

## Sceptic switches tack

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By Fiona Harvey in London

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Bjorn Lomborg, an influential figure among climate change sceptics, has thrown his weight behind a drive to forge a global deal to halt rising world temperatures at a summit in Copenhagen this year.

"It's incredibly important. We need a global deal on the climate," Mr Lomborg told the Financial Times.

The comments – from the author of the 2001 book *The Sceptical Environmentalist* and a 2007 follow-up saying climate change was less important than other world problems – are likely to be greeted with dismay by climate change sceptics who have seen him as an ally on the public stage.

"If that disappoints some people who are sceptics, I am not the least bit unhappy. I hope to have more people enthused [in thinking about how to tackle climate change]," he said.

He is concerned that the United Nations-led consensus that a climate treaty must focus on cuts in greenhouse gas emissions from rich countries is mistaken.

"It's a costly way to achieve very little," he said.

Instead, Mr Lomborg argues, there are cheaper ways of halting temperature rises.

These include tackling sources of climate change other than carbon dioxide, such as methane and soot; investing in new technologies; adapting to the effects of climate change; planting more forests; and weighing up whether emissions cuts are cheaper to do now or later.

Governments hope to thrash out a treaty at the crucial conference in Copenhagen this December.

"Getting a deal will undoubtedly be very hard, but if we get better ideas on the table that are cheaper and more efficient [than emissions cuts for the rich] then there is a greater chance that we will succeed," he said.

Mr Lomborg has assembled a group of climate change economists to come up with more options.

The group aims to publish papers on these and other topics over the next month, and in early September five senior economists, including three Nobel laureates, will survey the results and write a synthesis paper with ideas on how governments meeting in Copenhagen can seek alternatives to forcing rich countries to cut their carbon output.

Having questioned aspects of climate change science in the past, Mr Lomborg now says "the basic scientific questions [on climate change] have been answered pretty unequivocally".

Therefore the question moves on from not whether to try to tackle climate change but how to do so most cheaply and effectively.

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