

Key Points

- Climate change has not gone away. Every delay in the process to achieve a fair, ambitious and binding global agreement increases the impacts of climate change on vulnerable people in developing countries.
- While Cancun may not deliver the final deal, it must produce a constructive outcome and a firm commitment to achieving a fair, ambitious and binding global agreement under the auspices of the UN, as soon as possible.
- Developed countries must step up ambition and accountability on their mitigation and finance commitments in line with science and justice.
- The EU should seize the opportunity in Cancun to recapture its place as a leader in global climate policy by accounting fully and transparently on its fast start financing commitments, supporting the establishment of a new global climate fund, and committing to a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol.
- Ireland must play its part by bringing in ambitious and effective domestic climate legislation without further delay, and ensuring that its contributions to climate finance will be in addition to and separate from our aid commitments.

From Copenhagen to Cancun: keeping on track for a fair, ambitious and binding agreement.

Overview

The political stakes were high in Copenhagen, but the stakes for vulnerable people in developing countries were much higher. Trócaire is supporting communities already suffering the impacts of increasingly unpredictable weather patterns. Erratic rainfall, droughts and floods of growing frequency and intensity are pushing families to the edge of their ability to cope. For these communities the urgency for action has not gone away, it increases with every delay to the process to achieve a fair, ambitious and binding agreement.

In the course of 2010 many vulnerable developing countries continued to call for a final agreement to be achieved at the upcoming UN climate ministerial in Cancun, Mexico (29th November-10th December). Other countries assumed a more cautious approach. Citing unfavourable political conditions, including the continuing economic downturn and setbacks in passing domestic climate legislation in the US, they are advocating that Cancun should instead provide a 'stepping stone', delivering a set of decisions that should form part of a final deal. As discussions ahead of Cancun narrow on the compromises needed to deliver these decisions, Trócaire is calling for all Parties to keep their eye on the prize. A fair, ambitious and legally binding global agreement is what science and justice demands. Commitment to achieving this outcome as soon as possible must be at the forefront of negotiations in Mexico.

What's on the table in Cancun?

Whilst Cancun is not expected to deliver a legally binding agreement, a positive outcome in Cancun is crucial to ensure progress is being made in the multilateral process. Political momentum has therefore been largely narrowed to achieving agreement on a number of areas where some progress is considered to have been made. Amongst these is the expectation that agreement could be reached on a process to set up a new global climate fund.

Developed countries are also pushing hard to have both mitigation pledges made under the Copenhagen Accord incorporated in decisions under the official UN process, as well as the compromise reached on the ability of developed countries to analyse the mitigation actions of developing countries. The assumption is that this offers a possible trade-off, providing progress in finance, an area of importance to developing countries, as well as in an area important to developed countries, the ability to ensure that large developing countries such as China, India, Brazil and South Africa are delivering on the emission reduction commitments they make.

Is this enough?

While agreement in these areas could provide progress in the negotiations, if this is to be meaningful they must be combined with an unequivocal commitment to the ultimate objective of achieving a legally binding outcome as soon as possible. Furthermore, agreement in these areas is not a foregone conclusion. The lack of progress on key issues continues to hamper substantive breakthroughs in the negotiations. These include the need to step up mitigation ambitions in developed countries, meaningful debate on the scale and sources of long-term financing for climate action in developing countries, and clarity on the legal form of the final outcome.

Key Issues – Integrity of Commitments

Mitigation

While developed countries have converged around the goal of limiting a further rise in the earth's surface temperature to 2°C (e.g. G8 Leaders Summit July 2009, the Copenhagen Accord December 2009), their emission reduction targets fall far short of what is necessary to achieve this.

Recap on Copenhagen

- The UN climate conference in Copenhagen of December 2009 was the deadline agreed by the international community to achieve a new global agreement that would strengthen international action on climate change.
- More than one hundred Heads of State attended and tens of thousands of people from across the world flocked to Copenhagen with high hopes and expectations.
- Despite this unprecedented political and popular mobilisation, the summit failed to seal the deal on a fair, ambitious and legally binding agreement.
- Governments committed to reconvene in Mexico one year later, and 'took note' of the Copenhagen Accord, a controversial political agreement criticised for its lack of ambition and integrity on climate action.

