



EQUITY AND ITS LINKS TO AMBITION IN THE CLIMATE NEGOTIATIONS

Side Event

UN Climate Change Conference (COP18/CMP18)

Doha, 1 December 2012

The South Centre hosted a side event during the UN Climate Change Conference in Doha entitled “Equity and its Links to Ambition in the Climate Negotiations” on 1 December 2012. The theme of the side event was to discuss and highlight equity and development as the gateway for climate ambition.

Mariama Williams of the South Centre opened the event as the moderator of the panel with what many have termed a deregulation of the UNFCCC’s rule-based system. She said that there is a shift that has been happening for at least many years now which is the weakening of the collective ability of developed and developing countries to address climate change. Developed countries are trying to escape from their commitments in the Climate Convention to mitigate, provide finance and technology transfer.

Williams mentioned that we have just come out of a crisis that was the result in fact of many years of deregulation of the economic and financial system and we know the ultimate, rampant effect it had, and therefore we ought to be worried about the same happening to the climate regime.

At the same time of this impetus towards deregulation of developed countries’ commitments, there is an attempt to upgrade the mitigation obligations of developing countries.

Williams said that at stake in these negotiations are very fundamental questions: Is there a role for principles such as equity, common but differentiated responsibility (CBDR) in this context? What do we say about the mitigation gap, development gap, adaptation gap, finance gap and how do these link to ambition and the negotiations? Are we in a stage in our evolution that we can jettison principles especially equity because there is a planetary crisis? When do we begin to unravel human rights, indigenous and women rights also on these grounds? These are just some of the questions the other experts in the panel were going to address.

Matthew Stilwell of the Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development (IGSD) addressed how to share an ambitious global goal effort for reducing emissions fairly. He mentioned that the global goal sets the level of global effort. For a more ambitious goal, who does the work in terms of mitigation? Who provides the finance and technology? How are countries supported to adapt?

In terms of mitigation, he brought up an example used by a former developing country

negotiator. If you are building a dam to hold back a flood, a first question is how high is the dam? A second question is who brings the rocks to build the dam? The approach Annex I countries are proposing is bring as many rocks as you like, but there will be no guarantee then that the dam will be built to a level that will hold back the flood. This is the deregulatory approach.

Moreover, Annex I countries have made weak proposals in terms of their own level of their mitigation ambition. They don't, in other words, intend to contribute many rocks to the dam.

The Annex I Parties' emission reductions are in the order of 3.9 Gigatons (Gt) by 2020 based on a variety of different analyses of the Cancun pledges, and they have access to around 4Gt of loopholes, meaning that in total they could make "no net contribution" to the global effort by 2020.

The EU has put on the table a pledge of about 20% from 1990 levels by 2020 and studies suggest that they have achieved 17.5% of that already. Similarly, the numbers Australia has put on the table are quite low.

So it is likely, based on these pledges, that Annex I Parties would contribute little in terms of mitigation, while consuming a significant portion -- almost half -- of the global emissions budget that UNEP has said is broadly consistent with the 2 degrees Celsius goal.

That means that 20% of the people that live in rich countries would consume half, and the 80% who live in the developing countries would need to develop within the other half of that budget in 2020. This is clearly not an outcome that is consistent with a fair or an effective deal.

Stilwell also brought up the means of implementation in the UNFCCC -- the issues of finance, technology and capacity building.

The developed countries are reluctant to put forward a collective pledge of the money that will be available in 2013, while on the other hand they are asking developing countries to put forward pledges for their mitigation efforts and to begin planning their adaptation actions.

Studies suggest that very small proportions of the money provided between 2010-2012 has been genuinely new and additional. This suggests that funding mostly had either been previously pledged or was double counted as official development assistance (ODA).

Initially, the logic of the negotiations was that we should build on the Kyoto Protocol (KP), with the main non-party -- the United States -- being brought to the standard of the KP through "comparable efforts", and then the other large emerging economies would follow; like a rising tide, lifting efforts and strengthening the rules.

However, what we are now seeing in practice is the burying of the KP. Annex I countries are transitioning out of the KP, with Canada having formally withdrawn, and some of them not putting forward a legally binding commitment in the second commitment period -- Russia, Japan, New Zealand. Others have made very weak pledges and intend to transition out of the

Kyoto Protocol at the end of the second commitment period.

