

### Box 1. Key points

The future of global action on climate change is on the table at the UN climate negotiations (COP 17) in Durban, South Africa, 28<sup>th</sup> November-10<sup>th</sup> December. As the talks begin, Trócaire calls on national and global political leaders not to leave our common future to chance, and to place the most vulnerable people at the centre of concern.

The conference takes place in one of the world's most vulnerable continents to climate change, where climate change is already impacting on the lives of poor communities, and threatens to push millions more people into food and water insecurity. The African COP underscores the moral case for urgent progress in curbing global emissions and scaling up support for those who need it most.

In Durban:

- Efforts to undermine binding global action on climate change, and to remove recognition of the differentiated responsibilities of industrialised and developing countries, must be rejected with clarity and conviction.
- Commitments and action must be based on what is scientifically and morally necessary, not what is considered economically and politically feasible.
- The EU must state firm and unequivocal support for legally binding and equitable global action, including the continuation of the Kyoto Protocol.
- The greatest contribution the Irish Government can make to climate action efforts at both the national and international levels is to enact robust national climate legislation.
- Fulfilment of the commitment to establish the Green Climate Fund should be a concrete deliverable. The Fund must be adequately and predictably resourced and deliver effectively for the most vulnerable people.
- Any agreement on agriculture must deliver for the food insecure in vulnerable countries and enshrine the progressive realisation of the right to food as its primary objective.

# Too Important to Leave to Chance - Global Climate Action and the Durban Conference

## What happened in Cancun and what's at stake in Durban?

The Cancun climate conference of 2010 was considered a success relative to the political failure of Copenhagen the year before. Cancun secured the continuation of the UN process, but progress on the substance of the negotiations was limited. Critical questions were left unresolved, including whether Parties to the Kyoto Protocol would ensure its continuation as the cornerstone of international action on climate change, as well as the nature of commitments to be taken on by international community as a whole.

Furthermore, while governments recognised the inadequacy of existing emission reduction pledges, and reaffirmed their commitment to generate billions in new and additional resources for climate action in developing countries, no concrete commitments were made to progress these areas.

## The future form of climate action

*'Without a legally binding international agreement, there is no obligation to act'*  
Mary Robinson, 2011<sup>1</sup>

In Cancun governments were able to kick the proverbial can down the road. The road now ends in Durban. With the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol set to expire at the end of 2012, a clear signal from governments on the form of future action on climate change is needed.

The Kyoto Protocol is the only binding international framework governing greenhouse gas emissions. Its entry into force in 2005 was a diplomatic triumph for the EU and provided the basis for flagship EU climate policies, including the European Emissions Trading System. The Protocol contains an article obliging its Parties to adopt second round of emission reduction commitments under it, but a number of them, including Japan, Canada and Russia, have stated their intention to renege on this commitment. Critics of the Kyoto Protocol argue that it is inadequate because it does not incorporate emission reductions for many of the major emitting countries (the US, China, India and others). This argument provides a convenient cover for those who wish to deconstruct the current system of binding international commitments with its common accounting rules and compliance mechanisms.

Whilst it is correct that the continuation of the Kyoto Protocol on its own will be insufficient to curb climate change, failure to secure the continuation of the Kyoto Protocol in Durban would result in *no* binding emission reduction commitments at the global level from 2013, with no guarantee that a more effective global framework for action will be secured in the near future.

The EU and a number of like-minded countries claim to recognise both the symbolic and de facto importance of the continuation of the Kyoto Protocol, but have thus far failed to commit to a second commitment period. They await a signal from countries such as China and India, Brazil and South Africa that they will agree to negotiate parallel legally binding commitments.

These countries meanwhile await clarity from Kyoto Parties on their intentions to continue their legally binding obligations under the Protocol given their historical responsibility for global emissions, greater capacity, and failure thus far to deliver on existing commitments. This has led to a 'catch 22' scenario in which everyone is waiting on everyone else to move.

The US government has no intention of signing up to Kyoto, and has stated clearly that it will not agree to any legally binding obligations unless China and other emerging economies do so at the same time, a position that many climate conservative governments are happy to hide behind. They seek to replace binding international action with a voluntary framework in which all governments would make commitments based on what they consider economically and politically feasible, rather than on what is scientifically and morally necessary. Efforts to undermine binding global action, and to remove recognition of the differentiated responsibilities of developed and developing countries must be rejected with clarity and conviction in Durban.

*'A voluntary framework will not be enough to keep us within the limit (...) of manageable climate change (...). In a boardroom a voluntary pledge from a government sounds rather like a 'maybe'. That's why we in the UK have set legally binding carbon budgets through the Climate Change Act.'*

John Ashton, UK Foreign Office Special Representative for Climate Change, 2011<sup>ii</sup>.

