

MITIGATION BY DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

November 2010, Cancún

It is necessary that, at the next UN Climate Change Conference in Mexico, the amendment to the Kyoto Protocol be adopted for its second commitment period from 2013 to 2017 in which developed countries must commit to significant domestic GHG emission reductions of at least 50% in reference to 1990 levels.

People's Agreement, April 2010, Cochabamba

Key messages

- Developed countries have commitments to cut their climate pollution under the Kyoto Protocol
- The United States should ratify the Protocol or be bound under the Climate Convention
- Efforts by developed countries to replace the Kyoto Protocol with a weak, non-binding, domestic approach based on the Copenhagen Accord must be stopped
- Instead, developed countries must repay their climate debts and agree to fair and science-based targets for the post-2012 period under the Kyoto Protocol
- Loopholes – such as carbon markets and land-use accounting tricks – must be closed

Responsibilities of the rich

Rich countries bear a moral responsibility to cut their climate pollution. Their historic pollution is the main driver of the climate crisis. They continue to pollute and consume at high levels. Developing countries have not contributed much comparatively and historically, and have much larger populations.

All countries must be part of the solution to climate change. But developed countries bear the principal responsibility. They must repay their climate debts.

Despite their commitments, developed countries increased their emissions 11.2% from 1990 to 2007. They have so far failed in their basic responsibilities to reduce their emissions.

The problem of the United States

Many countries – including the United States – are trying to change rather than implement the basic bargain in the Climate Convention and its Kyoto Protocol.

The US is the largest historical contributor to climate change. Yet it has abandoned the Kyoto Protocol. So unlike other wealthy countries, it is not legally bound internationally to reduce its emissions by any specific amount.

It is now seeking to replace the current legally binding international system with a “new paradigm” based on the non-binding, domestic approach proposed in the controversial Copenhagen Accord.

The United States should join the rest of the world and become a Party to the

Kyoto Protocol. But it refuses to do so. So a major pre-occupation has been how to get it to commit internationally to emission reductions.

This was partly achieved in the Bali Action Plan, where all developed countries – including the United States – agreed to comparable mitigation commitments or actions. The challenge now is getting them to honor this agreement and take on binding and comparable commitments under the Convention.

Killing Kyoto

Despite its many flaws – including deeply controversial carbon market mechanisms – the Kyoto Protocol remains the only legally binding international agreement that imposes specific commitments requiring developed countries to cut their climate pollution.

To avoid binding targets, some developed countries are attempting to kill the Kyoto Protocol. They seek a new agreement to bind developing countries to similar emission reduction responsibilities, thus transferring the burden from rich to poor nations, without adequate financing and technology transfer.

What's needed under the Kyoto Protocol?

To fulfill their responsibilities and repay their climate debts, developed countries must commit to radically reduce their emissions under the Kyoto Protocol, based on science and equity.

More than 100 developing countries have called for cuts of 45% below 1990 levels by 2020. Bolivia has proposed domestic emission reductions of 50%

Key issues for negotiations

- The system of legally binding international obligations on developed countries to reduce their emissions must be protected
- The amendment of the Kyoto Protocol for developed countries' emission reductions after 2012 should be adopted in Cancun; further delay may result in a gap between the commitment periods
- A 'top-down' aggregate target for developed countries, based on science and equity, in the order of 50% domestic reductions in the commitment period 2013-2017 should be adopted under the Kyoto Protocol
- The United States should commit to comparable emission reductions under the Climate Convention; this is the centerpiece for mitigation under the Bali Action Plan
- A comprehensive assessment and effort to close all loopholes should be conducted, failing which developed countries' emission reduction targets should be increased by the amount of their loopholes
- A process to review and roll back market-based mechanisms under the Kyoto Protocol should be initiated under the Kyoto Protocol's Meeting of the Parties (CMP)

The emission reductions of developed countries must be achieved domestically, without the use of carbon markets or any other off-setting mechanisms that allows them to avoid the adoption of real measures to reduce emissions.

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during 2013-2017. Others have proposed 40% reductions by 2020.

These proposals are science-based. They are in line with demands that developed countries make equitable and adequate contributions to curbing climate change and keeping temperature increase well below 1.5°C or 1°C.

They are also based on equity. Cuts in this order are required to share atmospheric space fairly, keep temperatures down and ensure the burden of mitigation is not shifted unfairly to developing countries.

A principled approach

To ensure fair and science-based cuts by developed countries, developing countries are demanding a principled approach. This involves first identifying what the developed countries must contribute collectively, and then identifying what they must contribute individually.

Developed countries, by contrast, are proposing a 'bottom-up' system of voluntary and domestic pledges, whereby individual countries simply do what they are politically prepared to – not what is required in terms of science or equity.

This is the system they are advancing under the controversial Copenhagen Accord, which takes many steps backwards from the current legal framework. Pledges under the Copenhagen Accord have been estimated to result in warming of around 4°C.

Ending offsetting and closing loopholes

Deep emission reductions are not enough. They must be achieved without recourse to loopholes that demonstrate cuts on paper, without making them in practice.

The Kyoto Protocol currently allows developed countries to reach their emission reduction targets through market mechanisms like the so-called Clean Development Mechanism. These allow developed countries to shift the burden of mitigation to poor countries, and must be reviewed, rolled back and restricted. Developed countries' emission reductions after 2012 should be achieved domestically, as Bolivia and other countries are demanding.

Current loopholes— relating to land use, the "carry over" of amounts from the first commitment period, and market-based mechanisms – could even lead to increased net emissions. They must be closed. Developed countries must refrain from introducing new ones.

Repaying climate debts

Developed countries, in assuming their historical responsibility, must recognize and honor their climate debts as the basis for a just, effective, and scientific solution to climate change. The starting point is deep cuts and closing loopholes under the Kyoto Protocol, as the foundation for a fair and science-based solution to climate change involving all peoples and countries.

¹ Bank Information Center, <http://www.bicusa.org/en/Issue.Resources.48.aspx>

ActionAid

Arab NGO Network for Development
Asian Indigenous Women's Network
Campagna per la Riforma della Banca Mondiale (CRBM), Italy
Friends of the Earth International

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy

International Forum on Globalization
International Rivers
JS - Asia/Pacific Movement on Debt and Development (JSAPMDD)
Jubilee South

Nord-Sud XXI

Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA)
Sustainable Energy & Economy Network, Institute for Policy Studies
Tebtebba

Third World Network

Unnayan Onneshan Bangladesh
What Next Forum