

WILL THE DURBAN PLATFORM DEREGULATE INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE CONTROLS?

Warsaw, November 2013

We face a planetary emergency. People across the globe are experiencing the impacts of climate change which are devastating crop yields, spiking food prices, driving hunger and causing more frequent and more severe extreme weather. Yet we are on track to further increase greenhouse gas emissions, driving more climate change and worse impacts. To get off this track we must build a system of international climate controls based on science and the principles of equity.

An approach that adds up

To get off this track the world needs strong, fair, internationally agreed rules. These rules should equitably share the costs and benefits of transforming our societies in order to create a world with a stable climate, where people and all nature can live well. The UN Climate Convention represents the best shot we have at agreeing to such fair, science-based targets and rules.

The approach must 'add up' to the challenge presented by climate change:

- It must **ensure enough total mitigation occurs to limit warming to well below 1.5°C**; and
- It must secure enough **support for adaptation and loss and damage**.

Otherwise it risks leaving the most vulnerable to pay the costs (in uncompensated loss and damage) for the pollution of the rich.

This approach must also **be fair and share the effort to confront the climate emergency based on countries' historical responsibilities and respective capabilities**.

Many countries are advancing proposals to ensure the UN Climate Convention achieves its objective, and are proposing ways to share the effort going forward. Proposals include reviewing countries' initial pledges against equity criteria, raising the pledges up if they are inadequate, and locking them in with a strict system of compliance to see that they are fulfilled.

Versus 'Pledge and Renege'

But, at the Warsaw conference, rich industrialized countries are systematically working toward the deregulation of the international system of climate controls.

According to their official submissions under the Durban Platform, they seek a new climate architecture consisting of a narrow mitigation-focused instrument that is **weaker than the existing Kyoto Protocol, shifts the burden to developing countries, removes equity and the differentiation of responsibilities based on historical responsibility, and evades commitments on adaptation, finance, technology and capacity building**.

Developed countries such as the United States and the European Union, along with some northern academics, have been advancing a proposal under the Durban Platform that would accept each country's 'pledge' of what it intends to do (and only in the context of mitigation, not with respect to adaptation, finance, or technology transfer) **without any system to ensure that these pledges add up to what is needed, or that each country's pledge is fair**, given its historical responsibility and capability.

Such a system was tested with the Cancun Agreements, with the result that the developed countries pledged as little as 12% emission reductions on 1990 levels by 2020 (as opposed to the needed 40-50%). Very loose accounting rules and loopholes accompany these pledges, weakening them even further. Already it appears that both Canada and Japan intend to renege on their initial pledges, and there is **no mechanism to hold them accountable** should they do so.

Such proposals also defeat the purpose of having international climate negotiations. If governments are not prepared to 'negotiate' their emission cut targets – one of their central commitments in the regime – what benefit do the negotiations bring?

A Rules-Based System

Instead of a 'business as usual' approach what is needed is a strong-rules based system, building on the Convention and Kyoto Protocol including:

- Negotiating commitments in line with what science requires and that **reflect historical responsibility, per-capita contributions, and capabilities to act**.
- **A collective target** agreed through a science-based, principled approach.
- Individual targets that are determined by a country's historical responsibility and capabilities, while ensuring **access to sustainable development**.
- Commitments that are **binding internationally** not merely in domestic law.
- Robust and differentiated rules between developed and developing countries for accounting, reporting and **review of efforts to fulfill commitments including the obligation of developed countries to provide public climate finance and technology transfer**.
- **A compliance mechanism** for holding governments to account.

A bottom up, pledge and renege system cannot solve climate change.

It is time now for the UNFCCC to set a binding emissions budget and share the effort to stay within it based on the principles of equity.

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