

'Plan B' for International Climate Negotiations

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The roadmap for the next Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in Mexico is clear: The EU wants a comprehensive and legally binding outcome at the end of this year. To achieve this already in 2010 should be the fundamental goal of Europe's climate strategy. This is not only urgent because the world has no time to lose, it is also needed because investments into low-carbon-technologies tend to have a long market integration phase and because investors need a clear legal framework in order to finance

these projects. Therefore, we should not step back from our ultimate goal – integrating the reduction commitments we need to achieve the 2 degrees target – but work hard in order to make it possible.

Despite all optimism, which is required in international climate negotiations, one needs to keep some realism as well. On the road to Copenhagen, Europe was not equipped with a Plan B and that has made it even more difficult to re-adjust the strategy afterwards. This time, we should at least know what exactly we are working on and how to achieve some progress on the agenda. This is also necessary if we want to put some pressure on those waiting and effectively blocking any progress. It also relates to the problem that decisions in the UNFCCC are taken by unanimity, offering a veto power to basically every member of the Convention – a legal provision that should not prevent Europe from moving ahead.

So what would an alternative to the UNFCCC agenda look like? On which topics should Europe go ahead? First of all, it is important to keep our promises from the Copenhagen Accord. This is a precondition for every step we take on the international level. Especially the short-term financing provisions and their rapid implementation will be a litmus test for European credibility in international climate politics. At the same time, we should promote solutions for those areas where we do not need everyone on board, and where we can find immediate solutions among a smaller group of countries.

One such area is the protection of tropical rain forests. This is a pressing topic where we should not lose time by negotiation and inaction. If we can get a solution among developed countries together with those countries possessing large areas of rain forest, namely Brazil, Congo and Indonesia, to name a few, we have already settled an important topic.

A second crucial area will be technology transfer. Because of the need for early investments, the international community has to find solutions sooner rather than later to the question of how to accelerate investments in developing countries. The establishment of a technology platform and the identification of those technologies that could be transferred would be the first step. Also, already this year the plans should become more advanced, following the provisions set out in the Copenhagen Accord. While protecting intellectual property, there is still a range of options available for the market integration of clean technologies in developing countries.

Last but not least, the world should start to find sector specific solutions for those industries that are involved in global trade and account for a large amount of emissions. To name just a few: steel and cement, but also international maritime transport and aviation. A possible solution could be setting global emission targets and creating a fair

distribution of the revenues from selling certificates in those sectors between the rich countries and the poor.

All these steps could be taken outside of the UNFCCC process, but fed into it later, if there is a general agreement on the whole legal concept. Alternatively, if there is no consensus reached on the UN level, the EU could still advance the solutions further and find agreements with those countries that are willing to act.

In the end, it will be crucial to achieve at least some progress, even if it is only a small step. It could nevertheless open the door for more and more agreements on certain topics. Finally, there is the chance to follow the track of incremental agreements. This 'Plan B' doesn't look as smooth as a comprehensive legally binding framework agreement. But at least, it puts some pressure on parties to take decisions.

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