Current pledges invite a further warming of between 3-4°C, with devastating and irreversible consequences for vulnerable countries. Furthermore, 2010 has seen an increasing groundswell of support for a safer, more ambitious global goal of limiting further warming to 1.5°C. Spearheaded by more than 100 of the most vulnerable countries and civil society, these calls further highlight the inadequacy of developed country targets. **In Cancun developed countries must commit to increasing their existing targets and closing loopholes, to achieve emission reductions in line with the science and according to their historic responsibility.**

Financing Climate Action

In Copenhagen developed countries committed to providing developing countries with a 'fast start' package of US\$30bn between 2010-2012, of new and additional financial support for climate action. This is an important initiative intended to build trust with developing countries by supporting urgent actions and capacity building. Almost one year later, however, there is little evidence that the promised money is reaching developing countries and the people who need it most.

Developed countries are also doing their utmost to avoid disclosing where the money is coming from. This is primarily because the financing is largely not *new*, as promised, but rather aid money that has already been pledged, *re-packaged* as climate finance. Delays and lack of transparency have undermined the trust-building intentions of this initiative as well as the credibility of developed countries' commitments to providing long-term financing. Ensuring climate finance is separate from and additional to Overseas Development Assistance commitments is crucial if the international community is serious about achieving the Millennium Development Goals, as reaffirmed by governments in September this year. **In Cancun, developed countries must report fully and transparently on the sources and spending of fast-start finance, and agree to establish a common definition for what can count as 'new and additional'.** This can support best use of money by facilitating coordination, ensure that sufficient money is going to adaptation, and set credible standards for accounting on the fulfilment of long-term finance commitments.

Debates on finance within the official UN negotiations have focused almost exclusively in 2010 on pursuing agreement on the establishment of a new global climate fund. Progress in this debate is welcome as a global UN climate fund will represent a vital component of the future climate architecture. However, key to ensuring the legitimacy and credibility of the new fund will be decisions on its governance structures, the proportion of international climate finance that will be channelled through it, and the ability of those most in need to access the financing. **In Cancun, governments should agree on a process to establish a global climate fund to receive the vast majority of long-term finance.** The fund should have a governance structure that is under the authority of and accountable to the UN Conference of Parties, transparent, regionally balanced, and that enables direct access to funds for the most vulnerable.

Critical areas where negligible progress has been made in 2010 include the question of the scale of financing to be generated for climate action in developing countries, and how this finance will be sourced.

The level of finance that will be required to effectively tackle climate change in developing countries is complex to calculate as it is dependent on a range of factors, including the speed and depth of emission reductions in developed countries. Conservative estimates, however, indicate that needs, including for adaptation, mitigation, technology transfer and reducing deforestation, will be in the order of US\$195bn in public financing by 2020¹.

The UN Secretary General's High Level Advisory Group on Climate Finance issued an analysis in November of options for scaling up climate finance, using the US\$100bn figure agreed by developed countries in the Copenhagen Accord as a benchmark. A welcome conclusion in the report was that raising US\$100bn by 2020 is achievable, and that significant resources can be found from public sources. The report, overemphasises, however, the role to be played by private finance in climate action. While private sector finance will have a role to play (for example in mitigation action) historical evidence shows that private finance and the carbon market will not deliver for people living in poverty in developing countries. Public money and government regulation are necessary to ensure money goes to those who need most support in adapting to the impacts of climate change, and in developing sustainable livelihoods. **Cancun must see renewed and constructive debate on the scale and sources of long-term finance. Emphasis must be placed on agreeing a work-plan to establish sources of public financing that can be scaled up according to future needs.**

Legal Form

Continued attempts in 2010 by some Parties, including the US, to style a global outcome on the model of the Copenhagen Accord are extremely worrying. In stark contrast to the existing model of the Kyoto Protocol, which sets a global mitigation target under which developed countries adopted binding domestic targets, the Copenhagen Accord is based on a voluntary approach in which countries adopt their preferred targets, meaning no collective target to ensure a level of ambition in line with science, and no legal framework to ensure compliance. Pledges made by developed country governments under the Accord fall far below the levels required to meet even the Accord's own 2°C goal. This clearly shows that this approach is fundamentally flawed and should be rejected as a model for global climate action. **In Cancun, Parties must reject any attempt to introduce a Copenhagen Accord approach into the UNFCCC. Parties to the Kyoto Protocol should state their commitment to a second commitment period of the Protocol.** This would be a clear signal that developed countries are ready to fulfil their historical responsibilities as set out in the founding Convention (the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change). It will also help avoid a gap between the end of the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol in 2012 and the entry into force of a post-2012 agreement.

The human face of climate change

Nelly Chimala is 53 years old. She lives with her husband and children in Chimdikiti, Malawi. Nelly considers herself lucky – she thinks she is neither poor nor rich but is in the middle. Her house is made of bricks, with a straw roof.

