

THE RESULTS OF COPENHAGEN: CONSEQUENCES FOR THE WORLD'S POOREST COUNTRIES

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For the poorest countries in the world, climate change means an additional threat which they must helplessly face. Besides underdevelopment, a scarcity of resources, sovereign debt, or overpopulation, climate change brings with it a further threat to livelihoods, and therefore to development potential. Scientific investigation into the consequences of climate change for nutrition, water supply, health, land, and ecosystems clearly reveal the negative consequences which result from the rise in the average global temperature. These consequences can be roughly estimated, but can not be unconditionally applied to all poor states in equal measure. Firstly, an average increase of 1 to 2 degrees Celsius in the earth's warmth can lead to far higher temperature increases in some regions. Secondly, the effects on the livelihoods are dependent upon the local basis and dispositions. An African state which is already experiencing drought will not be able to compensate for a further decrease in precipitation, while a rise in sea levels is irrelevant to countries without coastlines (*landlocked least developed countries* – LLCs). The development of the sea level is of key importance to the smaller island states (Small Island Development States, SIDS), and the low-lying islands' tolerance for any increase is very low. For them, the 2-degree goal formulated by the G8 at Europe's instigation is not acceptable, because it would cement their eventual destruction, and they are demanding a 1.5-degree goal. Using this target, the consequences predicted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) would be just about bearable. However, given the levels of greenhouse gases present in the atmosphere, the world is already heading for an average temperature increase of 1.4 degrees Celsius.

The poorest developing countries have been demanding a strict limit on greenhouse emissions since the negotiations began under the framework convention on climate change, which is also when the SIDS group was founded (1992). They have not yet been able to back their demands with any concrete force, however. Thus, they have only ever been able to appeal to the culprits of climate change, nothing more. From an historical perspective, the OECD member states, and, for the foreseeable future, emerging countries are those responsible for the continuing progress of climate change. The poorest developing countries will not even come close to developing the potential that emerging countries such as China, India, or South Africa represent for the future rise in harmful greenhouse gas emissions. This is made particularly clear when one considers the budgeted expenditure of the federal government's scientific advisory council on global change (WBGU). The WBGU calculates how a fair division of the annual emission amounts among the world's countries could look, under the emissions devel-

opments recommended by the world climate council, and under the premise of the 2-degree goal. According to this estimate, Germany could only keep up its current level of emissions for another ten years, at which point its credit would be exhausted. For Burkina Faso, however, the budget would be enough to last another 3000 years.

An internationally binding commitment to climate protection currently only exists under the Kyoto protocol (reduction of six greenhouse gases by 5.2 percent, based on 1990 levels). This is to be achieved between 2008 and 2012 by the industrialised states (Annex-1 states of the Kyoto protocol). Beyond that, no concrete international goals exist. In light of scientific discoveries, and rising political pressure, many of the Annex-1 states have announced national goals which they intend to meet by 2020. A significant problem with statements concerning reduction goals under the Copenhagen accord is that the voluntary national goals are not readily comparable. For example, the EU's target to reduce its CO₂ emissions by 20 percent by the year 2020, is based on emission levels of the year 1990. The USA's 2020 target is a 17 percent reduction, but is based on emission levels from 2005 (based on 1990 levels, this represents around a 4 percent reduction). China has not even agreed to any absolute target, but rather announced that it will reduce the CO₂ intensity of its economy by 40–45 percent by the year 2020 (based on 2005 levels). Intensity goals are difficult to convert to absolute targets, however, because they are based on economic performance (Gross National Income, GNI) and this future income is uncertain. In order to reach a global temperature target, a conversion to absolute targets is necessary, at the very least, if scientific findings are taken seriously. In addition, the actual efforts will diverge in both directions. Either because the climate bills will be generously calculated, because e.g. the data is insufficiently reliable. Or there will be additional national political measures which affect greenhouse emissions, but which are never mentioned during international negotiations, because it was or will not be politically possible to solidify these efforts as internationally binding measures. China is not alone in its difficulties; it is also difficult for the USA to "sell" the international commitments to decision-makers at home, or to receive their unconditional support. These aspects make an evaluation of the actual development of climate change extremely difficult. They also make it clear that additional pressure is required. In particular, the competition which is already in progress between the industrialised nations could contribute to higher ambition in this regard. The poorest countries in the world are not capable of building up this pressure, however. The ambition must come from the large states, who define their climate policy using innovation strength, efficiency in the use of resources, and technology leadership.

The Copenhagen result was achieved in an unusual manner The Copenhagen accord was reached shortly before the end of negotiations between 25 heads

of government and states. These were mostly the members of the G20, and only a few represented the poorest states. The articles of the accord bear a strong resemblance to those important demands which were brought to the negotiations by the EU and the developing countries, and for a new international agreement is to be created. However, important aspects such as the agreement of long-term targets to be met by 2050 are not contained in the accord. The poor states have little to offer where international climate protection, or the associated subjects of climate politics are concerned. As those most seriously affected by the global effects of climate change, they can only make demands, or block processes at the UN. This makes them wholly reliant upon the United Nations. If the climate negotiations don't remain under their auspices, there would be no possibility for these countries to have any influence. It is only under the consensus principle (one country, one vote) that the poorest countries can exert pressure on the industrialised and emerging countries, or make their demands heard at all.

For the world's poorest countries, the SIDS and LDCs, it is of primary importance to find large and influential partners for the international climate talks. The EU has seen itself as an advocate for these groups of countries for years. In the two years leading up to Copenhagen, the Danish minister for the environment who was responsible for the talks constantly emphasised the concerns of the developing countries, and in particular of the SIDS. This would have been an optimal situation for the SIDS and LDCs, if the EU had not overlooked the fact that it could not set the tone for the international climate talks. This was in fact dictated by the interests of the USA and China. Both have other – even if not aligned – interests in retaining the UN process as the EU and the poorest countries. It would be important for the poorest countries to ask the EU to thoroughly evaluate its strategy for international climate politics. Firstly, the EU has the means to engender greater ambition in other large countries, not least by developing bilateral co-operation in important sectors (particularly in energy production). Such efforts would most notably lead to less emissions, even if they have the drawback of not following any international guidelines. Secondly, the EU will have to re-forge its alliances for an international climate accord. The SIDS and LDCs will continue to be important partners in the UN system. The EU can count on the support of these states, as long as it convincingly adheres to an international framework, as well as higher climate goals.

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