

## Who Pays For Climate Change?

Some scientists speculate that a global temperature increase of four degrees Celsius could destroy 85% of the Amazon rainforest.<sup>11</sup> The Amazon, located primarily in Brazil, is the source of many of the world's most important medicines and other products that are derived from flora and fauna found nowhere else in the world.

A similar temperature increase, resulting in the further melting of polar ice, would directly contribute to rising sea levels. A rise of a few feet would have devastating effects on countries like the Maldives, whose highest point is a mere 2.4 meters above the hungry sea.<sup>12</sup>

Those countries and ecosystems that will experience the most devastating changes caused by rising temperatures and rising sea levels are not the ones primarily responsible for these global climate changes. The most polluting countries – China, the United States, India, and Russia – directly and disproportionately affect climate change. But these countries will not suffer the most from its effects. In other words, although the world's most polluting countries catalyze climate change, those who produce the least amount of CO<sup>2</sup> bear its consequences most.

Peter Singer, a world-renowned ethicist, proposed a cap-and-trade system to cope with the discrepancy between polluters and those who bear the burden of pollution's ill effects. According to his model, each nation has the right to produce carbon dioxide, but only up to a certain amount. Countries that pollute below this limit may sell carbon dioxide emission rights to countries that produce more CO<sup>2</sup> than their allocation.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2009/mar/11/amazon-global-warming-trees>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.environmentalgraffiti.com/conservation/news-how-global-warming-and-natural-process-threaten-maldives>

