

COUNTDOWN TO COPENHAGEN

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'THE CLOCK IS TICKING'

"We all feel that the clock is ticking and that this might be the last chance we have to actually get a global deal that will help to rescue life on this planet as we know it," says Margot Wallström, Vice-President of the European Commission, in a recent interview posted on 'Big Think' [<http://bigthink.com>], a global online forum connecting people and ideas.

Question: What will the Copenhagen Climate Conference represent for international climate diplomacy?

Margot Wallström: We all feel that the clock is ticking and that this might be the last chance we have to actually get a global deal that will help to rescue life on this planet as we know it. And this is how serious it is. The biggest challenge for all decision makers everywhere is to have and to apply such long-term thinking that is necessary to address the problem of climate change -- because we are discussing one, two, maybe three generations. We have to think about fifty years ahead. Ten years is a very long time in politics. So what about having to think about fifty years?

At the same time, there are some positive signs. I think that the new signals from the Obama administration, the way we have started to work together, even the fact that the G8 Meeting set a target of keeping the increase of the temperature to two degrees above pre-industrial levels, is a good thing -- because at least we've decided this is the overall target, and then we have to start to count backwards. How do we reach that? What is necessary to do?

The big challenge will be to make sure that we can have, in the richer part of the world, comparable emission reduction targets, and that we can also get the poorest countries onboard to make commitments, because they are already the biggest emitters. So we have to have them at the same table. We have to get them onboard, and to be able to do so. We also have to raise the money necessary to help both adaptation and mitigation measures.

Question: How can we encourage poorer countries to meet emissions targets?

Margot Wallström: . . . they already know that this is not something that will theoretically happen one day in the future. They know that this is already a fact. This is happening to them. There are already 300,000 people dying every year from the effects of climate change. So it is already happening and they know it. But they also want to see that money is raised or resources are found so that they can adapt their economies, their agriculture, their infrastructure, all of the things that are necessary to both adapt and to mitigate or to invest in new, more energy efficient technology. This is where we have to be able to assist. . . .

Question: How much money is the EU contributing to climate change efforts?

Margot Wallström: Well we have calculated that and the need for this kind of funding would be in the range of 175 billion Euros per year. . . . Gordon Brown, in a recent speech, estimated it to be 100 billion only to the developing countries. We said in the European Commission 175, and half of it would have to go to the poorest countries. . . . So I think we are fairly close in understanding that these are the kind of amounts that we are talking about in order to pay for adaptation and mitigation measures. ☑

Voices of the South on Globalization is a monthly newsletter intended to inspire a meaningful North-South Dialogue by raising awareness for global interdependences and by offering a forum for voices from the South in the globalization debate. Each edition will present short analyses or commentaries from a Southern perspective on one particular issue of the globalization process.

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INDIA & CHINA WANT AN ACCORD IN COPENHAGEN

India and China are pushing for an agreement at the UN climate change conference Dec. 7-18 in Copenhagen and should not be viewed as a "negative or obstructionist force," says India's Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh, reports Bloomberg News. "Both of us were of the view that we should be part of the solution," Ramesh said in an interview August 25 in Beijing, where he met with Xie Zhenhua, China's top climate-change negotiator. "We want an agreement in Copenhagen."

Ramesh rejected calls for binding carbon emission-reduction targets to be placed on developing countries such as India, and reiterated the country's stance that developed countries should reduce carbon emissions by 40 percent from 1990 levels by 2020. U.S. climate-change legislation passed by the House sets the goal of a 17 percent reduction from 2005 levels by 2020.

Should developed countries agree to India's stance, which Chinese Foreign Ministry climate-change official Yu Qingtai earlier this month called "quite fair," India and China would have to "respond very positively."

"That's a game changer," Ramesh said. "It would be very difficult for me, as an Indian minister, not to respond if developed countries accept this proposal. The fat would be in the fire, our bluff would be called."

India and China are looking for developed countries to share more carbon-reducing technologies with poorer nations and help finance projects, Ramesh said. Both countries say their economic development would be unfairly hurt if they were forced to accept binding greenhouse-gas emission reduction targets.

A DEVELOPMENT ISSUE

"For us, climate change is not just an environmental issue, for us, climate change is a development issue," Ramesh said.

On August 24, Xie, a vice minister of China's National Development and Reform Commission, said "the focus of disagreement remains on each country's proportion of responsibility for emissions reductions, funding and technology transfer," the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

Emerging economies, including India, have said they need access to funds and technologies such as wind turbines to meet emission curbs and sustain growth. India requires \$5 billion a year between 2012 and 2017, in addition to its current investment plans, to support a transition to low-carbon energy generation, the United Nations Development Program said in its Human Development Report 2007/2008, citing research by the Energy and Resources Institute.

