

Copenhagen Climate Conference

What different countries want

Background briefing by Michael Deas for the Green Party

Edited by Amanda Hughes and Spencer Fitz-Gibbon

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1. Background

1.1 The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

The UNFCC was founded at the 1992 'Earth Summit' in Rio. The third Conference of Parties (COP3) agreed the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, which split countries into industrialised countries (Annex I and Annex II) and developing countries. Annex I and II countries committed to emissions reductions and accept financial responsibility for the funding of mitigation and adaptation programs in developing countries. However, because the US never ratified the protocol and because the protocol set weak targets and even weaker penalties for non-compliance, the protocol has been widely criticised and discredited. NGOs and civil society groups have also criticised Kyoto for providing trading-based mechanisms by which rich countries can finance emissions reductions in developing countries. Kyoto expires in 2012.

COP 14 in December 2007 set out the Bali Roadmap for the agreement of a post-Kyoto treaty at Copenhagen. It established two working groups. The Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP) has been discussing the commitments that industrialised countries are willing to make but does not include the US. The Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action includes all nations and has been taking on the bulk of the work. The fact that negotiating is happening in two streams has been criticised as problematic by the EU.¹

Recent negotiations in Bangkok have exposed the widening differences between different nations, with the US and other developing countries indicating that they want to abandon much of the Kyoto architecture that other countries had assumed would form the basis of a new treaty at Copenhagen. The Obama administration and a host of commentators have now begun to downplay the chances of a comprehensive 'final' agreement at Copenhagen.

1.2 Literature

There is a wealth of academic literature concerned with the negotiation of international environmental agreements (IEAs) that may provide useful tools for observers of the Copenhagen process.

Barrett (2003) is widely credited with having constructed the most complete model of IEA negotiation. Barrett's model centres on the idea that nations act in their own best interests and that treaties must restructure incentives in order to change a state's behaviour. "Unless a treaty changes incentives, countries are likely only to agree to a target they felt confident they would meet anyway," he states.²

Incentives can be restructured using side payments that compensate for international asymmetries in wealth and historical responsibility for the problem at hand.³ COP-14 in Poznan in 2007 agreed on the creation of an Adaption Fund for developing countries to be paid for by rich Annex II countries.⁴ Linking the treaty negotiations with other issues can also restructure incentives. For example, Russia was coaxed into the Kyoto protocol with a promise of WTO membership.⁵ Barrett (2003) also states that incentives must also be restructured to enforce compliance as well as improve participation.⁶

Barrett (2003) believes that the treaty-making process is "strategic" and that countries will often shield their true negotiating position until the final stages.⁷

Froyn (2007) argues that domestic political feasibility is the biggest restraint on participation in IEAs.⁸ US negotiators at Copenhagen can only agree to a final treaty they think they can get ratified by Congress, for example. The depth and breadth of treaties is a strategic choice and it may be constructive to decrease the aims of a treaty in order to increase participation, especially if a partial agreement then forms the basis of further negotiation.⁹ Game theory has been used to show that multiple agreements can increase initial participation (breadth) and long-term environmental quality (depth).¹⁰ As discussed below, many are starting to advocate that Copenhagen forms part of a multiple agreement process.

Elliot (2002) expressed a fear that the arrangement of international cooperation on environmental issues "reflects, constitutes and masks global relations of power and powerlessness".¹¹ Therefore, states that lack scientific resources and political clout need to be reassured about the validity of the science and the fairness of the treaty-making process in order to participate. To this end, the vast majority of cooperation efforts begin with the creation of independent scientific committees and the negotiation of procedural arrangements.

3. National positions

UK

Domestic target: Climate Change Act 2008 calls for increased cut in emissions to 34% on 1990 levels by 2020, and to 42% if an international climate deal is made at Copenhagen.¹²

Labour government

A Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) paper entitled "The Road to Copenhagen" lays out the government's current, publicly held, position on Copenhagen.

Some key features of the paper are:

Cutting greenhouse gas emissions: The UK government wants global emissions to be halved by 2050, a target that requires developing countries to reduce emissions by 80% by 2050. The EU is likely to increase its reduction target from 20% to 30% by 2020 if it feels that other developed countries have made strong commitments. However, the policy paper states that any increased target is likely to be met in part with the purchase of carbon credits.¹³

The policy paper states that developing countries should aim to reduce emissions by 15% compared to business as usual levels and that poorer countries will need financial assistance to meet such a target. Many developing countries do not have the institutional capacity or necessary data to adopt serious targets and such countries should be asked to commit to producing “low carbon development strategies”. The paper explicitly states that “the international community should look to impose specific actions” on developing countries and that developing countries should make their own targets.¹⁴

