

Copenhagen Plan B : “protect the rich”

vendredi 11 décembre 2009, par [REYES Oscar](#) (Date de rédaction antérieure : 9 décembre 2009).

A leaked text of the political declaration that could conclude the Copenhagen conference reveals back-room dealings that offer little to the Majority World.

Sommaire

- [Democratic deficit](#)
- [More “hot air” on reductions](#)
- [Strings attached](#)
- [A growing market](#)
- [A coalition of the unwilling](#)

Oscar Reyes

Dec 9 2009

So the rumours were true. For the past week, it was an open secret that the Danish government had already drafted a “political declaration” that could form the major outcome of the UN Climate Change Conference now that a full-blown international agreement is off the cards. The draft text has now been leaked, sparking outrage amongst Southern delegates and civil society organisations.

“The Copenhagen Agreement under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change,” as the draft is titled, would introduce percentage-based emissions targets for all except the Least Developed Countries, fatally undermining the Kyoto Protocol, which draws a line between industrialised Annex 1 states and the Majority World. The text also suggests that financial and technological support measures in non-Annex 1 countries, an underlying principle of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), should now be made conditional to their ability to meet complex emissions monitoring requirements.

The UNFCCC quickly attempted to limit the damage, putting out a statement from Executive Secretary Yvo de Boer that declared that the draft was a “decision paper put forward by Danish Prime Minister,” while maintaining that it was not a “formal text” of the UN negotiating process.

But the leaked text met with an angry response from many Southern delegates. Lumumba Di-Aping, the Sudanese chairperson of the G77 plus China grouping of 132 developing countries, said that the Danish Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen had failed in his role as a neutral host and had instead “chosen to protect the rich countries.” The emergence of the draft text was also met by an impromptu protest from members of the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance, who marched through the Bella Centre chanting “Two degrees is suicide, One Africa, one degree.”

Democratic deficit

Concern stems not simply from the contents of the draft text, but also the secretive and biased way in which it came about. The COP Presidency, which is held by host country Denmark, is mandated to craft compromises based on painstakingly negotiated drafts. In this case, the Presidency stands

accused not only of overstepping the mark, but of hopping, stepping and then jumping over it, pre-empting UN decisions with proposals lifted in part from text discussed at the Major Economies Forum, an initiative closely tied to the G20 grouping and chaired by US President Barack Obama.

As Meena Raman, Honorary Secretary of Friends of the Earth Malaysia, explains, “The leaked draft Copenhagen Agreement violates the democratic principles of the UN and threatens the Copenhagen negotiations. By discussing their text in secret back-room meetings with a few select countries, the Danes are doing the opposite of what the world expects the host country to do. The Danish government must stop colluding with other rich nations. Instead it must take as a starting point the positions of developing countries - which are the least responsible for climate change, but who are most affected by it.”

Raman Mehta from Action Aid India decried a “betrayal of trust” on the part of the Danish government.

More “hot air” on reductions

The draft text is weak and vague in its overall ambitions. In reiterating the goal of holding global warming to no more than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, the text sets a global reduction target of 50 per cent by 2050, of which 80 per cent should come from the industrialised world. These figures look distinctly unimpressive when tracked back to existing per capita emissions, however, with one estimate suggesting that they would allow Northern industrialised countries to continue outpolluting the Majority World by a factor of 3:5.

The short-term proposals are ostensibly more ambitious, with a suggestion that global emissions should peak by 2020. But the same passage of the text misleadingly claims that this peak has already been reached in “developed countries collectively.” This is based on the latest UNFCCC figures, which show that Annex 1 countries are now on track to meet their Kyoto Protocol commitments, but a closer look reveals that this is achieved on the basis of “hot air” emissions resulting from economic collapse in the former Soviet bloc in the early 1990s. Emissions elsewhere in the developed world have continued to rise. The projections for 2020 are further massaged by counting a large volume of “emissions savings” from carbon offsets made in the global South as part of Annex 1 emissions figures.

Strings attached

Whereas the Bali Action Plan emphasises that developing country actions will be “supported and enabled” by technology, financing and capacity building, the draft suggests that these measures would be “subject to robust measurement, reporting and verification.” This inversion implies that the support measures could be withheld unless monitoring is externally approved. Instead of placing an obligation on industrialised countries to repay and retribute their climate debt, this makes any support measures conditional to a series of complex technical assessments.

Just as significant is what the text does not include. There are no numbers on long-term financing, and there is no suggestion that these will be forthcoming in Copenhagen. The only figure offered is a projection of \$10 billion per year of “fast start finance”, a scaled-down version of a plan first presented by UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown in late November. But Lumumba Di-Aping was dismissive : “Ten billion dollars will not buy developing countries’ citizens enough coffins,” he said.

A growing market

The flip side of this lack of financial commitments is a commitment to scale up carbon markets as part of any agreement. The cap and trade proposals currently passing through the US would allow up to 1.5 billion tonnes of carbon offsets per year to displace the need for domestic emissions reductions, a demand that is over seven times larger than the existing supply of offsets through the UN's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and Joint Implementation scheme.

Although the language on carbon markets remains vague, talk of "an effective and orderly transition from project based to more comprehensive approaches" signals a framework that would introduce a broad range of new offsets, from "sectoral crediting" through to measures aimed at Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD).

"With developed countries offering so little by way of public finance, developing countries are being sent a message that support for offsetting mechanisms is their only real choice to access funds" says Payal Parkeh, a climate scientist with International Rivers.

A coalition of the unwilling

What the "Copenhagen Agreement" leak signals, above all, is a lack of ambition on the part of industrialised countries to make emissions reductions at home or meet their financial and other obligations to the South. "Despite the hype, the talk of 'Hopenhagen', the supposed political will to 'get it done', this set of negotiations might be no different than anything that has come before" concludes Rhiya Trivedi, a member of the Canadian Youth Delegation to Copenhagen. "It could be just another round of the North-South divide and power struggle."

Business as usual, in other words.

Oscar Reyes

Team member of Carbon Trade Watch

www.carbontradewatch.org

P.-S.

* The article appears in the Climate Chronicle newspaper published at the Copenhagen climate talks..

* Oscar Reyes (London, 1977) works on TNI's Environmental Justice project, is environment editor of Red Pepper magazine, and is co-author of Carbon Trading : how it works and why it fails. From 2005-2008, he was TNI Communications Officer and co-editor of Red Pepper magazine.

He has a BA from Somerville College, Oxford University and an MA in Politics (Ideology and Discourse Analysis) from the University of Essex. Before joining TNI he was a lecturer in Cultural Studies at the University of East London ; a lecturer in European Politics at Goldsmiths College, University of London ; and co-presenter and producer of a weekly radio show on London's Resonance FM.

He was also writer and presenter of World Week Watch, a round-up of global news on Press TV. He was a TNI Young Fellow in 2005.