

A committed European Union for an ambitious, global climate agreement

Climate change is a global threat with severe consequences as well to our environment as to our socio-economic development. The EU has in recent years clearly taken up the challenge of tackling climate change. The European Climate and Energy package, as approved in 2009, is the world's most comprehensive and ambitious set of legislations designed to address climate change. With the European legislation, the targets aimed at an improvement in energy efficiency of 20 % by 2020, an enhancement of the share of renewables energy sources to 20% of our energy final consumption, and a unconditional reduction of greenhouse gases by 20% by 2020 compared to 1990, will be put in practice. [avoir ici reference à l'engagement conditionnel de l'UE pour les 30%] But climate change is a global challenge in need of global responses. Greenhouse gases affect the climate regardless of where they are emitted. Therefore, the European efforts should be integrated within a global agreement and finding such an ambitious agreement is high on the EU agenda.

Since the climate change conference in Bali in December 2007 the global community is discussing a truly global approach on climate change to be put into place after 2012. The Copenhagen Summit was an important milestone in this respect. The Copenhagen Accord reflects an impressive political commitment in addressing climate change and embodies international solidarity on this issue. Copenhagen also decided to continue negotiations in the run up to the Conference of Cancun that will take place from 29 November-10 December. The Cancun Conference will be one of the priority meetings on the international agenda during the Belgian EU Presidency.

The EU climate target

The overarching goal of EU climate policy is what is known as the two-degree target. To avoid dangerous climate change, average global temperature cannot increase by more than two degrees Celsius compared with pre-industrial levels. To contribute to reaching this target and provide a firm basis for EU action in the international negotiations, the EU has decided to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30 per cent as part of an ambitious global climate agreement with comparable efforts by developed countries and adequate actions by developing countries. Regardless of an international agreement, the EU had agreed with its climate and energy package on a 20 per cent reduction by 2020.

The EU approach on the follow up to the Copenhagen Conference

Even though the outcome of Copenhagen was below the European expectations, it represents a step forward in tackling climate change at global level. The Copenhagen Accord gives political visibility to the

strong political commitment, included by the Heads of State and Government, in addressing climate change. The outcome of Copenhagen represents both a pathway for the continuation of the negotiations and the commitment for immediate action to address urgent needs on both adaptation and mitigation accompanied by concrete financial commitments on climate change finance. Furthermore, Copenhagen demonstrated an unique mobilization from public and civil society with the expectation to find adequate responses at the global level.

Some of the positive elements of the Copenhagen outcome are:

- it represents a clear political commitment for tackling climate change and countries that associated with the Accord represent more than 80% of emissions;
- the recognition of the 2° C target on limiting climate change with review in relation with the next report of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and with the 1,5°C target;
- economy wide reduction targets for developed countries and mitigation actions for developing countries representing a global involvement in climate action;
- Fast start finance in the order of 30 billion US \$ for 2010-2012 for developing countries;
- Climate change finance in the order of 100 billion US \$ by 2020 and establishment of the Copenhagen Green Climate Fund and the High Level Panel on finance to develop proposals on the different sources for financing including alternative sources of financing;
- the continuation of the negotiations within the two tracks, namely the Kyoto track focusing on new commitments for developed countries and the Convention track addressing the building blocks of a global response on climate change including mitigation of emissions, adaptation to the effects of climate change, financing for climate change and technology.

Because of this overall positive assessment the European Union quickly decided to take a positive approach on the Copenhagen Accord and to build upon the Accord with a view to re-launching the negotiations. The European Union associated itself with the Copenhagen Accord and communicated its unilateral 20% reduction target that will be increased to 30% in case of a satisfactory global agreement. The end objective for the negotiations for the European Union clearly remains a comprehensive global binding agreement, but this does not necessarily be achieved at once. Also a stepwise approach is possible.

The implementation of the short term elements included in the Copenhagen accord is of key importance. Therefore the European Union confirmed its share of fast start financing which equals 2,4 billion Euro for each of the next 3 years.

The European Union also took the view that in the run up to Cancun and with the aim of rebuilding trust between partners there is an increased importance for outreach activities and the European Union should engage in its bridge building role.

The challenges in the run up to Cancun

The most important challenge for any future climate regime will be its ability to live up what is scientifically needed to limit climate change and to keep the 2°C objective within reach. At present the announced national commitments still fall short of this objective and therefore a collective effort in enhancing efforts will be needed.

Bridging the gap between announced action and what is needed on scientific level implies also designing a future climate regime that is environmentally sound and where realized targets are accounted for in a robust and transparent framework.

Furthermore, for the European Union it is clear that action from developing countries needs to be imbedded in a context where international support matches with the level of ambition and where capacity building and technology transfer are key components of the architecture.

Within low emission development strategies the ambitions and the needs can be identified. Also the EU and its Member States will prepare its low-emission development strategy.

The further development of carbon markets in a sustainable manner can drive low-carbon investments while contributing to sustainable development. While project based mechanisms need to be geographically distributed more equilibrated and participation of Least Developed Countries in the CDM strengthened, there will also be a need to step up market mechanisms to the sectoral level so as to address up-coming sectors within emerging economies.

Deforestation accounts for around 20 per cent of global emissions and therefore should be urgently tackled. With the REDD + (Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation) proposals it is the EU's aim to generate financial resources and to halt global forest cover loss by 2030 at the latest.

Climate change and its adverse impacts pose an additional burden on developing countries, especially on the least developed countries (LDCs), the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and the African countries at risk of drought, desertification and floods, and increase the costs of reaching the MDGs. While support to mitigation and adaptation in developing countries will require additional resource mobilization from a wide range of financial sources, ODA will continue to play a role, particularly for support to adaptation, including disaster risk reduction, in the most vulnerable and least developed countries.

The Council of the European Union and climate change

The main substantial responsibility in preparing for Cancun and ad-

ressing the European Union's implementation of climate change commitments will be in the hands of the Council of Environment Ministers. However, the issue will also be addressed by the European Council and also the Council on External Relations who will have to be involved on development issues.

Road Map Climate Change during Belgian EU Presidency

The environmental priorities of the Belgian Presidency will be:

- 1) Climate change
- 2) Biodiversity
- 3) Sustainable consumption and production – sustainable use of natural resources and materials
- 4) Better Instruments for environmental governance

Climate change is also one of the overarching strategic priorities of the Trio Presidency (Spain, Belgium and Hungary) and climate change is a key contribution in the EU's objective for a green economic growth. At the Council of Environment Ministers Conclusions will be adopted to update the European Union's position on the international climate negotiations. Also legislative proposals for the continued implementation of the EU climate and energy package will be on the agenda during the Belgian Presidency.

Events Calendar

6- 8 July 2010

EU workshop climate change (Spa)

12-13 July 2010

Informal Environment Council (Gent)

2-6 August 2010

UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol global climate change negotiations

September – October 2010 (to be confirmed)

UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol global climate change negotiations

14 October 2010

Environment Council

28-29 October 2010

European Council

29 November – 10 December 2010

16th Conference of the Parties Cancun

16 -17 December 2010

European Council

20 December 2010

- Environment Council

Summits EU – third countries during second semester

(Russia, US, Brasil, Africa, ASEM, Japan, China, India)