

## Durban: The end of climate diplomacy?

Without a globally binding reduction of greenhouse gases, we'll never put the lid on climate change.

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### Overview

*Overshadowed by the European, Euro, Greek and Italian crises and largely unnoticed by the international public, the 17<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change will take place from 28 November to 9 December. Delegations from more than 190 countries, headed by their environmental ministers, will convene in Durban, South Africa. Since the disastrous conference in Copenhagen in 2009, skepticism has largely set in as to whether the world will be able to limit global warming to less than two degrees Celsius by the year 2100. But it is urgent that we do so, particularly to protect people in poorer regions from catastrophic consequences, according to climate researchers. Still, despite the already noticeable effects of global warming, Durban will not generate any globally binding and ambitious climate protection agreement. The conflicting interests between industrial, emerging and developing countries are too great; the need for development in poorer countries is too urgent; and the consensus that prosperity can only be achieved through increased use of fossil fuel is too firmly anchored. The minimum we expect from Durban is an agreement to implement the agenda adopted in Cancun. This includes greater commitment to emissions reduction goals and long term promises to finance the increasingly urgent adaptation policies in countries most affected by climate change.*

### Global warming up to 5 degrees Celsius?

Around the world, climate change is considered the central environmental threat to our way of life – or life itself – in contemporary societies around the globe. But this awareness has not yet led to serious climate protection measures.

The effects of climate change increase the pressure on our planet's renewable and non-renewable resources. Today, the world's population has reached seven billion; it is expected to grow by another billion every 14 years. Today, 1.1 billion people still have insufficient access to potable water; more than two billion people have no sanitary facilities. About one billion are starving. Despite our awareness of the negative impact that burning oil has on the climate, and our understanding about our limited resources, worldwide demand continues unabated. Whereas ten years ago industrial countries were emitting the most carbon dioxide (about 80% of global emissions) today it is increasingly emerging countries that are driving global emissions upwards, due to their steadily increasing use of fossil fuels. In 2010 the emission of CO<sub>2</sub> rose by a total of 512 million tons over 2009. That is more than ever before,

representing an increase of six percent. The main source of greenhouse gases (globally, not per capita) is China, followed by the USA and India. The greenhouse gas emissions generated in 2010 through burning of coal alone rose by eight percent. Which means that we are not "on track" when it comes to reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, to use the terminology of climate diplomats: We are heading toward a global warming of up to five degrees Celsius by the end of this century. Given these conditions, not only is the fight against poverty presented with enormous challenges; in fact, the very means of existence for many people hangs in the balance.

### The world is constantly changing

Land degradation, biodiversity loss, acidification of the oceans and desertification are among the consequences of our irresponsible relationship with the environment. The impacts on countries that do not have the necessary funds to adapt are widely known. Increasing weather extremes in combination with poor urban planning will present new challenges to many. We will have to get used to images such as those coming lately from Bangkok, where

women sell food to their customers while standing knee-deep in water.

Humankind has altered the planet so drastically that geologists already are talking about a new geological age – the Anthropocene era. Some say they even see opportunities in the melting of polar ice: international shipping routes are shorter, and new, untapped oil and gas fields are revealed. That fits in with the skepticism about adopted climate policy measures and the lack of results from international climate conferences. Because on one hand they are an expression of existing international power relations (for example, China, Russia and Canada are upgrading their armaments to similar degrees, preparing for possible conflicts over resources in the Arctic); and on the other hand they are expressions of deeply entrenched orientations toward wealth and societal development based on industrial – and by now extremely globalized – economic and social models that depend on fossil energy.

#### Diplomatic approaches to the north-south conflict

Add to that the fact that the diverse and complex nature of the climate crisis complicates negotiations on the intergovernmental level. Such negotiations tend to follow the lines of an old conflict – the north-south conflict, carried out on the diplomatic level (Brand, p. 102). Using the example of emissions trading, one can see how carefully the problem of climate change has to be constructed in order to enable national governments to negotiate on this issue at all. Emissions would be prevented through the introduction of market-based mechanisms (emissions trading, joint implementation and clean development mechanisms) if it is profitable to do so; in other words, you focus on the most economical form of climate protection; you don't ask first whether global environmental management linked with market mechanisms is even suited towards an effective climate policy (ibid).

Thus the biggest obstacle to positive results in climate negotiations, and not only in Durban but also in the years to come, is the consensus of the large majority of international players that societal development is contingent upon increased consumption of fossil fuels, which are still inexpensive. An agreement to limit the

use of fossil fuels is still considered an obstacle to development. That is why case-oriented and goal-oriented negotiations aimed at climate protection remain sidelined.

#### An African climate summit with symbolic value?

Still, there is no alternative to negotiations. And the Framework Convention on Climate Change is the only international institution that encompasses all countries. Here, offending polluters sit at the table with the injured parties and might reach agreements in certain areas, form progressive alliances and thus spark a positive dynamic for greater climate protection.

