

ROAD TO COPENHAGEN

Forum Discussion

Theme A - key principles for climate justice in a new agreement?

Climate change is happening now. Unpredictable weather patterns are endangering the livelihoods of people around the world through ever increasing floods, droughts and rogue weather patterns. This has dire consequences for health, agriculture, economic well being and in broader social and political respects. The world's poorest, not responsible for climate change, are first and worst affected by its impact.

In addition, most of the expected 2.6 billion rise in global population by 2050 will come from the poorest regions in the world. These are regions which have no convergent economic growth, are the most unstable politically and will be the hardest hit by climate change. Jeffrey Sachs speaks about the paradox of a unified global economy and a divided global society where the poverty trap is self-reinforcing, not self-corrective. It is an alarming trajectory which constructs a "sustainability gap" that must be addressed. It is clear that we will not be able to mitigate or adapt to climate change unless we address development needs.

To achieve an agreement that will be universally respected, climate justice will be key. Climate change is a human crisis which threatens to overwhelm the humanitarian system and turn back the clock on development. It is also a gross injustice - poor people in developing countries bear over 90% of the burden - through death, disease, destitution and financial loss - yet are least responsible for creating the problem. For example, Africa as a continent is responsible for 3.8 percent of global CO2 emissions yet the impact of climate change will be unfairly devastating. Despite this, funding from rich countries to help the poor and vulnerable adapt to climate change is not even 1 percent of what is needed. This glaring injustice must be addressed at Copenhagen in December.

United Nations Development Programme estimates that adaptation costs for developing countries are in the tens of billions per annum - by 2050 they will amount to USD 86 billion per year. Absorbing the climate change impacts will hamper achievement of many of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, including those on reducing poverty and child mortality and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. At best, 1 per cent of the resources required are currently available via the levy on the CDM mechanism. Therefore, in order to ensure climate justice and meet the millennium development goals, we need to develop new innovative ways for capacity building and technology transfer. More importantly, we need ensure that the funds available for adaptation measures in developing countries are fair and proportionate - clearly reflecting the "polluter pays principle", respecting human rights frameworks and gender equality, i.e. climate justice. While mitigation is global, adaptation is local. This is why a new climate agreement must place adaptation on equal footing with mitigation. Furthermore, it must address the issue of climate justice and human rights in a development perspective.

Prevention is better than cure. Acting early makes sense not least from an economic point of view. According to the 2007/2008 Human Development Report issued by the UNDP, every US dollar invested in pre-disaster risk management in developing countries can save USD 7. Hence,

industrialized countries must take strong and immediate steps to increase assistance to the least developed countries for adaptation.

It is important to recognise that needed resources to combat climate change will not primarily come from the mechanism under the Convention, even if scaled up and enhanced, but from the private sector that already constitutes 86% of total investment and financial flows. Hence, substantial additional public funding will be imperative to mobilize and leverage the needed private capital.

As such, the big opportunity for financing climate change lies in a shift of current and future investments and financial flows into a low carbon direction. In fact, addressing climate change should be an integral part of the solution to the global economic crisis, i.e. a new green deal. If public spending can be designed to boost “green growth” - private investments in clean and energy efficient technologies - the result will benefit not only employment, innovation and wealth creation, but also help combat climate change, enhance energy security and pave the way for a low carbon future.

Regardless the undeniable leverage needed from the private sector, providing public financing will be imperative for certain areas, technologies and principles (such as the polluter pays principle) that cannot be adequately funded through the private sector.

State of play in the negotiations

Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC, has summarized the negotiation situation with the following words: It is clear that an agreement reached in Copenhagen must clarify how much industrialized countries would have to reduce their emissions by 2020, and what developing countries are willing to do to limit their own emissions. Those two areas are inextricably linked because the **United States and other industrialized nations will not ratify any agreement without corresponding commitments by developing countries... Developing countries, in turn, will not commit to address climate change unless there is a clear target for Annex I parties and a stable financial system for both mitigation and adaptation is created**”. The G77/China have underscored the unconditional need for new, additional, appropriate, predictable and sufficient funding in addition to ODA, as well as for funding of incremental costs.

Given the state of play ahead of Copenhagen:

Climate justice

- How we can ensure that the world’s poorest who contributed least to climate change can be effectively protected? To this effect, what are the key principles that should underpin the new climate agreement?
- What role can business play when it comes to endorsing the Guidelines on Climate Justice? See Youth Forum Report 2009, Global Humanitarian Forum (available at <http://ghfgeneva.org/Portals/0/pdfs/YouthForum2009Report.pdf>)