

CLIMATE CHANGE

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Creating a Secure



Climate change will be at the top of the agenda when leaders of the world's major economies gather in Japan for the G8 Summit in July. The science is clear on the need for an ambitious and rapid response. Almost all heads of government now have a basic understanding that without climate security they will be unable to meet their economic or development goals. This makes reducing global greenhouse emissions a vital national interest and a core issue for international diplomacy.

b Y 2050, THE WORLD WILL NEED to cut its emissions dramatically, to at least half of 1990 levels. The challenge is to agree how this will be shared between countries and create the political conditions for national leaders to sign up to a global climate deal.

The starting point for the negotiations is the 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and its subsequent Kyoto Protocol, agreed five years later. Kyoto set emission reduction targets for developed countries up to 2012 and created the carbon market which includes the Clean Development Mechanism to finance complementary action in developing nations.

Although the Protocol was rejected by President George Bush's administration, it was ratified by enough countries to enter into force in 2005. With the exception of Canada, all Kyoto ratifiers are likely to meet their targets through domestic action or by purchasing carbon credits. Kyoto should be



Climate



the basis for the post-2012 agreement as it contains many of the key elements required for a comprehensive deal.

DANGEROUS LEVELS

The aim is to reach an ambitious global climate deal at the UN climate change conference in Copenhagen in December next year. It should set the world on a path to keep the global average temperature rise below two degrees in relation to pre-industrial levels. This is a tight but important deadline, intended to maintain confidence in the growing carbon market and drive the rapid changes required in government policy and investment decisions.

Climate change is already approaching dangerous levels. To avoid passing potentially catastrophic tipping points, global emissions must peak and decline within the next ten to fifteen years. That means making the right technology and infrastructure investments today that will lock in global emissions levels for decades to come. The

global deal must include a new technology cooperation and innovation mechanism that makes the transition to a low carbon economy possible throughout the world.

To put this into perspective, global greenhouse gas emissions are on a path to reach sixty gigatons a year by 2030. The challenge is to switch to low-carbon development that saves at least thirty gigatons per year by 2030 and does so in an equitable fashion across major economies that have fundamentally different starting points.

Analysis by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and others suggests that around eighty percent of the necessary savings – twenty-five gigatons – can be achieved with existing technologies.

Many of these could be introduced at minimal cost, including measures to improve energy efficiency in key sectors – power, industry, buildings and transport. Others will require some form of public support to accelerate their adoption, including renewable energy sources such as wind and solar. It is also vital to reduce emissions from coal through large-scale carbon capture and storage technology.

LEADERSHIP STARTS AT HOME

At the heart of the post-2012 deal must be ambitious, absolute mandatory caps on emissions by developed countries so they are twenty-five to forty percent below 1990 levels by 2020. The G8 summit should endorse this range; in Bali it was accepted by all G8 countries except the US.

Without this it will be immensely difficult to get developing countries such as China and India to commit to something that has never been done before – rapid economic development combined with radical decarbonisation.

For developed-country commitments to be taken seriously, they must be backed up by concrete laws and domestic measures that demonstrate the transition to a low carbon economy has begun. Nowhere is this more important than in Europe, which will be debating its own low carbon plan at a key

stage in the international negotiations. The European climate package must be finalised by the end of the year.

Though this climate package, it must be clear to the world that Europe will not build any more coal-fired power plants, unless they are designed for carbon capture and storage; that big improvements in energy efficiency are reducing demand; that renewable supplies are becoming mainstream; and that the emissions trading system will have permit auctioning at its core, with the auction revenue earmarked to support developing countries' adoption of clean technologies and adaptation to climate change.

In parallel, Europe should be encouraging the production and trade of low carbon goods. Next year the European Commission should remove high tariffs on Chinese compact fluorescent light-bulbs so that European consumers can purchase them cheaply and Chinese firms can see the benefit of producing such goods.

ENGAGING THE UNITED STATES

All eyes will of course be on the new President of the United States as he or she takes office in January. How the US re-engages with the world on climate change will have a defining impact on the outcome of Copenhagen.

On the one hand, the signs are good. The leading candidates have set out fundamentally different positions from the Bush administration, including support for mandatory caps on US emissions and national regulations for efficiency and renewables. On the other, the US economy is in bad shape and politicians are deeply troubled about the loss of jobs and competitiveness to China and other emerging economies.

The next president needs to understand that a strong multilateral position on climate change is vital to support the country's re-emergence as a popular and positive international force. Without this level of priority the issue will not get the attention it needs in the first hundred days of the new administration. Europe should engage now with the presidential candidates to underline

this message and stress the need for a special envoy for climate change at the next major meeting in Poznan in November.

FAIR DEAL FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Big developing countries such as China and India need to commit to ambitious action in return for increased technological and financial assistance. This is perhaps the most difficult challenge for Copenhagen and will rest heavily on the level of confidence built between the key players in the coming eighteen months.

China is especially important: by some estimates it is now the world's largest emitter and there is no realistic chance of the US ratifying a global climate deal without meaningful Chinese participation. Beijing is taking important steps in the right direction, including its ambitious drive to raise energy efficiency by twenty percent between 2005 and 2010. However it will only sign-up to additional commitments as part of a global deal if it is confident they are consistent with its wider economic growth goals.

Developing countries emphasise that, on a per capita basis, their emissions remain well below those of the developed world. The average American emits six times more carbon than the average Chinese and thirteen times more than the average Indian.

Since the US and Europe have been industrial economies for longer, the historical inequity is even greater. At the same time, the costs of climate change fall disproportionately on poor people in the developing world. This perceived lack of fairness is at the heart of the global deal negotiations and could easily derail them.

With time against us, we need to rise above these arguments and recognise the problem for what it is – a threat to our collective security. Technical solutions are available and the economic case for investing in them is understood. The issue is how we distribute the short-term costs of the transition to a low-carbon economy and overcome the political obstacles; including powerful vested interests. The G8 summit will be an important test.

