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Working Towards a Global Climate Agreement in 2009 - Current Status and Important Next Steps

Status after the 2008 negotiation process: Overview

Within the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations, 2008 was a year of analysis, gathering ideas and building trust. Negotiators progressed on some issues, including on the Adaptation Fund and on Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD), but a great deal of work remains. Even so, by approving an aggressive work plan and timetable, the Conference of the Parties (COP) in Poznan kept the world on a path to an agreement at COP-15 in Copenhagen at the end of 2009. What's needed now is political leadership from key nations to lead us down this path. In this regard, no country is more important than the United States.

Status of Key Countries at COP-14 in Poznan

- **Developing countries** demonstrated leadership:
 - Domestic action:
 - **Mexico** announced a pro-active financing proposal and an ambitious 50% cut in emissions from business-as-usual levels.
 - **South Africa** announced a date by which its emissions would peak and begin declining.
 - **Brazil** committed to reduce deforestation by 70% by 2018.
 - **China** highlighted several ambitious targets, including a commitment to improve energy efficiency 20% by 2010.
 - International proposals: Some developing countries have tabled concrete proposals in the negotiations. For example, the G77 plus China put forward a comprehensive submission on technology cooperation.
 - Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) promoted more ambitious objectives and reductions (calling for 1.5⁰C temperature limit compared to pre-industrial in Poznan). Meanwhile, both SIDS and LDCs continue to be seriously constrained by their lack of capacity to reduce emissions and to reduce vulnerability to climate change.
- **Developed countries** failed to respond to the leadership shown by developing countries:
 - The European Union (EU) lost its traditional leadership role in the UN negotiations. It was inwardly focused on reaching an agreement a package of legislation related to climate change and energy -- which was severely attacked and weakened by some European countries (including Poland, Italy and Germany). Furthermore, the EU was unable to develop a unified position at COP-14 on finance and technology. Nevertheless, together with Norway and Switzerland, the EU is still more of a leader on some issues than other industrialized countries
 - Japan, Canada, Australia, New Zealand all seemed to be waiting for the US and contributed very little.
 - Russia was not very active but articulated several very problematic positions, including its rejection of binding individual country targets and its strong



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disagreement over the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reduction range for Annex I countries.

UNFCCC Outlook in 2009

- Establishing the negotiation process that will lead up to COP-15 in Copenhagen was an essential outcome of COP-14. In 2009, the parties will move from discussing ideas to actually negotiating specific provisions, amendments and draft decisions.
- There will be three sessions before Copenhagen. The first will be 29 March–8 April, and will consider, among other matters, 2020 targets for individual developed countries. Country positions on all key issues are due by February 6, 2009. Beginning June 1, the parties will meet again to discuss an actual negotiation text. The date and agenda for the third meeting is as yet unset, but will take place in August/September. Consistent with the decision reached at COP-13 in Bali, work on a new agreement is to be completed by COP-15 in December 2009.
- To reach an effective agreement in Copenhagen, progress is needed on:
 - **Mid-term targets for developed countries.** These must be defined.
 - **Business-as-usual (BAU) conditions in developing countries.** Deviations from BAU must be clearly defined, along with manner in which those deviations would be measured and linked with financing and technology assistance.
 - **Finance.** These issues include financial mechanisms, funding levels and sources, links to Official Development Assistance (which must be additional to current assistance) and accounting (“measurable, reportable, verifiable”).
 - **Technology cooperation.** An agreement is required.

US Engagement in the UNFCCC Negotiations

- The US must lead the international community in addressing the climate change crisis. There currently is fear among negotiators that the US will not be ready for a global deal by COP 15.
- Therefore, signals from the US will be very important during the first few months of the new administration in order to help build the trust needed to sustain the necessary pace of negotiations. This includes clear signals that:
 - The US intends to participate in and ratify a global, binding climate agreement.
 - The US will be ready to make the first ambitious deals on such an agreement in Copenhagen in December.
 - US participation in the global negotiations reflects the parallel development of strong domestic US climate legislation.
- Given the contribution of deforestation to the climate crisis (up to 20% of global GHG emissions), a robust mechanism is needed to channel sufficient public and private sector funding to real, verifiable emissions reductions from REDD, while protecting biodiversity and reducing poverty among forest-dependent, indigenous peoples.
- US engagement and leadership over the next few months will be crucial on the issues of finance and global technology cooperation. These are serious deal-makers (or breakers) for developing countries. The EU is developing its positions on these issues between now and March 19-20 (European Spring Council); the US should engage with EU partners in this process.
- In the finance context, the US should support a specific international mechanism for raising urgently needed, sustainable, and predictable financing for adaptation, particularly for the most vulnerable countries; and to finance immediate capacity building for REDD.



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- To ensure progress in the international negotiations, the US must commit to a greenhouse gas reduction target. WWF's view is that the US should commit to reduce its overall economy-wide GHG emissions 25% below 1990 levels by 2020 and at least 80% below by 2050. Some of these reductions could come from uncapped domestic and international sources. However, if a weaker cap is agreed, reductions should be made domestically and additional reductions in uncapped sectors should be supplemental.
- The United States should also provide support for emissions mitigation in other countries. This could include support for Technology Action Programs, access to carbon markets for developing countries, and the development of sectoral mitigation plans.
- Achieving a successor international agreement to the Kyoto Protocol is clearly in the global interest, and it is also in the US national interest. A global agreement will provide important tools to leverage US domestic emissions reductions, will help protect the world's poorest communities and most fragile ecosystems from the impacts of climate change, will offer the framework for fairly addressing the effects on international economic competition of emissions reductions, and will help to rebuild America's standing in the world.

US Engagement in other International Processes

- In international climate negotiations, the Major Economies Meeting (MEM) has been associated closely with the George W. Bush Administration's unwillingness to engage constructively with the world on climate change. The MEM process has often been hosted by heads of state who are not committed to action on climate change and as a whole has been seen as undermining the UNFCCC process. If the MEM process moves forward, it should be reformed to greatly increase transparency and to include the heretofore excluded voices of the countries most vulnerable to climate change.
- Useful roles for the MEM and other Heads of State forums (e.g. G20) include:
 - Trust-building between key players, and resolving concerns that could easily become deal-breakers, e.g. competitiveness concerns. In the end, the agreement(s) of a Heads of State forum would need to fit within the overall architecture set by the UNFCCC.
 - Ensuring consistency between policies to solve the financial crisis and the necessary investments in 'green' development.
 - Committing to measures related to energy security and clean energy development, high-emitting industry sectors, and Technology Action Programs.

Bilateral Initiatives

- The US and China are clearly the two singularly most important countries for securing a global climate deal. China is clearly interested in moving forward in its policies on climate change, and the US should therefore engage actively and constructively with China on this issue and seek dialogue at all levels. A Heads of State meeting with China during the first months of 2009, with climate change included on the agenda, would be a very important signal.
- US leadership will be extremely important for the development of positions in other "umbrella" countries, not the least of which are Japan and Canada. The US should actively influence these countries to take a stronger stance. An immediate priority is a dialogue with Japan, which is expected to be developing and publicizing its mid-term emission reduction targets sometime in the first half of 2009.