

Echoes from Poznan

United Nations Conference on Climate Change, 1-12 December 2008

Friday, 12 December 2008

Only 352 Days Until Copenhagen

The Clock Is Ticking and Little Progress Has Been Made...

On 11 and 12 December 2008, cameras from all around the world turned to the ministers of the 189 countries who came to Poznan for the high-level ministerial segment on climate change. The presence of Ban Ki Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations, the Presidents of the Republic of Poland and Guyana, the Prime Ministers of Sweden and Tuvalu, and the Secretary General of the Convention bear witness to the importance of this meeting.

Disappointment Starts to Be Shown

The speeches given by the Ministers representing the large coalitions (G77/China, AOSIS, LDCs, European Union, Umbrella) set the tone, and outcome is somewhat mixed.

Efforts are deemed insufficient, especially by the G77/China. As has already been emphasised (cf. *Echoes from Poznan*, No. 3), this group expected strong pronouncements from developed countries in the framework of the negotiations on the climate agreement beyond 2012 (emission reduction targets) as well as significant gestures

on other aspects of implementing the Convention and Protocol. However, on the period beyond 2012, the G77/China did not receive the response they had wanted from developed countries in regard to financing and technology transfers.

Until these two subjects receive the all attention they deserve, developing countries will not make any concessions on participation in the collective effort to reduce emissions.

While developed and developing countries agree that making the Adaptation Fund operational is urgent, divergences remain in regard to the practical modalities of doing so (see *Echoes from Poznan*, No. 3). According to the Prime Minister of Tuvalu, developed countries are attempting to limit access to financing. As the Maldives' Minister of the Environment repeated, speaking in the name of the LDCs, direct access to financing is mandatory. The informal discussions over the past three days have not reached a compromise. The subject will need to be sent up to the Ministers.

Fulfil and Increase the Bali Commitments

The scientific proof is there: climate change is underway. For Yvo de Boer, it is therefore crucial that the Bali Action Plan is not abandoned. The

Bali commitments must be confirmed and, above all, strengthened!

Yet, what has happened in the past few days within the working group on the Kyoto Protocol do not inspire optimism. Indeed, the Annex 1 countries contented themselves with repeating the somewhat vague decision that they had formulated in Bali on the emission reduction range (25%-40% by 2020 compared to 1990 levels) they would target.

As Ban Ki Moon says, Poznan must result in a detailed plan for the coming negotiations. The international community has less than 12 months to reach an ambitious and fair agreement in Copenhagen. Time is of the essence.

The small island states, represented by Grenada's Minister of the Environment, reiterated the position they expressed in Bali. Global warming must not exceed 1.5°C. For this, the greenhouse gas concentration must not exceed 350 ppm CO₂ eq.

The Secretary General of the Convention also called on all countries to set up by the end of 2009 a very clear policy framework on the objectives to pursue, the financing necessary, and the institutions to set up.

For the Prime Minister of Tuvalu, this new agreement must meet the stakes of a low carbon future, with international assistance to match. Expectations in regard to adaptation are high, and resources should be greater than they currently are.

The Maldives' Minister of the Environment called for an equitable distribution of resources for adaptation that takes into account countries' ecological, economic and social specificities. For small island states (AOSIS), it is a question of survival. Migration must not become their final recourse.

Where Have the Leaders Gone?

The Secretary General of the United Nations called for strong mobilisation among leaders. Developed countries must prove their leadership by adopting ambitious targets. Developing countries, for their part, must limit their emissions, which requires adequate financial and technological support from developed countries.

Developed Countries Must Keep their Promises

In Poznan as in Bali, developed countries are once again in the cross hairs. The G77/China have not missed an occasion to reiterate that they still have not to date kept their promises when it comes to lowering emissions under the Kyoto Protocol (for the period 2008-2012). In regard to financial support, especially for adaptation, developed countries are also far from the mark according to the G77/China.

Who Will the Leaders Be in the Future Climate Regime?

In regard to the future climate regime, the G77, especially the small island states and LDCs, have high expectations in regard to medium- and long-term emission reduction targets for developed countries. These countries would need to reduce their emissions by at least 40% by 2020, and by at least 85% by 2050 compared to 1990 levels. Eyes are therefore turned very specifically towards the European Union and the United States.

Since the Convention and Protocol were adopted, the European Union has often played a proactive role. Today internal discussions on its Climate and Energy Package have shaken this position. The outcome of the discussions on this package will have consequences on the entire world. Several speakers have pointed this out.

The European Union, through the Climate & Energy Package, is being closely watched on two major points:

i. **Its Emission Reduction Target**

The European Union has announced the figure of less 30% for its emission reductions by 2020. It did not specify whether this was for domestic reductions only, or if it included emission reductions in other countries (compensation). For developing countries, it is crucial that this reduction take place mainly on the domestic level. However, the Climate & Energy Package plans nearly two-thirds of reductions on the international market.

ii. **Its Financial Support for Developing Countries**

The European Union has not made any concrete proposals on this subject in Poznan. The European Union member-States are very divided on the possibility of allocating part of the revenue from the sale of emission quotas to fighting climate change in developing countries, as one of the earliest versions of the system planned. Some European countries believe that this allocation must be voluntary. Yet, a strong and positive signal would be encouraging in allowing developing countries to participate actively in the fight against climate change.

This morning, no agreement had yet been adopted in Brussels on the Climate & Energy Package. The discussions continue.

The United States are also being closely watched in the climate discussions. President-elect Barack Obama has already announced his ambitions when it comes to fighting climate change. Some could easily see the United States taking the lead in the negotiations. However, one must remember that the United States' commitment in the Kyoto Protocol can only happen after Congress adopts a national law on the fight against climate change.

Promising Actions in Emerging Countries

According to Prime Minister of Sweden, the participation of the most advanced developing countries is vital. They must participate according to their responsibility and capacity to act. As Ban Ki Moon and Yvo de Boer mentioned, significant initiatives have been taken by Brazil, China and India in regard to the environment and more specifically the fight against climate change. These initiatives should be expanded and more fully showcased in the framework of international negotiations.

Solidarity and a New Foundation

As it has in many other discussions, the economic crisis inserted itself into the discussions on the climate. Speakers, however, were unanimous: it must not distract us from our imperatives when it comes to fighting climate change.

For Ban Ki Moon, the economic and climate challenges must be tackled simultaneously. The President of the Republic of Poland believes that solidarity must remain at the centre of development and the fight against climate change.

For the European Union, the economic crisis must, on the contrary, be seen as an opportunity to build a new foundation that could be initiated in Poznan and consolidated in Copenhagen.

In Poznan,

Anne Chetaille

Email: chetaille@gret.org

Tel.: +48 785 257 514