



Demanding Climate Justice at COP-15 Copenhagen

Autumn 2009

The importance of Copenhagen

This December the Danish capital of Copenhagen will host crucial international talks on climate change. These talks are the latest in a series of attempts to reach a global agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The global summit in Copenhagen will decide the fate of the Kyoto Protocol, the only international legislation we have ever had to combat the dangers of climate change.

The Danish capital city is the last stop on the rollercoaster ride of hope and despair since the protocol was signed. Partial attempts to move negotiations forward limped from failure to failure in recent years: the world's two largest emitters - the US and China - cannot agree on limits, and the outlook looks bleak.

However, the failures so far are meaningless because nothing happens at United Nations meetings until the 11th hour, when nations are forced to reach a decision. Every nation has an incentive to procrastinate, because no nation wants to reduce carbon emissions on its own. Global warming is a truly global problem and we need every nation to participate or else there is no solution.

Background to the talks

In 1992 at the Rio Earth Summit more than 100 world leaders agreed to take action on climate change, and signed up to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The UNFCCC was set up to look at how to reduce global warming to prevent dangerous climate change and support poorer countries to develop cleanly and cope with climate impacts.

This resulted in the creation of the Kyoto Protocol – the first legally enforceable international treaty designed to reduce emissions – in 1997. One hundred and forty one countries signed the treaty, which came into force in 2005 and required rich countries (known as 'Annex I' countries) to take action to tackle climate change.

The Kyoto Protocol expires in 2012, which is why a new deal is urgently needed. A fair and credible agreement at Copenhagen that goes much further than the Kyoto Protocol is crucial if we are to take serious action to avoid dangerous climate change.

The negotiations at COP-15

The meeting that is taking place in Copenhagen is known as 'COP-15' or, the 15th Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC. International summits like this Copenhagen meeting are rather unusual events. Thousands of official participants attend, including UN bodies such as the World Bank, national governments such as the UK, non-governmental groups like Friends of the Earth, business organisations, scientific bodies, and of course the media. Even more unofficial participants will go to Copenhagen to make their interests heard.

These summits are political meetings. Governments are ultimately there to find agreement on solutions to global challenges; yet at the same time trying to protect their own national interests. Business groups and campaigners go there to try to ensure that whatever is agreed reflects their aims too. The media plays a vital role in keeping the public informed as to what is going on.

Nations often negotiate in blocs, by agreeing a common position with other countries, and nominating individuals to negotiate at the summit on this shared position. For example:

- the UK negotiates as part of the European Union
- one hundred and thirty of the countries poorest countries, including China and India, negotiate as part of a bloc called the G-77 (this bloc also includes the alliance of small island states);
- a new bloc came into existence after the creation of the Kyoto Protocol known as the 'Umbrella Group', consisting of Australia, Canada, Iceland, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the USA;
- more recently Mexico, the Republic of Korea and Switzerland formed a coalition called the Environmental Integrity Group.

Essentials for international agreement

According to Yvo de Boer, executive secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), there are four essentials for an international agreement in Copenhagen. They are:

1. How much are the industrialized countries willing to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases?
2. How much are major developing countries such as China and India willing to do to limit the growth of their emissions?
3. How is the help needed by developing countries to engage in reducing their emissions and adapting to the impacts of climate change going to be financed?
4. How is that money going to be managed?

Demanding Climate Justice at Copenhagen

FoES believes that these questions need to be answered in a way that recognises that rich countries have done the most damage to our climate and they should take action first.

As part of Friends of the Earth International, we are taking part in a campaign to *Demand Climate Justice* at Copenhagen

We demand that:

- **Wealthy industrialised countries (listed in 'Annex I') commit to at least 40% cuts in domestic emissions by 2020**, by using green energy, sustainable transport and farming and cutting energy demand.
- Annex I countries **must not allow cuts to be achieved by buying carbon credits from developing countries or by buying forests in developing countries to 'offset' ongoing emissions in the industrialised world.**
- The additional money provided must be for **developing countries to grow, in a clean way, and in a manner which enables those countries to cope with the floods, droughts and famines caused by climate change** while ensuring that this money is distributed fairly and transparently.

Influencing COP-15

Friends of the Earth's job is to press governments to agree to do the right thing, to ensure strong and favourable media coverage so that the public back our position, and to keep an eye on those who are trying to stop anything happening, and where necessary challenging them in public.

Friends of the Earth International has observer status and therefore representatives will attend to try and ensure that our demands are met. Written submissions have already been made to the UNFCCC explaining why it is so important that that our demands are met.

Key to being effective at such meetings is good intelligence, followed by good co-ordination. If we can orchestrate a team of campaigners to say the right thing at the right time to media, government, and the other participants, then it is possible to influence world events.

But as much as what happens in Copenhagen is important, the lead up and activities at home are just as vital. Governments take decisive action only when persuaded that the electorate is behind them. The change in US policy on climate change is as much the result of concerted campaigning and individual or state level action as it is about a change of resident at the White House.

Equally, here in Scotland, our MSPs were persuaded of the need to commit to strong 2020 targets because the noise from their constituents became too loud to ignore.

That voice has to shout louder and longer than ever before in the lead up to Copenhagen and beyond. Because whilst the deal is vital to setting the future direction of international governments policies, it is the subsequent action taken to deliver on the deal that will really make a difference.

Scotland has led the way by setting the scientifically rigorous target of 42% reduction in emissions by 2020, and we must bring the rest of the world with us. Equally, the Scottish Government must be persuaded of the necessity of maintaining the 42% target. They have the option to lower the target if agreement is not reached in Copenhagen. We must ensure they feel unable to go back on their rightly ambitious commitment.

That action must reduce emissions fast, and assist the developing world to achieve a low carbon future. Sustained and sustainable action is the only way forward.

On Saturday 12 December 2009 the Friends of the Earth 'Flood for Climate Justice' will take place in Copenhagen. In the middle of the two weeks of negotiations, we will 'flood' through the streets of Copenhagen with our demands for climate justice.

We are encouraging as many people as possible to come to Copenhagen, using the most environmentally friendly transport they can, to be part of a movement for climate justice. For information on how to travel to Copenhagen by sustainable modes click here.

If you share our vision please come and join the spectacle on 12 December, when we will use our bodies and our voices to create a message that decision-makers and lobbyists cannot ignore: the flood is coming!

For more information visit www.scotlanddemandsclimatejustice.org.uk