUT

Copenhagen saw a sharp increase in the number of “civil society” observer organizations at the negotiations. These non-governmental groups (environmental, women, youth, indigenous, research, business, local government, and others) provide valuable “on the ground” perspective. They also provide a critical window into the UN negotiations, allowing the world’s citizens to engage in and judge the outcome of the negotiations.

Unfortunately, the UN accredited 45,000 people, three times than the Bella Center capacity of 15,000, forcing thousands to wait in lines five hours long that stretched to the

next metro stop.

In an unprecedented move that compounded chaos, on Thursday and Friday of the conference's second week, the UN Secretariat banned all civil society organizations from entering the Bella Center. Tens of thousands of people, representing hundreds of organizations (including SustainUS) were directed to watch the proceedings via video link at a few sites around the city.

One of the few young people allowed to enter and witness the talks was Juan Carlos Soriano from Peru. Early on Saturday morning, on behalf of young people from around the world present at the conference, Juan Carlos gave an impassioned speech at the plenary (although most delegates were not present to listen). You can watch it here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OH7ezO8DoKw>

UN REPORT LEAKED

In another development from Copenhagen, a draft United Nations report was leaked which looked at the real impact of proposed cuts of CO₂. Greenhouse gases and climate are tightly linked, so it's sobering just to know atmospheric carbon dioxide is already at its highest level in more than two million years. But it gets worse.

If you sum up all the world's nations carbon-cutting proposals (totaling a 15% cut from 1990 levels), the report found atmospheric CO₂ levels will still skyrocket from current 387 ppm to a terrifying 770 ppm. The last time CO₂ was that high was at the end of the super-warm Eocene, 33.9 million years ago – when Earth had no Antarctic ice sheet. The transition to our current climate system was marked by worldwide mass extinctions.

(A member of Congress told me, “The world's deposits of coal and oil formed over tens of millions of years. You don't need an advanced degree to know that if we dig up and burn it all in a few decades, something bad will probably happen.”)

According to the report, a rise to 770 ppm would trigger a cascade of feedbacks, and the Earth would warm by 6 degrees in my lifetime. Droughts and shifting rainfall would mean a staggering 90% of African peasants would no longer be able to farm their land. That's right: ninety percent. Millions would be forced to find another livelihood. When the report was released, non-governmental organizations in Copenhagen responded by calling the UN accord “climate genocide.”

Some groups are now calling for the world's nations to go far beyond even ambitious goals such as 80% cuts by 2050 or even carbon neutral. They say that because we have already overshot safe levels of CO₂ in the atmosphere and CO₂ emissions are cumulative on a human timescale (they stay in the atmosphere for 1,000 years), we need to go "carbon negative" -- stop all emissions and start removing carbon from the atmosphere. Already, some buildings are being designed as carbon negative structures, sequestering CO₂. The technology we'll need in the next 10 years doesn't even exist today, and that

means innovation and jobs.

REFLECTION: CAN WE INSPIRE THE WORLD TO DANCE?

As I write this, Copenhagen seems like a faraway world. Being inside the cavernous UN negotiation hall was intense and emotional. I was honored to work with some of the most passionate, talented, and amazing people I've ever met. It is deeply inspiring to join with young people from around the planet for our common vision: a safe, healthy, fair, and abundant world for present and future generations.

Reflecting back, what I'll remember is being part of a growing worldwide movement. On Saturday December 12, more than one million people at 4,000 events in one hundred and forty countries held vigils to call on global leaders to agree a fair, ambitious and binding climate agreement. One hundred thousand people marched in the streets of Copenhagen. The TckTckTck campaign (an unprecedented coalition) gathered over 15.2 million signatures -- creating the largest petition in history.

My spirits are raised by fellow youth bringing their passion and heart inside the UN negotiation halls. Two years ago in Bali, only a few delegates in the plenary spoke with any passion. In Copenhagen, nations walked out, pleaded, got angry and emotional. World youth rallied behind the poor and vulnerable countries who are making brave stands. Several courageous youth leaders fasted for an unimaginable 44 days, and inspired countless others (I was among them) to join in a global day of solidarity fasting.

For me, I feel a deep sense of moral responsibility. My nation is responsible more than any other for the crisis – contributing a whopping 29% of total carbon emissions since 1850. According to our American ethic of “polluter pays” and “you break it you bought it,” the United States owes a massive ecological debt to the world and to future generations, which is growing larger every hour.

For young people today, this isn't news. We've grown up hearing the science; we know the world is changing. And we vote.

It's disappointing, frustrating, and embarrassing that Obama did not push the world towards the strongest agreement possible. But – the good news – there may be common ground for Americans to agree. Over french fries at Hard Rock Café Copenhagen, a member of Congress told US youth, “Even the most adamant climate hold-outs in the Senate are concerned about America's competitive advantage in the clean energy economy. They don't want America to be left behind.”

For me, ultimately, this is about justice. It is deeply unfair that a small group of people is actively destroying the ability of people in poor countries and future generations to have a decent shot at life. With tears in his eyes, a SustainUS delegate told what his new friend from a poor country said during his goodbye: “Please, promise me when you return to America you will do everything in your power to save my family and our way of life.”

Time is running out. Science says we have at best a few years to turn this enormous ship around. It seems that nothing short of a unified and powerful movement will create the political imperative to move. We have to quickly expand our notion of what is possible for the world and of what we ourselves are capable of.

Here's a video which does just that. The story behind this is incredible. A small young girl in Belgium wanted do something about climate change -- her dream was to have a beach full with people dancing with her in a climate dance. Her vision caught the attention of a video producer and they organized a video shoot.

In August 2009 on the Ostend Beach in Belgium, 10,000 people turned out to dance for the climate. It gives me goose bumps:

<http://www.dancefortheclimate.org/>

If one girl can inspire 10,000 people to dance, what are we collectively capable of?

Thank you again for your encouragement and well-wishes. It means more than you know.

Let's build the world of our dreams. Our future is calling,
Dominic

“If you think about it, you'll sit down. If you feel it, you'll stand up.”
—Van Jones

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