Ramesh said he and Xie discussed the idea of when their two countries' carbon emissions would peak. Mid-August, China released a report from government-run think tanks estimating that the country's emissions would peak by 2030. The report also recognized that China had surpassed the U.S. to become the world's biggest producer of greenhouse gases.

The government in Beijing says it is increasing energy efficiency and promoting the use of renewable power to cut the amount of energy it consumes per unit of gross domestic product 20 percent by 2010 from 2005 levels.

India says it has one of the lowest carbon emissions per capita in the world and is responsible for 4 percent of output while the U.S. is responsible for 20 percent. The South Asian country is the fourth-largest emitter of carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels, trailing China, the U.S. and Russia.

Developed countries must bear "historic responsibility" for industrial emissions of greenhouse gases they have produced, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said on July 7. "It is the developing countries that are the worst affected by climate change."

CHINA GETS READY

Meanwhile China is considering putting climate legislation on its legislative agenda, according to a draft resolution on climate change, which has been submitted to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), reports China Daily.

"China will draw up new laws and regulations to provide a legal basis for combating climate change," said Wang Guangtao, director of the NPC's environment and resource protection committee. The resolution shows good coordination between the government and legislative body in advance of the Copenhagen meeting, said Yang Fuqiang, director of global climate change solutions at environmental group WWF. "Once the government signs the new treaty, the NPC will ratify it," he said.

The United States is the only developed country that has not ratified the climate pact. "The former U.S. president signed the Kyoto Protocol back in 1997, but when the official delegation came back with the treaty, the Senate refused to ratify it," Yang said.

Also, once the proposed climate change laws are worked out, China will have "legally binding actions" to fight the illegal emissions, said Zhang Jianyu, China program head of the U.S.-based Environmental Defense Fund.

"China already has a bunch of laws and regulations related to climate change and environmental protection, but the climate legislation will give the forces fighting global warming more legal power," Zhang said. Existing laws and regulations related to climate change and environment protection should be revised to better combat global warming, according to the draft resolution, he said. ☑

NO 'DIVINE RIGHTS', PLEASE

"What we're talking about is a profound change of industrial civilisation. It would be surprising if there weren't stumbling blocks," said Sweden's lead climate negotiator and chairman of the EU working group, Anders Turesson, wrapping up the third round of climate change negotiations this year in Bonn.

Turesson hit the nail on the head. But a significant point at issue is whether the industrialised nations would succeed in preserving as some sort of a 'divine right' their domineering role in a new industrial civilisation, and manage to retain by means fair or foul their comparative advantage over emerging economies and all other developing countries.

During informal negotiations August 10-14 in Bonn -- as on previous occasions in run up to the UN climate change conference in Copenhagen -- emerging nations and other developing countries left no doubt that they would not surrender to any diplomatic coercion.

Echoing the sentiments of those countries, China has accused rich industrial nations of increasing pressure on the poor to do more to combat global warming while shirking their own responsibility to lead. "There has been a general feeling of unhappiness about the level of efforts that (developed nations) say they will take," China's climate ambassador Yu Qingtai said in a news agency interview on the sidelines of talks in Bonn.

"What is even more worrying is a continuation and even a strengthening of the tendency of trying to shift the burden to the developing countries," he said. "That must change."

Early August in a briefing for Chinese and foreign media in Beijing, Yu said: "There have emerged many global issues today, but . . . the issue of climate change can best reflect the concept of 'global village' and the need of mankind as a whole for pulling together in times of trouble. Faced with global warming, no country can stay aloof or say it is totally free from the negative impact."

The only way out for the international community was sincere cooperation. "Therefore, for the common interest of mankind, the Copenhagen conference must be successful and lay down a solid foundation for the international cooperation to be conducted after 2010."

Yu said the success of the Copenhagen conference will depend on efforts made in three aspects: First, to confirm the substantial greenhouse gas emission targets for the developed countries during the Kyoto Protocol's second commitment period (2012-2016) and ensure those developed countries which have not ratified the Kyoto Protocol fulfil emission reduction commitments comparable to other developed countries.

Second, effective institutional arrangements to ensure that the developed countries provide the developing ones with support and help in terms of funds, technology transfer and capacity building, as envisaged in the Bali Road Map and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Third, under the framework of sustainable development, the developing countries, with support and help in terms of funds, technology transfer and capacity building, take appropriate mitigation actions based on their own national conditions respectively.