- ***In Durban the EU must set the terms of a resolution to the debate through stalwart support for legally binding and equitable global action, and the continuation of the Kyoto Protocol.***
- ***Ireland must be a progressive voice within the EU, cutting through internal EU politics to emphasise the need for certainty (binding action) and protection of the right to development (an equitable approach to sharing the global effort).***

The greatest contribution the Irish Government can make to climate action efforts at both the national and international levels is to enact robust national climate legislation.

- ***In Durban the Irish Government should announce a timetable for the publication and passing of national climate legislation, as committed to in the 2011 Programme for Government.***

## Closing gaps and loopholes

In Cancun governments agreed to hold the increase in global average temperature to below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, but current emission reduction pledges and loopholes in the methodologies for accounting of efforts mean this target is certain to be missed and that temperatures could rise by a 4°C or more. Even if the continuation of the Kyoto Protocol and a binding future for climate action is secured, without a significant increase in current emission reduction commitments and the closure of accounting loopholes, the integrity and effectiveness of the system will be severely undermined.

- ***In Durban the EU should signal firm intention to increase its emission reduction commitment to 30% reductions based on 1990 levels by 2020.*** This should be a stepping stone to the more than 40% reductions by 2020 required by the EU and other industrialised countries to stand a reasonable chance of achieving the 2°C objective they have agreed, and to leave the door open to the more ambitious action needed to avoid the worst impacts.
- ***In Durban the EU must promote accounting rules that increase accountability and ambition.*** Current proposals must be vetted to ensure delivery of emission reductions in reality and not only on paper, prevention of a shifting of responsibility from developed to developing countries, and of double counting of emission reductions and finance flows.

## White elephant, or pillar of a just transition?

One of the most concrete achievements of the Cancun climate conference in 2010 was agreement to establish a new 'Green Climate Fund' under the UN. Agreement on the fund was welcomed by civil society and many developing countries as a signal that global climate finance flows would increase. It was also hoped that this would ensure that the UN would be a (if not *the*) primary channel for public climate finance, rationalising the existing spaghetti bowl of funds and flows in order to make accessing finance easier.

A Transitional Committee, made up of representatives of developed and developing country governments met throughout 2011 to negotiate governance arrangements and modalities for the fund, and proposals for next steps will be on the table in Durban.

Progressing the commitment to establish the Green Climate Fund should be a concrete deliverable in Durban and could unlock progress in other areas. A number of key principles should be incorporated in decisions to operationalise the Fund in order to ensure it will deliver effectively for the most vulnerable people.

This includes;

- Ensuring the GCF guarantees meaningful participation of a diversity of civil society and community-based organisations at Board level, in national decision-making and at all stages from proposal development to monitoring and evaluation.
- Ensuring that GCF policies, guidelines and mechanisms enshrine the application of international social, environmental and human rights safeguards, and provide for recourse mechanisms at national and international levels.
- Ensuring that socio-economic and gender expertise are represented and taken into account throughout GCF structures, access mechanisms and programme/project management levels.
- Ensuring that 50% of GCF finance is dedicated to adaptation, provided through grants only.
- Ensuring direct access as a primary modality for GCF finance
- Ensuring that decision-making in the GCF is fully independent of any international financial institution and is accountable to the decision-making authority of the UN Climate Convention, the Conference of Parties (COP).
  - ***In Durban the EU should support agreement on a timetable for the setting up of the Green Climate Fund (GCF), ensuring governance arrangements and modalities that increase access, promote country ownership and pro-poor investment.***

A Fund without funds would bring no gains in adaptation and mitigation efforts in developing countries, undo any trust leveraged by agreement to establish the fund, and represent a time and resource-consuming white elephant. While developed country governments reaffirmed in Cancun their commitment to provide \$30bn between 2010-2012 and \$100bn by 2020 in new and additional resources to support climate action in developing countries, no indication has been given of what public finance would be available from 2013 onwards, and how the promised \$100bn by 2020 is to be generated. While much research has been done on innovative sources of finance in recent years by governmental and non-governmental organisations alike, political agreement on a roadmap for scaling up public finance for climate action is missing.

## Box 2. We're in this together, we must stand with the most vulnerable

*'There have been droughts here before but never like this one. Normally if it is bad here we can go somewhere else, but now it is bad all over. There is nowhere to go.'*

Andrew Lodie, Lokitaung, Northern Kenya, July 2011.

In the last twelve months people across Ireland have experienced the severe impacts of extreme and unpredictable weather. In the Horn and East of Africa, the last twelve months saw the culmination of the worst drought in 60 years, exacerbating chronic hunger across the region and resulting in famine in the most vulnerable areas. We are all vulnerable to climate change. Poor people in developing countries are both particularly vulnerable and least responsible. It is the consequences for these people on which we must judge the adequacy of our actions.