DECC also want to push for an improved system of monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) with instruments such as regular emissions inventories.¹⁵ DECC claims that international institutions on which the Copenhagen deal will depend should be strengthened but based on “reform and building on existing institutions, only establishing new ones where necessary”.¹⁶ This is in direct contradiction to the Obama administration’s reported position that countries should carry out their own reporting and monitoring free from international verification and “sweep away” much of the existing infrastructure.¹⁷

Carbon markets

DECC wants Copenhagen to reach agreement on how proposed emissions trading systems (ETS) in US, Japan and other countries can be linked with the existing EU ETS en route to a global carbon market. DECC hopes all developed country ETS will be linked by 2015. Developing countries with the necessary capacity should be encouraged to take part in emissions trading. The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) is a key part of the framework but has been subject to controversy and accusations that it is open to abuse.¹⁸ DECC wants to reform the CDM but provides little detail how.

Technology

DECC wants Copenhagen to use market based incentives to increase the speed at which low carbon technology is developed and rolled out. It suggests that the EU-China agreement on clean coal provides a blue print of how states can collaborate on technology and development and that the Copenhagen deal should include provisions that would facilitate similar agreements in the future.¹⁹

Forestry and land use

DECC wants agreement to “reduce tropical deforestation by at least 50% by 2020 and halt forest cover entirely by 2030”. It suggests that the best way to do this is to finance reduced deforestation by bringing forests and land use change into the carbon markets and make them part of developed countries’ targets. This section also makes

reference to “biodiversity issues” and “the concerns of local and indigenous communities”.²⁰

Adaption and Finance

DECC wants to support the existing agreement on an Adaption Fund for developing countries and encourage developing countries to make adaptation to climate change a key part of development planning. It also suggests that increasing availability of information and expertise would help developing countries.²¹

Finance contributions should be based on ability to pay. Countries should be forced to meet their existing long term Official Development Assistance commitments and ensure that these commitments are “climate proofed”.²²

Full report: <http://centralcontent.fco.gov.uk/central-content/campaigns/act-on-copenhagen/resources/en/pdf/road-full-document-pdf>

Gordon Brown has pledged to attend Copenhagen and has been asking other leaders to do the same.²³

European Union

Domestic target: 20% reduction on 1990 levels by 2020 and 30% reduction “if a satisfactory international agreement is reached”. 20% of energy to be generated renewably by 2020.²⁴

The EU will negotiate collectively at Copenhagen and it can be assumed that the EU position will be close to that of DECC however information on the EU position is harder to find.

Underpinning the EU position is its belief that “industrialised countries need to cut their greenhouse gas emissions to 25-40% below 1990 levels by 2020 while developing countries should limit their rapid emissions growth to around 15-30% below projected business as usual levels in 2020”.²⁵

The EU is ideologically committed to emissions trading systems. It is proud of its “first mover” experience in emissions trading systems and wants to help other developed countries adopt domestic systems en route to the creation of a global emission trading system. The EU also wants to reform the Clean Development Mechanism to strengthen the rules regarding what “counts” as a CDM credit and ensure that the majority of developed country targets are met with domestic mitigation efforts.²⁶

A recently adopted policy paper that seeks to “unlock the current impasse in the negotiations by presenting a blueprint on climate finance” sets out the EU position on climate finance. It states that:

- The €100bn annual budget it thinks is required for developing country mitigation and adaptation can be funded 20-40% by public and private finance, 40% from the carbon market with the remainder (€22-50bn) to be paid for by Annex 1 countries
- “Fast-start” finance should be in place immediately after a successful Copenhagen
- All countries, except LDCs, should prepare low-carbon growth plans by 2011,

including credible mid-term and long-term objectives and prepare annual greenhouse gas inventories.²⁷

As it became apparent during the recent Bangkok talks that the US wants to abandon much of remnants of Kyoto in any new deal, the EU struck a reconciliatory tone and accepted that a completely new agreement would be possible but that it hoped that the best parts of the existing framework could be kept.²⁸

United States

Domestic target: N/A

It is being widely reported that the Obama administration – aware that that any agreement must be ratified by a lobby-prone Congress - wants to abandon many of the decisions made while it was not at the negotiating table. According to a Guardian story, the US is refusing to sign up to any agreement based on Kyoto's classification of China and other big emerging economies as developing countries that do not have to large emission reductions in the short term.²⁹ The US also rejects the current framework's focus on monitoring and enforcement. Instead, it wants many of the big questions to be revisited and a new framework to be developed.³⁰