Yu regretted that since the Bali Road Map was adopted, the negotiations of the international community have lasted "with quite slow headway". He called upon "all the members of the international community to show sufficient political sincerity, fulfil their commitments tangibly, not only accept the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities orally but also put it into practice in order to make the conference a success".

India argued similarly while reacting strongly to efforts by the U.S. and the European Union (EU) to use statements made by it in a non-United Nations forum to attempt to influence the agenda of the climate change negotiations in Copenhagen.

The U.S. and EU are drew on the declaration signed by India at the Major Economies Forum (MEF) in Egypt, which laid down that 17 countries had agreed to cap the increase in temperatures leading to global warming at 2 degrees Celsius.

The U.S. argued that this will form the basis for the "shared vision" at Copenhagen meet. Shyam Saran, Prime Minister's special envoy on climate change and leader of the Indian delegation at Bonn, said: "MEF discussions are to take direction, but it is not negotiation. It is strange that the poverty reduction goal from the declaration was not picked, but the 2 degrees Celsius goal was mentioned."

In the thick of gloom looming large over the informal negotiations in Bonn, there were few who saw glimmers of hope that a global climate deal will be struck in Copenhagen this December. UN's top climate change official Yvo de Boer did not hide his scepticism on August 14. "At this rate we will not make it," he said, though "a climate deal in Copenhagen this year is an unequivocal requirement to stop climate change from slipping out of control."

While there is a general consensus that global warming should be halted, it is doubtful that individual country contributions will really add up to a post-Kyoto pact that expires 2012 but must be agreed before the UN climate change talks kick off in the Danish capital. The Bonn talks gave little hope of that happening. The text, which will serve as the basis for negotiations for the successor to 1997 Kyoto Protocol, is currently swamped with about 2,000 bracketed statements pointing to areas of disagreement.

[Read more on page 6 \(right column\)](#)

IT TAKES TWO TO UNTIE THE GORDIAN KNOT

Forging a durable global consensus on a new climate accord reminisces of a highly intricate knot that, according to an ancient Greek legend, resisted all attempted solutions until Alexander the Great cut through it with a sword.

A new study by the transatlantic German Marshall Fund (GMF) has discovered its own double-track solution to the puzzle of the Gordian knot embodied by climate talks: To begin with, the United States and Europe must overcome their differences. At the same time, they must accept the repeated demands of the developing lands.

"Whether Europe and the United States like it or not, the only global deal developing nations are prepared to consider right now must include commitments from developed nations to immediate emissions mitigation, more financial assistance, and to giving developing nations greater control of global climate institutions," says the study.

Its author is Nigel Purvis, president of Climate Advisers and a senior transatlantic fellow at the GMF, a "non-partisan American public policy and grant-making institution dedicated to promoting greater cooperation and understanding" between North America and Europe. Purvis' paper, released in run-up to the Bonn climate talks Aug 10-14 on the road to Copenhagen, points out that climate talks are not occurring in a vacuum. Rather, the current round of negotiations builds on 20 years of climate diplomacy and is following a "roadmap" approved by the international community in December 2007 in Bali.

COMMON GROUND

The author notes with satisfaction that the United States and Europe are finally finding common ground on climate change. In sharp contrast to years past, the transatlantic partners now agree -- including at this year's Group of Eight (G8) Summit in Italy on July 8 -- on the severity of the climate threat, the urgency of solutions, the necessity of action by all major emitters, the responsibility of developed nations to take the lead, the responsibility developed nations have to assist developing nations, and the importance of negotiating new global climate agreements.

Yet, there is also reason for concern, Purvis notes. With only months remaining before the international community hopes to outline the successor to the Kyoto Protocol that expires in 2012, many key nations are only just starting to define their climate change negotiating positions, or signal where they would be willing to make compromises.

While the transatlantic partners have the power to shape a new climate agreement in significant ways, developing nations have made it abundantly clear that they will only accept international responsibility for additional climate action if developed nations satisfy three conditions.

The paper argues that first, developed nations must substantially reduce their own emissions, especially through strong action before 2020. Second, developed nations must finance the incremental cost for developing nations of both adapting to climate change and abating their growth in emissions.

Developing nations account for approximately half of global emissions today, but are projected to contribute 90-97 percent of the growth in global energy-related CO2 emissions through 2030.

Third, developed nations must agree to share with developing nations the management and control of new financial resources mobilized for climate action in the developing world. The call for control over financial resources might remind of traditional struggles over foreign aid between donors and developing nations. "But it also reflects a strong sense of entitlement developing nations have to 'compensation' for the damages caused by emissions from developed nations," says Purvis.

