

# Echoes from Copenhagen

United Nations Conference on Climate Change, 7-18 December 2009

Wednesday, 9 December 2009

## The Marathon has started!

### Will the Political Will Be Present?

The 15<sup>th</sup> United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP15) opened Monday in Copenhagen. On the first day, 15,000 participants descended on the Bella Center: representatives of governments, civil society, intergovernmental organizations, local governments, the media, etc. Nearly 40,000 people requested accreditation.

### Will the Conference Live Up to What Is at Stake?

The attention given to this summit is worthy of what is at stake: under the 2007 Bali Action Plan, the international community must reach a new international climate agreement in Copenhagen, laying the bases for the post-2012 climate regime. After two years of discussions, the world's eyes are fixed upon Copenhagen. The countries' positions are now known. The Conference will conclude on 18 or 19 December. Eight days of negotiations remain before the arrival of the Heads of State and Government (approximately one hundred are expected).

By then, negotiations on the points of contention must advance in order to reach an agreement on both industrialized countries' emission reductions and on the financial and

technological support for developing countries. This agreement will have to comply with the Rio principles: responsibility and equity. More than ever, the debate focuses on the modalities for low-carbon development accessible to all, and crystallizes North-South relations. The legal form of the agreement and the establishment of international sanction mechanisms also remain uncertain.

### Unsurprising Positions

The two ad-hoc negotiation groups—under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP), and for Long-term Concerted Action under the Convention (AWG-LCA)—began work Monday. Within the AWG-LCA, discussions are about mitigation effort sharing between nations and the definition of financial support to fight climate change in developing countries. But the successive declarations merely reveal the stagnation of positions.

As a reminder, in order to have a fifty-fifty chance of limiting global warming to 2°C, the IPCC has asked industrialized countries to lower their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 25% to 40% by 2020 compared to 1990 levels. Currently, these countries' emission reduction commitments fall between 16% and 23% by 2020 (and for the United States, only 17% compared to 2005 levels, i.e. -4% compared to 1990 levels).

In addition, developing countries (G77 + China, including the island states and the least developed countries) are determined to see

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industrialized countries adopt ambitious GHG reduction and developing country support objectives. Developing countries, which are also preparing to commit to mitigation strategies for their emissions in relation to a baseline scenario, expect guarantees in this direction. The most vulnerable countries will not be satisfied with a simple declaration, and expect this Summit to make real progress: “There will be no Plan B,” as the representative of the Bangladesh delegation insisted.

Another stumbling block is financing. Developing countries demand an equitable, inclusive and effective agreement. They need public funds in the amount of 110 billion euros by 2020. All countries must contribute, each according to its ability.

The AWG-LCA negotiations have begun and should end on 15 December before the arrival of the Ministers.

## Financing: What Price on Developing Countries' Adhesion?

The financing of the fight against climate change in developing countries is one of the main, and perhaps the largest, stumbling block between developed and developing countries. The success of the Copenhagen Conference will depend heavily on the progress that is made on this topic, within the discussions on the post-2012 period (i.e. the AWG-LCA). Developing countries expect answers in regard to the necessary financial amounts and fund governance.

### Financial Amounts to Mobilize for Developing Countries: Announcements Below Expectations

Since the Bali Conference, developing countries have continuously stated that obtaining—now and beyond 2012—financing appropriate to needs that is sustainable, stable and additional was the sine qua non for their participation in the global effort to fight climate change.

When the AWG-LCA opened on Monday 7 December, developed countries put numbers on the table. The European Union (EU) and the United States (US) propose that

approximately ten billion dollars per year in early financing (“fast-start” in UN jargon) be provided to developing countries in the next three years in order to prepare for implementation of the post-2012 agreement (capacity building, institution building, impact and cost studies, etc.). The EU’s share could be decided during the Summit of European Heads of State and Government from 10 to 11 December. On post-2012 financial support, only the EU has issued a statement, estimating needs at 100 billion euros per year by 2020, one-third of which could be financed with public funds.