A set of new rules built under the Ad hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA) are weaker than the KP as they apply to Annex I Parties, weaker in terms of compliance and also losing reference to “comparability of efforts” that was included in the Bali Action Plan.

So we may end up with a weaker system of rules than we agreed to in 1997 for the developed countries.

A climb down in the rules from the Annex I Parties, inadequate action on the means of implementation, proposals of global goals that can really lead to very dangerous levels of global warming – these are tendencies that need to be arrested in the negotiations, Stilwell said.

Dr. Zou Ji, Deputy Director General, National Center for Climate Change Strategy and International Cooperation (NCSC), China, stressed the need for understanding the basic concept, the fundamentals of climate equity in the context of the international regime.

He mentioned that everybody has a right to survive, to be respected and to also fully develop, no matter what country you come from. If some stakeholders, no matter at what level, do not have the opportunity, do not have the choice, this is not equitable.

Another angle to assess if we have equity or not is the current status. One can develop a long list of indicators to assess if we have equity or not, such as income. In any economy you have the high income group and the low income group.

Emissions (per capita, total, cumulative) is also an indicator. Dr. Zou Ji stresses that given the scientific facts, cumulative emissions should be the core concept to assess emission equity.

Equity can be also regarded as a motivation to sustain efforts to take some action e.g. to mitigate, adapt and this relates to the relationship between equity and ambition. When designing and developing international and national regimes for addressing climate change, we have to pay attention to the incentive mechanisms or institutional arrangements to make people or stakeholders feel that it is equitable.

Industrialised countries’ emissions in history over two centuries were what mainly led to climate change today. The underdeveloped countries like those in Africa emit very little but have to suffer from the negative impacts of climate change. This is unfair and is the basis of the responsibility system.

Dr. Zou Ji also talked about the pathway of development. In the debate on cumulative emissions, we should not forget that developing countries have been repeating the conventional pathway, in terms of the commercial model, value system, technology, etc. Industrialised countries continue to dominate world politics, the world market and even the development pathway through globalisation, international trade and investment and also

through advertisements by their companies all over the world. Developing countries have been copying this pathway which is leading to new high emission sources.

We should be aware of this because this will lead to a very pessimistic future. We have to change the development pathway and change conventional ideas like market systems and the value systems. If we do not think in that way, it will be very superficial. The world cannot change, you just repeat the pattern.

Zou Ji said the wrong picture was being portrayed about China being the top emitter. This is because China also has the world's top population. In per capita emissions terms, China is still quite low. Developed countries like Germany and UK had high increases in their per capita emissions before the levels started going down.

The major source of emissions for China is manufacture and investment. The major sources for emissions per capita for industrialised countries are transport, building and consumption. In the background of globalisation, China's embodied emissions based on exports account for 20-30% of total emissions. These are very different sources.

Dr. Zou Ji was not defending the emissions themselves. What he was saying was that these kinds of analyses should help to identify the nature of the sources for economies in different stages of development and we will have a clear idea on the trends of the trajectory. He is also confident that China's peak should be lower compared to the historic peak of most industrialised countries.

Chee Yoke Ling of the Third World Network (TWN) said that many developed countries including Europe has abandoned equity in the last 3-5 years in the political decisions being made.

She also brought up the Rio Plus 20 Summit. Twenty years after Rio 1992, the fight was so hard to keep the principle of equity. There seems to be a process of dismantling one of the most important outcomes from 20 years ago. Three treaties coming from Rio '92: UNFCCC, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), are all rooted in equity. And they are all legally binding deals.

So when the USA, Europe, Canada, and others say that there is no legally binding regime, the NGOs get upset. This is a misleading message to the public. There is a legally binding document. It is just not being respected.

On finance, Chee said that this was that one issue the G77 made very clear, that finance implementation is important. However the USA said that the G77 and China proposal was irrelevant.

No one is paying the developing countries to adapt. During extreme events, countries have to pay themselves, or if countries are poor, they have to somehow survive or not.

Videos of the presentations are available in the following links:

Mariama Williams - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zM48bu1xIj0>

Matthew Stilwell - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oSrSdLybrLs>

Dr Zou Ji - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2-6_I5ynoV4

Chee Yoke Ling- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vMQQ8KOzrzE>