WHAT MAKES CLIMATE TALKS DIFFERENT

All this makes a climate deal different from the reciprocal exchange of similar commitments that policymakers in the U.S. and Europe are accustomed to negotiating. In many areas of international cooperation, including arms control or trade, for example, nations agree to do X and refrain from Y if other nations also agree to do X and refrain from Y.

"In contrast, emissions reduction commitments alone by the developed world are not enough to secure emissions abatement by developing nations. This is not because these nations are determined to pursue irresponsible development. On the contrary, many emerging economies (including China) have already adopted serious national climate action plans," the paper's author argues rather frankly.

But emerging economies will refuse to commit themselves internationally to these plans, let alone make their emissions mitigation plans more ambitious, absent new international commitments by developed nations, he adds. More specifically, developed nations will need to commit to immediate emissions mitigation, more financial assistance, and to giving developing nations greater control of global climate institutions.

The paper cautions: "If developed nations refuse to go along with the global deal developing nations propose, major emerging economies will likely continue for at least another decade on a high carbon development path, hiding behind alleged intransigence in the developed world." [Read more on page 6 \(left column\)](#)

FUNDING REMAINS A MAJOR CHALLENGE

One key issue for the forthcoming climate change talks in Bangkok (Sep 28 to Oct 9), Barcelona (Nov 2 to 6) and finally Copenhagen is funding -- in particular for adaptation to climate change. Precisely the issue of how to successfully match national adaptation programmes of action (NAPAs) and funding remains a challenge, says a document posted on the website of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) secretariat.

"Current climate agreements do not provide binding commitments for adaptation funding. Funds available for adaptation through the GEF (Global Environment Facility) are relatively small, have been disbursed slowly, and will need to be increased substantially to make any meaningful contribution to climate change adaptation in developing countries," the UNFCCC says.

The document adds: The Least Developed Countries (LDCs) will be hoping for significant progress on adaptation at the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen December 7-18. This includes more concrete funding commitments by industrialized nations for adaptation activities, especially for NAPA implementation, as well as improved access to funds.

The LDCs also hope that the lessons they have learned in preparing and implementing adaptation through the NAPA will inform plans for adaptation in future, and that any new adaptation planning processes will build on the strong basis of the NAPAs.

"In order to curtail the amount of adaptation needed in the future, they are also hoping that industrialized countries will take the lead in making a stronger and time-bound commitment to deep emission cuts," says the UNFCCC secretariat.

The significance of this document is underlined by the fact that adaptation is one of the five key building blocks -- together with shared vision, mitigation, technology and financial resources -- needed for a strengthened future response to climate change. Adaptation is considered vital in order to build resilience to, and reduce the impacts of climate change that are making their presence felt, and are predicted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to increase.

The LDCs are most at risk from climate change, yet least able to cope with its effects. NAPAs were instituted as a means for LDCs to identify priority activities that respond to their urgent needs regarding adaptation to climate change, and are seen as the basis for future adaptation.

With 41 out of 48 NAPAs already completed, many countries are now moving into the implementation phase. But they are confronted with an array of bureaucratic hurdles and lack of appropriate funds. According to the UNFCCC secretariat, the process of preparing and implementing NAPAs involves many stakeholders, and results in many proposed priority activities and projects. With this in mind, a NAPA Project Database was created last year on the UNFCCC website in order to facilitate the development of project proposals for implementation.

The steps involved in preparing NAPAs include assessing vulnerability to current climate variability and extreme events, identifying key adaptation measures and selecting a prioritised shortlist of activities. After completion, the NAPA is submitted to the UNFCCC secretariat, and the LDC Party becomes eligible to apply for funding to implement the NAPA under the Least Developed Countries Fund, which is managed by the Global Environment Facility, a global partnership among 178 countries, international institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector to address global environmental issues while supporting national sustainable development initiatives.

The LDC Party requests an implementing agency of the GEF (currently there are 10 of them), to assist it in submitting a proposal for funding. The GEF agency works with the country to develop the concept into a full project. The agency works very closely with the country during each successive step, and ultimately supports the country in implementing the project.

With a view to making these complicated procedures transparent, the Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG) will soon publish a step-by-step guidebook describing the NAPA implementation process that will be used in regional training workshops on NAPA implementation. The first of these will take place in Tanzania from October 19-23.

UNFCCC has listed experiences of three LDCs involved in implementing NAPAs. One of these is Samoa. Like other Least Developed Countries, Samoa is highly vulnerable to natural disasters. The extreme events of tropical cyclones Ofa (1990) and Val (1991) caused damage with costs estimated at approximately four times the gross domestic product (GDP) of Samoa.

