

The CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

Ideas for a better world in 2011

In many ways, 2010 is a year you may want to relegate to the filing cabinet quickly. It began with a massive earthquake in Haiti and wound down with North Korea once again being an enfant terrible – bizarrely trying to conduct diplomacy through brinkmanship.

In between came Toyota recalls and egg scares, pat downs at airports and unyielding unemployment numbers, too little money in the Irish treasury and too many bedbugs in American sheets. Oil gushed from the floor of the Gulf of Mexico for three months, mocking the best intentions of man and technology to stop it, while ash from a volcano in Iceland darkened Europe temporarily as much as its balance sheets.

Yet not all was gloomy. The winter Olympics in Canada and the World Cup in South Africa dazzled with their displays of athletic prowess and national pride, becoming hearths around which the world gathered. In Switzerland, the world's largest atom smasher hurled two protons into each other at unfathomable speeds. Then came the year's most poignant moment – the heroic and improbable rescue of 33 miners from the clutches of the Chilean earth.

There were many transitions, too – the return of the Republicans in Washington and the Tories in Britain, the scaling back of one war (Iraq) and the escalation of another (Afghanistan), the fall of some powers (Greece) and rise of others (China, Germany, Lady Gaga).

To get the new year off to the right start, we decided to ask various thinkers for one idea each to make the world a better place in 2011. We plumbed poets and political figures, physicists and financiers, theologians and novelists. Some of the ideas are provocative, others quixotic. Some you will agree with, others you won't. But in the modest quest to stir a discussion – from academic salons to living rooms to government corridors – we offer these 25 ideas.

Bjørn Lomborg

BJØRN LOMBORG, author of *"The Skeptical Environmentalist"* and *"Cool It: The Skeptical Environmentalist's Guide to Global Warming"*

Idea: Make green energy cheap

Mr. Lomborg writes: What one or two steps could be taken in 2011 to make progress in global climate change?

Accept that the current approach to global warming does not work economically or politically. Using carbon cuts to keep temperature rises under 2 degrees C would cost \$40 trillion a year by 2100 and avoid less than 2 cents of climate damage for every dollar spent, according to research by climate economist Richard Tol.

The public has a low acceptance of expensive carbon cuts. Outside Europe, few leaders have managed to pass significant emission-reduction legislation. (The European Union's legislation will cost \$250 billion. And what will it achieve? Standard climate models show that, by the end of this century, the EU's approach will reduce temperature rises by approximately 0.05 degrees C – almost too small to measure.)

Green alternatives are not close to being ready to replace oil and other fossil fuels. Change track. We will never succeed in making fossil fuels so expensive that no one wants them. Instead, we should make green energy so cheap that everyone wants it.

This requires much bigger investments in green energy. Research by McGill University's Chris Green for the Copenhagen Consensus Center shows that an investment on the order of 0.2 percent of global gross domestic product – amounting to about \$100 billion – would help us create the needed breakthroughs. If we had affordable green energy sources, everyone – including China and India – would buy them, and long-term emissions would drop dramatically.