These initial announcements on financing are a first step. However, developing countries have stated that it was not enough. Long-term financial commitments are necessary for structuring action in favor of a sustainable, low-carbon, resilient development path. Developing countries are also unyielding on the source of post-2012 funds: wealthy countries must live up to their historic responsibility and make new public funds available in addition to official development assistance objectives (0.7% of GDP). Recourse to the carbon market and private sector must supplement a very high predominance of public funds that are predictable and stable.

### Fund Governance: What is the GEF's Role in the Future Financial Architecture for Climate Change?

The governance of funds for climate change adaptation and mitigation in developing countries is another sensitive issue in the negotiations on the post-2012 period. How will resources be managed in the framework of the future climate agreement? Will a new fund need to be created, as demanded by developing countries, or will existing institutions be strengthened, in particular the Global Environment Facility (GEF)—the Convention’s current financial mechanism, an view defended by some developed countries? For the moment, the issue is far from resolved. In response to the repeated criticism from developing countries, the GEF has undertaken several reforms to better meet the needs of developing countries and improve their access to financing. During the discussions on the examination of the Convention’s financial mechanism (a regular exercise during each COP), which began on

Tuesday 8 December, developing countries acknowledged the efforts made, but they also re-affirmed their criticisms. From the experience of the past fifteen years, developing countries consider the issue of the predictability and sustainability of voluntary financing particularly worrying. The GEF's popularity seems to have improved slightly thanks to these reforms, but will this be enough to convince developing countries of the GEF's place in the future financial architecture for climate change?

## Negotiators Have No Time to Lose!

While the Copenhagen Conference officially takes place from 7 to 18 December, the number of days specifically devoted to the negotiations is in reality much lower. After the opening day, the members of the technical delegations have only six days to prepare the ground before the arrival of the Ministers (on the 15<sup>th</sup>) and Heads of State and Government (on the 17<sup>th</sup>). That is very little given the magnitude of the issues that still need to be addressed.

### A Profusion of Official and Less Official Texts

Two years after the Bali Action Plan was adopted, the negotiations in Copenhagen began on the basis of a 174-page document. The thickness of this text is the result of the persistence of numerous points of contention that were not able to be lifted despite the five intermediary negotiating sessions that were held during the year 2009. The current version compiles all proposals, "non-papers" and reference documents, and contains 164 pages of appendices.

Simultaneously, the Danish presidency of the conference wrote a draft of the final declaration, which generated a strong reaction by developing countries and notably emerging countries (China, India, Brazil and South Africa). The main point of disagreement deals with the degree to which commitments taken by emerging countries will be binding. Indeed, the Danish draft proposes that emerging countries' commitments be written into the international agreement and monitored within

the framework of Climate-Convention process, something that emerging countries reject.

Discussions on adaptation are revealing the current deadlocks in the negotiations. Until Tuesday afternoon, the negotiators did not know which text they should use as a basis for negotiation. Two "non-papers" and one "non-non-paper" were present on the table. Ultimately, a combination of all these texts would serve as the basis for dialogue. Given that points of contention already exist about formulations for each of those 30-page texts and for adaptation alone, this does not bode well for the outcome of the discussions.

This multiplication of initiatives is difficult for observers to follow. Are official delegations, particularly those from the poorest countries, better able to position themselves simultaneously on all aspects of the negotiations?

### What Harmony Within the European Union?

Within the EU, the only group of countries in the negotiations to have a political organization, dissension is also perceptible. As the Conference's host country, Denmark's proposal is a parallel initiative alongside the coordination ensured by the Swedish presidency of the EU. On their end, Jean-Louis Borloo (French Minister of Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and the Sea) and Gordon Brown have in the past few days made generous announcements in favor of an emission reduction objective that corresponds to the upper band given by the EU, i.e. -30% in 2020. In defending this move, they have gotten ahead of the European heads of state and government who are only scheduled to make a pronouncement on this point after the European Council meeting on Thursday 10 and Friday 11 December. What is more, Jean-Louis Borloo is seeking to promote his "climate justice" action plan in favor of the most vulnerable countries, which includes specific measures, notably in the area of access to energy and adaptation. To date, however, this plan does not seem to have won the support of other EU member countries.

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