In the drought season, there are increasing risks of forest fires, which is particularly damaging since forests play an important role in watershed management and environmental protection. Samoa experienced four major forest fires during the drought/dry periods of 1982-83, 1997-98, 2001-02 and 2002-03.

Climate change and rising sea levels are also serious concerns given that 70 percent of Samoa's population and infrastructure are located in low-lying coastal areas. The main objectives of Samoa's NAPA are to implement immediate and urgent project-based activities to adapt to climate change; to protect people's life and livelihoods; and to increase awareness of climate change impacts and adaptation activities. Its NAPA projects address six main areas: food security; early warning and disaster management; health; infrastructure; terrestrial ecosystems and water resources. ☑

IT TAKES TWO TO UNTIE . . .

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Emerging economies simply do not see the more straight-forward deal -- emissions mitigation by developed nations in exchange for emissions mitigation by emerging economies -- as in their national interest, says Purvis.

He adds: Eventually China, India, and other emerging economies may feel greater negative impacts from climate change, and as their emissions continue to grow they will face significantly more pressure for action from Africa and other extremely vulnerable parts of the world.

Over time, therefore, their negotiating positions might change but this process would surely take time, just as it has taken the United States more than a decade since the 1997 Kyoto conference to respond to new scientific information and mounting international pressure.

Thus, whether Europe and the United States like it or not, the only *global* deal developing nations are prepared to consider right now will include the preconditions mentioned above.

The assumption behind this paper is that this deal, while not ideal for Europe and the United States, is very much in the interests of America, Europe, and the world, provided that their concerns on mitigation and financing are addressed too. Purvis describes exactly what that qualification means.

The scientific community has advised policymakers that global greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced at least 50 percent by 2050 to avoid unacceptable risks of catastrophic climate change.

This goal is now embraced by Europe, the United States, and other major industrialized nations, and also enjoys support from major developing nations provided developed nations agree to reduce emissions at least 80 percent by 2050.

With this long-term goal coming into view the world is focusing now primarily on what nations must do by approximately 2020 as a down payment toward the 2050 goal. The good news is that most parties, including the U.S. and Europe, agree on a number of important points regarding some of these midterm actions:

- By 2020, developed nations must substantially reduce their emissions and emerging economies should slow the rate of growth of their emissions; progress of all major emitters should be quantitatively measured; developed nations should take on absolute, economy-wide emission reduction targets whereas emerging economies should pursue other actions, which might include sector specific goals, concrete policy reforms, and emissions intensity objectives; actions by emerging economies should be supported by external funding provided by developed nations; and emerging economies should have access to capital from international carbon markets when they >>> (Continued in next column)

NO 'DIVINE RIGHTS', PLEASE

Continued from page 3

"We seem to be afloat on a sea of brackets," the UNFCCC executive secretary said. The document has not been significantly slimmed down in weeklong Bonn discussions.

Keen that Copenhagen does not end up in a fiasco, Yvo de Boer has repeatedly stressed the need to move much faster to deliver strong outcomes on areas such as adaptation, technology and building skills in developing nations.

Governments need to buckle down and concretely identify how to achieve this. At the Bonn meeting, however, "only limited progress was made, although governments did get down to some practicalities in the areas of adaptation, technology and capacity building," said Yvo de Boer

Whilst some advance was made in narrowing down options in the negotiating text, governments also discussed technical issues such as how mid-term (2020) emission reduction pledges of industrialised countries could be translated into legally binding targets as a key component of the Copenhagen deal.

"Industrialised countries need to show a greater level of ambition in agreeing to meaningful mid-term emission reduction targets. The present level of ambition can be raised domestically and by making use of international cooperation," the UN's top climate change official said.

"We also need a clear indication of the finance and technology industrialised countries are ready to provide to help developing countries green their economic growth and adapt to the impacts of climate change," he added, supporting developing countries viewpoint.

"The question is how all nations can profit from this development. Poorer countries risk being left by the wayside without access to technology and finance. International cooperation needs to provide them with the means to enable them to green their economies and to adapt to the inevitable effects of climate change. In order for that support to be financed, I believe that countries need to be more specific about what they want supported and how," Yvo de Boer said.

- IDN-InDepthNews ☑

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outperform internationally agreed upon benchmarks or other measures of success. But the bad news is that developed and emerging economies disagree on roughly a dozen other important issues with respect to emissions mitigation by major economies. Among these differences, two really big questions stand out -- the level of ambition of the medium-term U.S. emissions target, and the legal and structural form of actions by emerging economies. - IDN-InDepthNews ☑