

Copenhagen is our chance for a global climate deal



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One historic turning point - many future challenges

It is not possible to underplay the significance of the Copenhagen climate conference in December. As acknowledged recently by the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel: *'In the years to come it will be decided which future our planet awaits, and what will await those who live on this planet. Failure at the UN climate summit in Copenhagen would set back international climate policy by years'*. Much has changed since the current treaty on global warming, the Kyoto Protocol, was ratified in 1997. The most difficult revelation is that climate change is harming the poorest first and worst - those that contribute virtually nothing to global warming but are the least able to deal with its repercussions.

These people have no choice about their future - they will have to adapt just to avoid falling victim to climate related disasters. It is with this injustice in mind that the rich nations should proceed in Copenhagen. Now is not the time for political bartering, but fulfilling moral obligations; if the most vulnerable people are to survive the impacts caused by industrialised countries, emissions of greenhouse gases will have to peak and decline sharply within seven years and continuously fall after 2020. But, because of the level of GHGs already in the atmosphere, strong mitigation action will not be enough. Adaption support is essential to help those already suffering survive.

Adapting to climate change: A necessity for millions

From the floodplains of Bangladesh, to the arid deserts in Sudan, many people are feeling the effects of global warming.

Glacial melt in the Himalayas increases flooding and riverbank erosion for downstream villages in Nepal; persistent droughts in Kenya force Maasai herdsman to search further for scarce water for their livestock, losing many animals to dehydration on the way.

Projects that increase people's ability to adapt to changes in their natural environment are ongoing with communities in many areas, yet greater support is essential if help is to reach all the places currently at risk.



How much developed countries will provide to safeguard the poorest people in developing countries is one of the key issues to be resolved at the negotiations in Copenhagen.

The decisions made there will determine the ability of millions of people to adapt to their changed realities.

Why climate change hits the poorest first and worst

In 2007, the series of reports from the Nobel Peace Prize winning Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded that the impacts of climate change are already being felt and fall most heavily on those in some of the poorest countries. There are three main reasons for this:

1. Lack of assets

People living in poverty are vulnerable to climate change because they have few assets to help them avoid or recover from a shock event. It is very difficult for people to pursue alternative livelihoods if they have no capital to cover the costs and poor access to new knowledge or opportunities for learning new skills. Being marginalised, they are further hindered by a lack of influence over the institutions that control their access to resources.

Whilst communities in these situations are exposed to sudden weather-related disaster events, when one happens, they are often unable to replace or repair damaged property, and subsequently less prepared and more vulnerable to future threats.



2. Relying on natural resources

People in rural communities generate most of their income from farming, fishing, or livestock rearing and rely on the natural resources available to them. Any changes in rainfall levels, soil fertility, temperature, plant coverage or water-levels can have devastating consequences for their livelihoods.



3. Vulnerable areas

Throughout the developed world it is usually the poorest that are forced to live in the most dangerous and marginalised areas. These are places where no one else will live because they are too risky.

In Bangladesh, population size and competition for land push poor people into areas, such as the char lands, that are regularly flooded or receding through riverbank erosion.

The capacity to adapt

Despite these vulnerabilities, people have developed ways to live in severe circumstances. They have the traditional knowledge and techniques to survive in harsh conditions.

But, as climate change intensifies the challenges beyond their experience, coordinated adaptation support is needed to protect people's livelihoods and their right to development.

Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change have committed to providing a system of adaptation support for countries that are now affected by climate change.

How Copenhagen can help those already suffering

The climate conference in Copenhagen needs to address the causes and effects of global warming. Agreements must be made on these essential elements to limit the problems caused by climate change and make adaptation a realistic option for those in the developing world.

Mitigation

The challenge is to reduce the levels of green house gases (GHG) emitted into the atmosphere. Binding mitigation targets must be agreed that compel industrialised countries to take short and long term actions to reduce their emissions. Countries must bring precise figures to Copenhagen.

The IPCC suggests cuts of 25-40% below 1990 levels by 2020 and 50-80% by 2050, yet recent science from the UK's Hadley Centre indicates that reductions of at least 40% are needed by 2020.

