

## **Summary of the discussion about further steps towards a common climate policy in Bonn, 6th August 2010 after the UN Climate Change Conference**

It is still questionable whether we will get a legally binding Kyoto II Protocol or a series of voluntary commitments to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases. The big issues – finance and legally binding commitments – are still waiting for political decisions. Nevertheless, the UN Climate Change Conference in Bonn with more than 1600 representatives from 176 states made some progress on the modalities of the next climate treaty. It ended with a series of options and some hope to deploy climate finance, increase technology transfer, capacity building and adaptation.

No one of the participants of our evening debate could say whether we are coming closer to legally binding commitments or not. But everything points to a series of rather voluntary commitments. One of the reasons seems to be that in our times the interests of the nations diverge even more than 13 years ago in Kyoto. Hence the political heavy weights among the emerging countries are not willing to accept a binding agreement. Another reason might be that the US Senate recently rejected a climate bill which prevents the US administration to act. There are even indications that we might get three agreements – one for the developing and emerging countries, one for the industrialized countries and one for the US. But it may also be that we get no agreement at all.

On the other hand there seems to be a consensus that we have to act soon and decisively. All countries fall in with the IPCC that the observed climate change is of antropogenic origin. We therefore have to act in common and hopefully soon. Particularly the NGOs and the global civil society put pressure on the governments and ask for action. It could well be that the rapidly changing civil society gets more influence on the climate issue and becomes more aggressive if the governments are unable to act.

Let us assume that we get only voluntary agreements. In such a case the next question would be how to make the national approaches compatible with each other. The more it is important that common modalities exist and are accepted. This could be the major role of the next conferences.

And what will be the future of emissions trading in a world of voluntary agreements? Again it must be guaranteed that the different national systems are compatible with each other and that the trade of emission rights follows the same rules.

Technolgy transfer, international funds and emission trading could be linked together in order to facilitate the transference of appropriate technologies. As at the end we have to reduce physically the emission of greenhouse gases technology plays a key role. Technology has also to be adapted to the circumstances of the respective countries. All countries need to increase their expenditure for research.

Among the industrialized countries there seems to be more willingness for increased funding. Whether this signal will be confirmed by the governments has still to be proved. The financial crisis left the industrialized countries heavily indebted. Funding should be separated from the national budgets.

It remains an open question whether President Obama will ask the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) to declare CO<sub>2</sub> a dangerous substance which would allow EPA to act autonomously and fix a cap – without approval by the Congress - for the emissions. To

declare CO<sub>2</sub> a danger is not easy to prove. But if put in relation with the acidification of the oceans it could well be an argument that could even be agreed by the Supreme Court. As recently many serious studies were published about the acidification of the oceans, about the link between the growing partial pressure of CO<sub>2</sub> in the air and the decreasing pH of the oceans there might well be a growing awareness of this proven phenomenon.

If the Americans don't move particularly the Europeans will face a competition problem. As the EU will certainly continue to reduce the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, as in Europe there is a consensus among the people and the decision makers to act without hesitation and efficiently, as Europe puts a price on CO<sub>2</sub> and will continue to price this greenhouse gas, Europeans might be faced with a competition problems if other nations refrain from penalising CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) insists in a 1.5 degree increase of global temperature instead of 2 degrees as agreed by most countries. On the other hand we have to be aware that even the 2 degrees target will probably not be reached. As the climate effect is slow and we cannot simply switch in a few years from a high to a low CO<sub>2</sub> regime the temperature will probably increase and will warm up the oceans. The sea level will rise and endanger the islands and the coasts.

Concerning the 2 or 1,5 degree target we are faced with a simple problem of measuring. How can we identify the 2 degrees? In reality we need a network of measurements all around the globe and then an algorithm has to be politically agreed to define the medium value. The margin of error is 0,5 to 0,8 degrees!

The measurement of the average temperature is a methodologic problem. In reality we measure the partial pressure of CO<sub>2</sub>, actually nearly 400 ppm. If we arrived at 450 ppm we calculate with a high probability that this concentration corresponds to 2 degrees increase in temperature. But with a lower probability the 2 degrees target could be reached with 350 or 550 ppm. Therefore it is very difficult to define scientifically the increase in temperature. We are always faced with a high degree of probability. The 2 degree target was therefore defined by politicians – in this case by the EU – in order to have an understandable and popular message and not by scientists. But it remains difficult to measure it.

Astonishingly or not there is nothing like a Latinamerican climate policy. Although the Latinamericans insist on many occasions on their common vision, although there are many efforts to unite their different policies, climate policy is not a common vision. It is left to the different states and societies. On the other hand there are examples where the civil society from different countries voice their discontent with the reserves of their respective governments.

To link the combat against poverty with the fight against climate change is a must. There will be no efficient climate change policy without combating poverty. The process of civilisation passes through this combined action.

A proactive fight against climate change is a new challenge. New in a political and methodological sense. There is no more an imperial power who can impose his will. All are equal and at the end we need a consensual solution. Climate policy is therefore a chance to bring the different interests peacefully together. The common and imminent danger might become the catalyst of a new civilisation – but only if we succeed.

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