She works hard farming and has been able to send her children to school with the income she earns from selling crops. However, farming is harder for Nelly and her family now than it used to be. Rains were not a problem before but now she feels there is a big difference in the rainfall. In the past she was able to fill 3 granaries of maize from her harvest but now she is only able to fill one, and this usually does not last her until the next harvest.

To try to deal with the lack of moisture in the soil she does not weed or clear the land after harvesting, and instead incorporates the leftover stalks and weeds into the soil so that the ground does not dry out with the heat. This process is not easy to do, it requires a lot of labour but she relies only on the family to help her with this.

Unfortunately the family get sick more often now which means Nelly has less time and less help to work in the fields, limiting the family's chances of having a good harvest.

Case study from Trócaire (IDS) Climate Change Household Research, Malawi 2010.

See, 'Societies in Transition', a briefing Paper on Trócaire (IDS) two-year research project on the impact of climate change on families in the developing world. November 2010. <http://www.trocaire.org>.

¹ Fair, Ambitious and Binding: Essentials for a successful climate deal. Climate Action Network International (2009) http://www.climateactionnetwork.org/sites/default/files/CAN_FAB_Essentials_1.pdf

Essential components of a fair, effective deal include:

Mitigation: Preventing dangerous climate change

- Global agreement on a long-term goal of reducing greenhouse gas concentrations to 350ppm (parts per million), and to review emission reduction targets as necessary to achieve this goal.
- Developed countries agree emission reductions of at least 40% below 1990 levels by 2020. To be achieved using domestic reductions, limiting the use of offsetting.
- Developing countries limit their emission growth, supported by finance, technology transfer and capacity building.

Adaptation and Finance: Protecting vulnerable people from the impacts of climate change

- Ensuring the provision of sufficient public financing for climate action in developing countries, to enable vulnerable people to adapt to the impacts of climate change, to support mitigation actions, technology transfer and reduce deforestation. Figures for public finance should be reviewed in light of evidence of progress in mitigation and of the impacts of climate change.
- Ensuring climate financing is in addition to Overseas Development Assistance commitments. Payments for offsets must not contribute towards this minimum public financing.
- Ensure sufficient public finance is channelled to adaptation, and is targeted at the most vulnerable people.
- Adaptation financing should be provided in the form of grants, and should include provision for an international climate insurance pool.

Legally binding and enforceable:

- Until the international community agrees to a system that provides for better environmental outcomes, equity, a stronger compliance mechanism, and has widespread support, the Kyoto Protocol should continue with a second commitment period.
- In addition to the Kyoto Protocol, a complementary agreement should provide emission reduction commitments by the US comparable to other developed countries, incorporate financial commitments, and cover developing country action.

Individual and Collective Responsibility for a Common Future

Climate change did not disappear with the closing of the Copenhagen conference. As countries North and South struggle with the fallout of an economic downturn, people are legitimately demanding that the crisis be dealt with urgently and that social justice steer the choice of measures and their implementation. Climate change is a slow onset global crisis that will have irrevocable consequences if not dealt with effectively and efficiently. With responsibility lying primarily in the developed countries of the North and the impacts being felt primarily in the South, climate change presents one of the defining global justice issues of our time. Early and effective action has been proven to be the most effective and cost-efficient approach, and is the only ethical option.

A fair, ambitious and binding global agreement is necessary to provide a clear level of overall ambition and a legal framework for action to guide domestic targets. Ensuring agreement is achieved in the UN is crucial in order to ensure that the most vulnerable countries have a say in decisions that will affect them the most, and so ensure that they are adequately supported to cope with climate change rather than left simply bear the brunt of it. **Commitment to achieving a fair, ambitious and binding outcome within the UN as soon as possible must be at the forefront of negotiations in Cancun.**

All countries have a role to play and responsibilities to meet. **The EU should seize the opportunity in Cancun to recapture its tradition of leadership in international climate negotiations.** It can do so by accounting fully and transparently on its fast start financing; supporting agreement on the establishment of a new global climate fund that is accountable to the UN, with equitable governance structures and effective access for vulnerable communities; and by affirming its intention to sign up to a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol.

As a country with disproportionately high emissions for its population size, Ireland has a responsibility to ensure these emissions are reduced, and to contribute its share of support to developing countries to cope with the effects emissions have caused.

Ireland should bring in ambitious and effective climate change legislation without further delay. This should enshrine a 40% emission reduction target by 2020 based on 1990 levels, and commit to achieving this through domestic action. Furthermore, Ireland should officially commit to ensuring the sources of its **contributions to climate finance are entirely separate and additional** to our target to provide 0.7% of national income in Overseas Development Assistance.

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