



Earth Summit 101: A Jedi's primer to the meeting in Rio

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By Greg Hanscom

News flash: World leaders will gather in two short months at the 2012 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro to discuss the future of the planet. You may have caught the news stories last week about President Obama's failure to RSVP. You're forgiven if you missed them. You're not the only one who just said, "Earth Summit, *what?*"

But this is for real. And there are a few things that you, good Jedi knights, ought to know about it.

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3. **It's going to bomb unless we get our asses in gear.**

Listen, I get it. We've been burned too many times by these high-level gab fests. We watched U.S. leaders dodge the Kyoto treaty, and the 2009 climate talks in Copenhagen ended with a whimper. But to blow off the Earth Summit because it's likely to produce nothing but hot air is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Left to their own devices, the delegates in Rio will likely produce an endless list of toothless proclamations and platitudes — particularly if the U.S. isn't firmly on board. Need proof? Take a gander at the 200-plus-page rough draft of the summit agreement, and then consider that in Rio, the document will be team-edited, line-by-line, by delegates from more than 100 countries.

"You don't get the most inspiring and innovative policy out of these negotiations," understates Tara DePorte, executive director of the Brooklyn-based **Human Impacts Institute**, a small nonprofit that helped create coalition called MobilizeUS to get people involved.

5. **You can help.**

Please, tell President Obama to show up. Saying so sends him a clear message that we give a shit about the future of our planet. And if Obama goes, that puts pressure on all other world leaders to attend. (Besides, this is his chance to come off as a total intergalactic hero.)

To make things easy, NRDC has created a Facebook petition, and MobilizeUS has a petition on Change.org. If you want more information, the U.N. has created "briefs" on the critical issues that will be addressed, including jobs, energy, cities, and food. Jacob Scherr's blog is worth reading. MobilizeUS has a hundred suggestions for ways you can get involved. (Write your representatives! Make a video! Throw a house party [PDF]!)

If you want to go all out and drink from the fire hose, check out the U.N.'s Rio+20 website and the Rio+20 Portal from the folks organizing the People's Summit. And of course, stay tuned to Grist in the coming months. We'll bring you regular updates in the lead-up to the summit, as well as live reports from Rio in June. As Yoda once said, "In a dark place we find ourselves, and a little more knowledge lights our way."

Full article: <http://grist.org/news-2/earth-summit-101-a-jedis-primer-to-the-meeting-in-rio/>