Given how close we are to Copenhagen and how committed most other countries are to the existing framework, the US position poses a major threat to the possibility of a strong and effective deal being negotiated at Copenhagen. China has accused the US of trying to kill off Kyoto and other developing countries have also reacted angrily.³¹ It is not clear how the US position will affect a proposed bilateral agreement between it and China aimed at helping the two countries – that are together responsible for 40% of global emissions – share technology and agreement a bilateral target.³²

The Senate is currently reading a bill that would reduce emissions 20% on 2005 levels by 2020 while a separate proposal being considered by the House seeks a 17% reduction. Both proposals include an 83% reduction by 2020. The proposals would establish a domestic carbon trading market that could be linked with the EU ETS. An Obama administration official recently admitted that the chances of any climate legislation being passed in the US prior to Copenhagen are slim. “We will go to Copenhagen and manage with whatever we have,” the official said.³³ But Energy Secretary Steven Chu maintains a pre-Copenhagen law is still a possibility.³⁴

Canada

Domestic targets: In addition to its Kyoto targets, Canada's action plan includes emissions reduction goals of 20% compared to 2006 levels by 2020 and by 60-70% by 2050. Objective that 90% of electricity needs be provided by non-emitting sources including hydro, nuclear, clean coal and wind power by 2020.³⁵

Along with the US, Canada has made itself unpopular for suggesting that the Kyoto framework is abandoned in favour of an “entirely new” global pact. Canada says that it is open to including some part of Kyoto in a new agreement. Canadian Environment Minister Jim Prentice refused to report on suggestions that G77 countries walked out of negotiations in response to a Kyoto signatory suggesting a new framework.³⁶

Japan

Domestic targets: Mid-term goal of 25% reduction by 2020 compared to 1990 levels. 60-80% reduction of current emissions by 2050 is long-term goal.³⁷

Japan has been mentioned in the same breath as US and Canada as one of the countries suggesting that Kyoto is abandoned but I have been unable to find concrete evidence that this is their actual position.

The newly elected Democratic Party of Japan has increased Japan's previously unambitious emissions targets.³⁸ Japan, South Korea and China have announced that they would work together closely to ensure that Copenhagen is effective.³⁹ Japan is planning a post-2012 domestic emissions trading scheme.⁴⁰

Brazil

Domestic targets: As a developing country, Brazil is not committed to any binding emissions reductions targets under the Kyoto Protocol. National Plan on Climate Change calls for 10% reduction in Brazil's annual electricity consumption by 2030 maintaining the high proportion of electricity generated from renewable sources (currently 89% if you consider biofuels as renewable)⁴¹

President Lula da Silva has announced that Brazil will pledge to reduce Amazon deforestation by 80% which he claims amounts to a 4.8 billion tonne reduction in carbon emissions.⁴² However, Brazil opposes the inclusion of forests in carbon trading schemes.⁴³

Russia

Domestic targets: A Kyoto Annex 1 country, Russia reduced its emissions between 1990 and 2006 by 34.1%.⁴⁴ However, a large part of this reduction can be explained by the collapse of heavy industry that accompanied the fall of Communism.⁴⁵

President Medvedev has hinted that Russia will pledge to reduce emissions by 50% on 1990 levels by 2050.⁴⁶ However, his predecessor Vladimir Putin said that Russia would not agree to binding cuts that did not also apply to US and China.⁴⁷

India

Domestic targets: India does not currently have formal emissions reduction targets but does have a wealth of renewable energy targets.⁴⁸

The chair of the IPCC says it is "very unlikely" that India will change its official position that as a developing country it is not willing to commit to binding emissions cuts at Copenhagen.⁴⁹ India has offered an annual inventory to the UN detailing its emissions and mitigation attempts.⁵⁰

China

Domestic targets: China does not currently have formal emissions reduction targets but does have a wealth of renewable energy targets.⁵¹

President Hu Jintao told the recent talks in New York that China will increase efforts to improve energy efficiency and curb the rise in CO₂ emissions but gave few details.⁵² China was the most vocal critic of US proposals to abandon large parts of the Kyoto architecture at the recent Bangkok talks.⁵³

G77

The G77 group of developing economies has reacted angrily to attempts by US and Canada to scrap the Kyoto framework. "The G77 is extremely concerned with the notion that there is a clear intention being shown that developed countries, who are party to the Kyoto Protocol, of not agreeing to new targets for the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol," a spokesperson said.⁵⁴

Alliance of Small Island States

Domestic targets: Various, but some countries have set ambitious targets. Maldives has pledged to go carbon neutral by 2020, for example. (The Guardian, 2009)

The Alliance's climate change statement calls of rich countries to "reduce their collective GHG emissions by more than 45% below 1990 levels by 2020, and more than 95% below 1990 levels by 2050, given their historical responsibility". The Alliance normally receives a large amount of coverage during international talks.

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