In addition, one should not underestimate the symbolic value of an African climate summit. First of all, Africa has the world's lowest level of emissions but is most affected by the consequences of global emissions. Secondly, the Mexican president already showed in Cancun that an aspiring industrial country can bring a much more positive dynamic into the negotiations process than long-time industrial countries can. Without the dynamic Mexican leadership, which earned the trust of developing countries, the Cancun Agreement would not have come to pass. In Durban, too, much will depend on the diplomatic skills of the South African presidency.

*“Most people in the African civil society doubt that the industrial countries really want to take action against climate change!”*

*Mithika Mwenda  
(Initiator of the Caravan of Hope)*

#### What is up for debate in Durban?

The process initiated in Cancun must lead to concrete results in Durban. This concerns in particular the area

of **checking emissions reduction targets, the future of the Kyoto Protocol, climate financing, adaptation and forest protection.** The role of agriculture as a guarantor of food security and a driving force behind progress in developing countries must be given greater consideration in the climate negotiations, a point that not only Welthungerhilfe but also African non-governmental organizations repeatedly emphasize.

#### Reduction targets

Although the current voluntary targets of industrial countries are not sufficient, the countries meeting in Cancun were the first to officially concur on the two-degree goal as the maximum acceptable temperature increase. In addition,

they agreed on a process to clarify whether this limit, the current emission levels, should not be corrected downward. In 2014 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change will deliver a new progress report that will present the scientific basis for what is already known, namely that the current reduction targets aim far too low.

### **The Cancun Agreements**

*In 2010, the 16th Conference of the Parties produced some tangible results, including the following agreements:*

- *To establish a “Green Climate Fund” with the goal of management, dispensation and control of funds for climate protection and adaptation in developing countries.*
- *To establish mechanisms for facilitating the transfer of technologies so as to introduce state-of-the-art technologies where they are most needed.*
- *To create a framework concept for adaptation measures with the aim of helping set up protective measures in countries that are particularly affected.*
- *To create a data bank in which developing countries could enter their voluntary emissions reductions and describe the kind of support they will need.*
- *For the first time, an agreement was reached on the necessity of complying with the two-degree goal. It was also decided, on the basis of recent scientific evidence, to check whether existing commitments correspond to the goal.*
- *Signatories to the Kyoto Protocol committed to ensure that the expiration of the first commitment period at the end of 2012 does not lead to an “emissions gap.” The decision regarding a second Kyoto Protocol commitment period was postponed to Durban.*

### **The future of the Kyoto Protocol**

But the main theme in Durban is the future of the Kyoto Protocol. The currently still valid commitment period for industrial countries runs out at the end of 2012. It was signed in 1997 when the industrial countries recognized their historical guilt as the world’s biggest polluters. The establishment of another commit-

ment period has failed so far, particularly because Japan, Russia and Canada have insisted that emerging and developing countries should also be required to commit to reduction targets. For their part, the emerging and developing countries make their support dependent upon the industrial countries’ implementation of the reduction agreements. And their compliance does not look too good: Japan will miss its Kyoto target by 15%, Canada by 35%. Australia is 22% behind and even EU countries are way behind their pledges (Spain, 40%; Austria, 25%; Italy 14%). Then there are the capital commitments that industrial countries made in Copenhagen, which remain inadequately fulfilled. This stalemate will block progress on other negotiating issues that urgently must be decided in Durban. Of course, in the meantime the EU has offered to agree to a continuation of the Protocol, but only if other countries play along. The USA already made it clear in April that the conditions, namely the reductions required also in developing and emerging countries, have in no way been met. So there will definitely not be a vote for a second commitment period. To make matters worse, the formal declaration of support in the USA has even been blocked by Congress in Washington.

### **Climate financing**

Another important element is the provision of **funding for adaptation measures** in developing countries affected by climate change, beyond 2012. After the so-called fast-start phase of 2010-2012, in which nearly \$30 billion is to be made available by the industrial countries, it is unclear how financing will continue beyond 2013. According to the World Bank, the countries impacted by adaptation measures need between \$75 and \$100 billion per year, with the precondition that the two-degree goal be met. Otherwise adaptation measures will be even more expensive.

Financing for the **“Green Climate Fund,”** proposed in Cancun and to be decided upon in Durban, therefore remains unclear. Even if the fund is approved in Durban, there has been as yet no decision on who is to provide the moneys and from where (for example, public or private funds). After all, recipient countries should be able to have direct access to the moneys. It is planned to have two observers from civil society organizations on the supervisory board.