Rapidly industrialising countries need to agree to deviate from business-as-usual emission projections, and industrialised nations must commit to supplying the finance and transfer of technology to enable low-carbon development paths in these countries.

A decision on how best to protect the rainforests and ecosystems that store and remove carbon from the atmosphere will also be required.

If these actions are agreed to the extent that the latest science predicts is needed, increases in global temperatures should be kept below 2°C and the worst climate change impacts averted.

However, even if these targets are agreed and rising emissions curbed, the level of GHGs already in the atmosphere mean that the world is locked into significant climate change impacts for the next 20 year period.

Adaptation

To deal with the unavoidable consequences of global warming, adaptation is an essential component of a Copenhagen deal. Parties should agree action, including committing finance, that can start immediately, as well as finance and institutions for long term support:

Near term start:

- *Implementing existing adaptation plans*
Many developing country parties have submitted their National Adaptation Programmes for Actions (NAPAs) to the UNFCCC. International support should enable operation of the NAPAs to proceed before 2012

- *Finance*

A mechanism to generate adequate, predictable, and sustainable finance for adaptation. Funding for adaptation should reach at least \$100 billion annually by 2020, supplied by developed countries in the form of grants and additional to existing pledges towards their Official Development Assistance (ODA) targets

Longer term support

- *Capacity building*

Effective capacity building and support for countries in implementing and preparing national adaptation programmes and strategies, including, for example, through the creation or enhancement of regional centres of excellence

- *Insurance*

An insurance mechanism financed by developed countries to help countries recover from climate change related disasters.

CAN Europe's asks for the EU in Copenhagen

An EU Emissions Reduction Target of more than 40% Below 1990 Levels by 2020

The current EU emissions reduction target is inadequate. The latest science suggests that a more ambitious requirement of reducing greenhouse gases by more than 40% below 1990 levels by 2020 is required to have a high probability of limiting warming well below 2°C.

EU's Contribution of at Least 35 Billion € per year in New Public Financing by 2020

The total amount of public climate change financing, technology and other support to developing countries that is needed is estimated to be well in excess of 110 billion euro per year by 2020. Europe's fair share of this total is at least 35 billion euro per year in new and additional public financing by 2020. This figure is based on Europe's quantified share of historic emissions and financial capacity.

A Legally-Binding Agreement with a Robust Compliance Regime

The legally-binding Copenhagen agreement must provide for a robust compliance regime with codified international accounting rules. International verification of emissions data and developing country mitigation actions will also be necessary to build trust amongst the Parties and to ensure the transparency and environmental integrity of the system.

Eliminating Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation

The Copenhagen agreement must protect existing forests, and specify that the vast majority of emissions from deforestation and forest degradation will be eliminated by 2020. Above all, any effort to reduce such forest-related emissions must protect biodiversity and fully respect the rights of local and indigenous peoples.

CAN-Europe is a Brussels based environmental NGO focused on climate change. Established in 1989, CANEurope acts as a coordination office for environmental groups working on climate change issues. At present, CANEurope counts over 120 member organisations throughout the EU 25 plus Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey. CAN-Europe has built significant expertise in climate policy and has become a respected stakeholder amongst relevant actors working on environment and climate change in Brussels and across the EU. On an international level, CAN-Europe is, and always has been, present at the international negotiations and has a strong coordinating role at these forums.

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Germanwatch is a north-south initiative and has been one of the leading German NGOs in the German climate debate for 15 years. Present at all UNFCCC negotiations in Bonn it has a long established relationship with the UNFCCC secretariat (Bonn). It also has contact with more than 200 schools where Germanwatch has given presentations on climate change during the last two years. The Germanwatch website is one of the most visited climate web pages in Germany. They they hold an email-database of more than 3000 decision makers and multipliers.

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Practical Action is a development NGO that has been working in the developing world for forty years directly with those communities which are now feeling the impacts of climate change. Practical Action therefore has a unique breadth of knowledge and experience to draw upon throughout this project. Alongside this Practical Action has a supporter base in excess of 40,000 as well as extensive knowledge in the field of advocacy, having worked on a number of issues to secure policy change within the EU, and education, where they have worked with both teachers and students in the UK for over 20 years. Practical Action is also a member of the Stop Climate Chaos coalition.

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