In 2009 the Irish Government committed to contributing €100mn as part of the EU's commitment to 2010-2012 climate finance. The first instalment of this commitment was announced at the Cancun conference in December 2010, €23mn of which was new and additional to Ireland's ODA budget. The fact that new and additional funds were committed was important and signalled a recognition by the government that climate change presents additional challenges to tackling poverty and thus requires additional resources. Ireland's 2010 instalment was also dedicated to adaptation, of critical importance given the significant under-funding of adaptation and urgent needs on the ground.

- ***In Durban the EU should champion agreement on a Work Programme on scaling up climate finance between 2013-2020, including budgetary contributions and innovative mechanisms, and ensuring no gap in funding after 2012.***
- ***In Durban the Irish Government should announce its 2011 instalment of new and additional climate finance.*** Channelling this through the UN Adaptation Fund would send an important signal of support for adaptation and for UN governed funds. This should be complemented by commitment to a national planning process to scale up secure sources of public climate finance, alongside Ireland's commitment to allocate 0.7% GNI to ODA by 2015.

- *In Durban the Irish Government should be a progressive voice on operationalising an effective and pro-poor Green Climate Fund, and on securing adequate public finance for climate action in developing countries from 2013 onwards.*

## Joining the dots on climate action, food security and poverty reduction

Agriculture is a key sector in both the causes and the consequences of climate change. While it contributes between 14-30% of global emissions, it is also particularly vulnerable to the impacts, especially in developing countries where small-scale rainfed agriculture feeds and employs the majority of the population. The progressive realisation of the Right to Food, meaning a focus on the most vulnerable people, must be the starting point for the development of policy on agriculture and climate change.

If policies and actions are appropriately constructed they can contribute to increases in resilience, production and food security, simultaneously reducing emissions and poverty levels. If policies and actions are founded with the wrong objectives and incentives, they could lead to increases in greenhouse gas emissions, increased vulnerability and even threats to human rights. The case of international biofuels policies is evidence of this very real risk.

While agriculture cuts across debates on landuse, mitigation and adaptation within the UN climate negotiations, the main emphasis within the negotiations has thus far been on mitigation. Agreement on a dedicated Work Programme to bring together the various negotiation streams dealing with agriculture is on the table in the negotiations. This presents an important opportunity to be grasped, as well as risks to be avoided. To ensure the African COP delivers for small-scale agriculture in Africa, a number of principles must be enshrined in any decision on a Work Programme. These include;

- The progressive realisation of the Right to Food, meaning a focus on the most vulnerable people, must be the starting point for the development of policy on agriculture and climate change.
- For developing country agriculture the priority should be adaptation. Mechanisms that shift responsibility for mitigation in agriculture to small scale farmers in developing countries should be precluded.
- Ensure coherence with policy orientations from those UN bodies with mandates on agriculture, food security and the Right to Food, in particular the UN Committee on Food Security.

- *In Durban Ireland should champion a holistic approach to agriculture in the EU and ensure the progressive realisation of the right to food is at the heart of an agreement on agriculture.*

## Too important to leave to chance, too urgent to delay

Electoral cycles, economic challenges and related political conditions have led some to suggest that agreement and entry into force of enhanced global action on climate change is likely only by 2020.

Such sentiments ignore both the implications of such delay, and make a risky assumption that changes in political and economic conditions will make progress easier.

Within the last weeks the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has issued updated projections of increasing temperatures, more intense rainfall and storms in the future. In May 2011 the International Energy Agency (IEA) reported that global emissions had risen to a record level in 2010, despite the worst recession in 80 years. The Head of the IEA warned recently that unless a global framework is in place by 2017, the international community stands no chance of meeting the targets it has set to avoid the worst impacts.

*'In light of the even more compelling facts, the question has to be put to those governments in favour of postponing decisions: for how long can you defend your in-action?'*

Connie Hedegaard, EU Commissioner for Climate Action, 2011<sup>iii</sup>.

*'If we could see through the fog of current events, we might discern a fork ahead. One path points towards chronic insecurity and conflict; the other offers a prospect of co-operation and mutual prosperity. The choice between these two paths that will be foreshadowed at Durban'<sup>iv</sup>.*

John Ashton, UK Foreign Office Special Representative for Climate Change, 2011<sup>v</sup>.

### Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> Robinson M. (2011) 'Protecting the Most Vulnerable: securing a legally binding climate agreement'. Lecture at London School of Economics. 10 March.

<sup>ii</sup> Ashton J. (2011). 'Climate Change; there is no plan B'. The Guardian, 14 November.

<sup>iii</sup> Hedegaard C (2011). 'IPCC Report on Extreme Weather' Reuters, 18 November.

<sup>iv</sup> Ashton J. (2011). 'Climate Change; there is no plan B'. The Guardian, 14 November

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