



PRESS RELEASE

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The Global Climate Regime on the Brink

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We agreed in Bali in Dec 2007 to build a much stronger international climate regime to better cope with recent alarming analysis of the disastrous effects of climate change. But instead of achieving this new regime, we now see quite unbelievably an attempt to dismantle even the weaker regime that we now have. Instead of a legally binding system to lock in adequate emissions cuts to 2020 for developed countries collectively and individually -- which is what was agreed to -- there is now the most likely prospect of a "voluntary pledge" system in which developed countries merely state what they can do, without a formal system of assessing the adequacy of each country's target or the adequacy of the collective effort. This will itself be a disincentive for developing countries, when they see those who are supposed to lead the process, falter instead.

Disastrous Projection of Pledges

Top climate scientists in a UN Environment Programme report show how disastrously off-mark such a voluntary system can be. Instead of cutting their emissions by at least 25-40% below 1990 levels in 2020 as required (or by more than 40%, as demanded by developing countries), the developed countries will **actually increase** their emission by 6% in a bad scenario (based on the lower end of pledges and the use of loopholes) or will only cut by 16% in the good scenario (based on the upper end of pledges and without the use of loopholes). The calculations are based on the pledges the developed countries made under the Copenhagen Accord.

These pledges, together with the figures from announcements made by some developing countries, show that the world is moving in the direction of a global temperature increase of between 2.5 to 5 degrees Celsius before the end of this century, according to the UNEP report. This is far removed from the 1.5 or 2 degree "safe limit", and is a recipe for catastrophe. In 2005 the global emissions level is estimated at 45 Giga tonnes (i.e. 45 billion tonnes) of CO₂ equivalent and in 2009 it is estimated at 48 Gton. With business as usual, this will rise to 56 Gton in 2020, which is on the road to disaster. The scientists in the UNEP study agree that emissions have to be limited to 44 GtCO₂e by 2020 to stay on a 2 degree limitation course. Based on the Copenhagen Accord pledges, the emissions in 2020 could be 49 Gton under a good scenario, but as high as 53 Gton (almost like business-as-usual) in the bad scenario.

Developing Countries Doing Their Share

It is evident that all groups of countries have to contribute to improving this disastrous situation. However the Annex I countries are obliged to take the lead, and show the way. But their pledges so far are deficient, as a group. And the intended downgrading of the regulated system to a deregulated system goes in the wrong direction.

An Oxfam press release last week on their newly commissioned paper says that industrialized countries which are most responsible for the climate crisis are not pulling their weight. “Their competitors in developing countries –from China to India and Brazil – have pledged to do more to rein in emissions and start building prosperous low carbon economies. Europe and the US risk being left behind.”

New figures from the forthcoming Stockholm Environment Institute overview of the pledges show that:

- * China’s total emissions reductions could be nearly double those of the US by 2020
- * The emissions reductions of developing countries could be three times greater than those of the EU by 2020.
- * The emission reductions of China, India, South Africa and Brazil– the BASIC countries – could be slightly greater than the combined efforts of the 7 biggest developed countries – the US, Europe, Japan, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Russia by 2020.

There should thus not be an excuse not to enter a Kyoto 2nd period on the ground that major developing countries are not doing their fair share.

Still Hope for Durban If.....

There is still hope for Durban, however, if enough developed countries decide they will stay with the Kyoto Protocol and fulfil its second commitment period starting 2013. And that those who stay out of Kyoto will make a comparable effort, inside the Convention (AWG-LCA). Developing countries for the first time are making targets, and those of the largest countries have been credible.

There is little time left to salvage a credible global climate change regime as Durban is the last chance to continue with the Kyoto Protocol without a gap (the first period ends in 2012).

We also hope that there will be sufficient progress on finance and technology, especially with the firm establishment in Durban of the Green Climate Fund, the Technology Mechanism and an Adaptation Committee -- three new institutions that are essential to assist developing countries. The negotiations on the Fund and the Technology Mechanism are so far progressing, but a spurt is needed to get final results in Durban. There cannot be a postponement on these, nor the

placing of conditions that these will be established only if some developed countries get what they want out of developing countries in other areas.

NOTE: The overall understanding on mitigation reached in Bali: (1) that the Annex I parties in KP would take on adequate 2nd period commitments on aggregate and individual reduction targets consistent with what science requires; (2) that the US would make its own comparable commitment in the Convention, in accordance with Para 1b(i); and (3) developing countries would undertake enhanced mitigation actions with financial and technological support, both of which would be measurable, reportable and verifiable (MRV).

This three-piece Bali understanding is now unraveling with alarming speed. The KP is in mortal danger, as most of its Annex I members show clear signs of abandoning ship. The new vehicle they are looking to join is vastly inferior. It is the voluntary pledge system that the US had been advocating, in which individual developed countries state how much reduction they would like to set as their target. In the system, there is no aggregate target to be set in accordance with what the science says is required. There is no formal mechanism to review the commitments (individual and aggregate) and to get Parties to revise them so that they meet adequate levels. The mild discipline is that there will be a periodic review on whether the Parties meet their pledged targets, but not a review as to whether the pledges are adequate.