### **Adaptation**

Given the conditions of increased global warming, there is an urgent need to adapt to the

consequences of climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has diagnosed an increase in major weather catastrophes – such as flooding in Thailand, Pakistan or Australia, forest fires in Siberia or droughts in China or Somalia – in its new study based on current extreme weather events. Without sufficient measures to adapt to climate change, there can be no sustainable success in the fight against poverty.

Cancun made the biggest advances in the area of adaptation. Guidelines for a comprehensive **adaptation framework** for the next few years were defined. Included in these guidelines was the establishment of an **adaptation committee** charged with pushing for implementation of adaptation measures. Also in Cancun, it was resolved to establish a special support process for particularly endangered countries, going beyond the existing National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPA). The question of how to handle compensation payments for loss and damages caused by climate change is another significant issue for developing countries. And for the African countries, it is particularly important that there be a successful treatment of this issue in Durban.

### **Forest protection**

Emissions from deforestation and forest degradation account for 15 percent of man-made greenhouse gases, so the protection of forests must be given greater priority in international climate negotiations. Consequently, mechanisms for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) should be promoted.

The concept is based on the function of forests as carbon sinks. Since a monetary value is attached to the carbon stored in forests, the preservation of forests can, for example, be considered a market mechanism. This is how emissions from tropical deforestation should be recognized and evaluated so that economic

*In poor countries, severe weather costs lives; in rich countries, it costs money.*

incentives to stop deforestation can be offered. But the financing of forest protection must not lead to reduced climate protection in industrial countries; therefore REDD should not be included in emissions trading, because – given the low price of CO<sub>2</sub> and the insufficient cli-

mate protection goals – the steering effect of emissions trading would be further eroded.

So in Durban, binding rules must be concluded to secure the financing of these measures and reduce the causes of deforestation. This includes decisions on safeguards and emissions reference values. The relocation of emissions and the double counting of reductions should be prevented. Historical data should be used as a basis for calculating forested land instead of projections of future deforestation. Another point that must be considered is creating incentives for countries with low deforestation rates to preserve existing forests as carbon sinks.

### **Stepchild agriculture**

Agriculture has not yet been integrated into international climate agreements due to its complicated role as both offender and victim. On one hand, agriculture itself is affected by climate change, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. On the other hand, it is simultaneously a major cause of climate change: it contributes about 13 to 15 percent of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. If you include the fact that increased agriculture means reduced forested areas, agriculture's share of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions goes up to a third. Altered land-use, most importantly through logging, adds significantly to climate change.

In its multi-functionality, however, agriculture also has a significant potential to counter climate change. Not only does it fill social and ecological needs: It also could greatly reduce emissions through improved and more efficient use of machines, fertilizers and pesticides. This would support a sustainable agriculture, suited to a given location, that ideally would serve to take better advantage of the soil's capacity to absorb carbon.

According to the World Agriculture Report (IAASTD 2009) the potential of smallholder agriculture is far from exhausted, whether in terms of increased production or its contribution to climate protection. Too little research has been done in this direction over the last 30 years. But for several years now, increasing numbers of institutions have been requesting more funds for research. The enormous potential for appropriate technology must be linked to sustainable forms of production in order to generate a triple-win effect: emissions reduction, adaptation to changing climate conditions and food security. The latter aspect in particu-

lar should be taken up during negotiations under the rubric of adaptation measures.

**Conclusion:**

There won't be any glorious declaration of a global, binding and ambitious agreement in Durban, in keeping with past experience. The scales of world politics are shifting more than ever; emerging countries are playing a much greater role than before. The irrationality of the climate debate in the USA coupled with the European financial crisis make it harder to regain the trust of developing countries that was lost in Copenhagen. Welthungerhilfe considers it urgently important for Durban to implement the processes launched in Cancun, at the very least.

**Welthungerhilfe's minimum expectations from Durban:**

- implementation of the Cancun Agreements
- adjusted ambitions for the achievement of reduction goals
- a clear mandate for a global, binding climate protection agreements by 2015, with the aim of having all major countries as signatories by 2018
- a second commitment period for the Kyoto Protocol
- an appropriate endowment of the "Green Climate Fund" as of 2013, with moneys to support the financing of adaptation measures

**These expectations prompt Welthungerhilfe to ask the following of the German government:**

- The German government must work to ensure that the conference in Durban generates a mandate for developing a comprehensive and binding climate agreement by 2015.
- It must strongly push for the European Union to raise its emissions reduction target to 30% in 2012.
- Germany must fulfill its national emissions reduction targets of at least 40% reduction by 2020 and 80-95% reduction by 2050 (compared to the 1990 figures) and enact a climate protection law with binding reduction targets.

- Germany must ensure that by 2013 there are no financing shortfalls for adaptation measures. This means that a scenario must be developed in Durban according to which the calculated and required \$100 billion per year is reached by 2020.
- The German government must promote the operationalization of the adaptation committee. Important here are: a fast start; participation of civil society; and a majority representation of developing countries in the control structure.

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