Towards Copenhagen:can we reach an equitable post-2012 agreement on climate change ?

Discussion paper:
Recommendations from the organisations of the "climate and development" network for a post-2012 regime on climate change

The next 16 months will be decisive for the future of our climate. A new agreement for the fight against climate change is to be signed by the end of 2009, at the COP 15/MOP 5 in Copenhagen. It will be come into force on 1 January 2013. The stakes are high: the new agreement has to reconcile essential developmental requirements with those of the fight against climate change.

Within the framework of these "post-2012" negotiations, the "Climate and Development" Network[1], with members throughout Europe and Africa, met this May in Bamako. The objective: to work together on the negotiations' essential topics (emission reduction, including the fight against deforestation and the degradation of forests, adaptation to the impacts of climate change, technology transfer and financing).

The network set itself the goal of drawing up proposals that could raise the awareness of the negotiators in both Southern and Northern countries with regards the stakes of climate change negotiations and contribute constructively to the negotiations already underway. For each of the key subjects dealt with in the negotiation, the network's recommendations are listed below.

1. Reducing greenhouse gases emissions

A reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions is decisive in the long-term fight again climate change. The reduction objectives adopted by some industrialised States for the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol have clearly not been sufficient to allow the climate to stabilise.

Today the challenge consists of considerably expanding the reduction objectives of all the industrialised countries as well as encouraging some developing countries – notably emerging economies – to abandon their current emission path. Without a drastic reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions, the adaptation to the impacts of climate change will reach its limit.

Clearly more ambitious future targets for the reduction of emissions in industrialised countries

- The international community should set itself the objective of limiting global warming to well below 2ºC (in comparison with pre-industrial levels) before the end of the century. This is the threshold beyond which the consequences of climate change, particularly for the poorest countries and populations, will be irreversible.
- All industrialised countries should adopt binding, absolute objectives for reducing their emissions.
- Future reduction objectives should be based on science. The latest IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) report indicates that, in order to have the best chance of remaining below the 2ºC threshold, global emissions must reach their highest levels by 2015 and then drop by 50-85% before 2050, relative to their 2000 levels. However, even this scenario, based on a greenhouse gas concentration of 450 ppm (Parts per million) CO2-equivalent in the atmosphere, only gives us a 50% chance of avoiding a global warming of 2ºC! Therefore, this emission reduction target should merely be an absolute minimum figure for the international community.
- Thus, industrialised countries will

3. Adaptation to climate change

The Convention and the Protocol oblige industrialised countries to help developing countries adapt to climate change. However, up to now, the governments' attention has focused on emission reduction. But climate change is already having an impact and affects above all the most vulnerable countries, which have less capacity to deal with this.

Industrialised countries should respect their obligations with regards to adaptation

- Adaptation should benefit from the same level of political attention as the efforts aimed at emission reduction.

- Industrialised countries should respect their obligations to help developing countries adapt without waiting for the conclusion of the new climate change agreement. In particular, they should support the rapid implementation of the National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) drawn up by the least developed countries.

- Financing for the adaptation of developing countries should be increased considerably in order to meet the requirements that are estimated at several billion dollars each year. This financing should be sustainable, stable and predictable, and thus closely linked to the emission reduction system. In particular, it can result from an emission taxation system or other mechanisms (for example be linked to the carbon market etc.). It must be additional.

- The industrialised countries' financial support should be based on the "polluter pays" principle, and on their respective capacities, in other words their "economic health" to deal with the problem.

Giving priority to the countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change

- Priority must be given to the urgent and immediate responses needed for the most vulnerable countries, so that they adapt to the impacts that are already affecting them.

- Experts in developing countries should moreover be integrated into the current IPCC in order to take greater account of the future impacts of climate change in developing countries, notably in the least advanced countries.

Involving local populations in the conception and implementation of adaptation strategies

- Adaptation strategies should be based on the local populations' initiatives and involve the latter in their creation and implementation. Involving, training and raising the awareness of the decision-makers and local populations in adaptation strategies constitute a key factor in their success. Support for initiatives and climate change adaptation projects at a local level should be encouraged, maintained and be granted specific funding.

- Women in particular should be more involved in decision-making processes, not only because they are more affected by the impacts of climate change, but also because they play a key role in the conception and implementation of the adaptation strategies.

Integrating the adaptation to climate change into development policies and projects

There is a fine line between adaptation and development. For greater efficiency, adaptation should be systematically integrated into development projects and sectoral policies. However, additional funding should be made available to include the incremental cost linked to adaptation.

Integrating ecosystem management into adaptation strategies

Biodiversity and ecosystems play a crucial role in ensuring the sustainability of local populations' means of survival and their improved management should allow the resilience of the most vulnerable communities to increase.

4. Technologies transferts

Technology transfer constitutes a key element but also an impasse in negotiations. In Bali, developing countries firmly reminded industrialised countries of their obligations in this area. In order to stabilise the climate and adapt to the impacts of the changes currently underway, a rapid deployment of technologies is required and, moreover, on an unprecedented scale.

Technology transfer for emission reduction AND adaptation to the impacts of climate change

- Technology transfer for adaptation should be viewed in the same way as transfer for emission reduction.

- In the domain of adaptation, a great deal of technologies and know-how already exist and could benefit from wider diffusion. One of the solutions consists of sharing knowledge (notably through South-South exchanges) in order to allow for the more widespread appropriation and application of adaptation technologies.

Technology transfer taking into account different specificities and contexts

- The successful appropriation of a technology is linked to specific local contexts. The private sector and local populations play a key role in facilitating and accelerating the diffusion and appropriation of technologies.

- Adaptation technologies should be prioritised in order to focus on those that favour the development of the most affected and poorest populations rather than those linked to investments in large infrastructure projects.

Effective technology transfer, accompanied by the necessary legal framework and financing

- Technology transfers must be easy to measure and check. The group of technology transfer experts was sent to draw up performance indicators to judge the effectiveness of these