

Climate negotiations: adopting an ambitious, positive vision for 2015

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Aubagne, 02/12/2013. – The climate conference once again left a bitter taste in the mouths of those who followed the progress of the negotiations. Maybe a more "positive" mobilization would yield a more effective strategy for achieving an ambitious agreement?

189 countries met in Warsaw last month with a view to taking joint decisions concerning the future of the planet. Despite good intentions, this great gathering began to look like a stalemate in chess with all the pawns left staring at each other and refusing to advance. It really is so hard to move beyond individual interests.

While the BRICS* emerging countries offered to make commitments subject to acknowledgement of historical responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions, other countries went the other way. Japan drastically reduced its emission reduction targets and Australia deliberately chose to snub the UN process. As for the European Union, traditionally a model pupil, it seems that internal dissent is too strong for it to continue dragging the negotiations in a more ambitious direction.

Under the circumstances, an increase in emission reduction targets in 2015 looks highly unlikely.

Rash promises

The Adaptation Fund was saved in extremis with promised contributions amounting to 100 million euros. Some mechanisms were formalized or complemented, such as the "loss and damage" mechanism which will help countries in the South severely impacted by climate change.

The REDD+ mechanism, which is designed to protect forests, received funding to the tune of 280 million euros to enhance MRV (monitoring, reporting and verification). Discussions on other flexibility mechanisms such as the Clean Development Mechanism, on the other hand, were deferred. Finally, some topics were barely touched upon. These include agriculture, despite the fact that it is responsible for 14% of global greenhouse gas emissions and involves around 3 billion people on our planet!

In the end, the initial objective of topping up the Green Fund with 100 billion dollars per year for the climate by 2020 increasingly resembles a fading utopian dream. Unless, like many countries including France, you think that this objective could be achieved almost exclusively by means of private sector investment.

Not constraint but opportunity

Moving on from this, all our hopes for a new and satisfactory agreement rest on the next two key dates: Lima 2014 and Paris 2015. A good start seems to have been made, since France and Peru have demonstrated their commitment to working together to achieve signature of a satisfactory compromise in two years' time.

To make a success of these two crucial conferences, we urge the French government, which has a huge task before it, to take up the challenge with conviction, dynamism and enthusiasm. If it is to mobilize the international community around an ambitious and "positive" global agreement, the French leadership needs to reinforce its credibility with exemplary conduct at national level.

Combating climate change should no longer be seen as a constraint but rather as an opportunity. An opportunity to come together to build a new model of sustainable society on the foundation of green growth, which is key to new job creation and environmental conservation in a world better equipped to cope with the impacts of climate change.

What is at stake in these conferences is not victory in a game of chess but a better life tomorrow, in both North and South. If that message really gets across by 2015, the chances of winning the battle for the climate may not be quite so bad.

Press Contact: Caroline PIERRET
Tel: + 33 4 42 18 55 88

* BRICS countries: Brazil, Russia India, South Africa and China