

Copenhagen 18/12:  
Africa Must Continue Calling for a Fair,  
Ambitious and Legally Binding  
Climate Deal:  
a Proceedings Report



*By: Ms Uyo Salifu*



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Calling for a Fair, Ambitious and Legally  
Binding Climate Deal: a Proceedings Report

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Proceedings Report

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## **Introduction**

*The critical role of Africa in the climate change negotiations, especially now that they are to be held in Africa for the second time in a few years cannot be over-stated. But just what is the exact nature of this role and how could it be enhanced further. These are some of the questions that were debated at a roundtable held on 14 September 2011. The dialogue which is part of the IGD's research work towards CoP 17 in Durban, was led by Prof. Godwell Nhamo, University of South Africa and Dr Lesley Masters, Institute for Global Dialogue. This project is made possible by generous support from the Government of Norway.*

*The particular focus was to determine Africa's current approach to climate change negotiations ahead of the United Nations Framework Convention Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Durban scheduled to take place from the 28<sup>th</sup> of November to the 9<sup>th</sup> of December 2011. The aim was also to allow an open and critical reflection on the competing dynamics of the climate change negotiation process and for examining what can be learnt from the process in achieving satisfactory outcomes, particularly for Africa. This proceedings report outlines the key components of the discussion.*

## **Climate change negotiations with specific reference to COP 15**

Dr Nhamo underlined the fact that the Copenhagen negotiations in November-December 2009 dashed the expectations of many as global leaders were unable to arrive at consensus for a legally binding climate deal. Furthermore, COP 15 failed to prioritise adaptation in its agenda due in large part to the fact that mitigation ranked higher than adaptation for many of the leading developed states. There were some positive outcomes from Copenhagen, albeit marginal, as global leaders informally agreed, or 'noted' the Copenhagen Accord. The Copenhagen Conference also admittedly paved the way for financial pledges in January of 2010. Nevertheless, Copenhagen came under fire for the procedural shortcomings of the negotiation process, which transformed the approach of UNFCCC negotiation processes to an informal one.

The presentation drew on the existence of certain methodological aspects, which reflect the UNFCCC operational dynamics and aid the understanding of the UNFCCC multilateral forum. Noteworthy in this regard, is the Actors (humans), Actants (non-humans) and Networks (AANT) formula.

Climate negotiations were described as being quasi-objects, due to the cross-cutting nature of actors, issues and domains which interact, namely; social, technical and scientific themes and the national and international spheres. Some of these aspects were highlighted in the forum.

## **Africa and the COP 17 negotiations**

The discussion noted that like in previous negotiations, COP 17 will be influenced by a range of actors who have vested interest in the outcome of the negotiations. Business, for instance, have strong interests in the decisions made. Regional organisations such as the African Union (AU) and sub-regional organisations such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) additionally have positions within the negotiations and these may diverge. Beyond regional groupings, the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), the Least Developed States (LDC)s, the G77 and the G77+ China all have a potential role to play in influencing the outcome of COP 17. These actors will not only influence the outcome but may also prevent African countries from maintaining a united position during the negotiations.

With regard to the thematic considerations of climate change negotiations in general and COP 17 in particular, some of the issues that are negotiated are technology, adaptation, mitigation, financing, capacity building and awareness.

In line with the title of the discussion forum, equity was emphasised as an indispensable objective for Africa in the climate change negotiations. It was noted that it is imperative for the responsibility of environmental damage to be shared fairly and for African economies to be given the necessary support for transitioning into green economies. This is because although Africa has had little part in emitting Green House Gases (GHG), much of the continent will bear the brunt of climate change. In this regard, industrialised states, which have had high carbon output, should be made to pay for their part in environmental degradation.

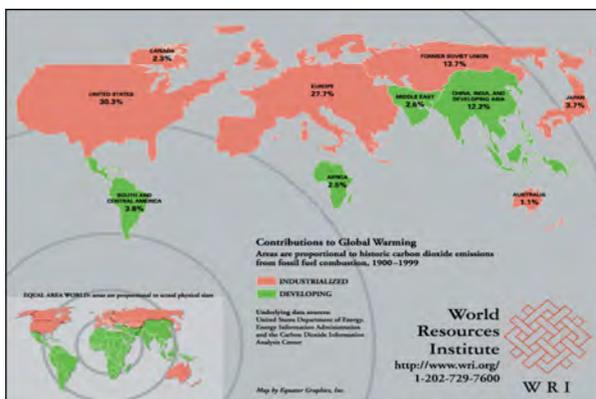


Image 1: Map of global emissions distribution

The challenge in achieving equity within climate change negotiations is that some actors, such as African states, are considered to occupy lower positions than developed states in global climate governance. This makes them less likely to achieve their interests in global negotiations. The slogan; ‘some states are more equal than others’ was used to illustrate the place of African and developing states in global climate governance.

In calling for a fair, ambitious and legally binding climate deal, African governments were admonished to firstly include environmental issues more comprehensively in their individual agendas, to develop their agenda for COP 17, and to ensure that core issues pertaining to Africa are tackled. Adaptation was emphasised as a key aspect to focus on in COP 17. Linked to adaptation are agricultural issues especially as they relate to climate change. These aspects are pivotal for Africa because poverty among the largely agriculture-dependent African states makes coping with the effects of climate change a fundamental challenge. The COP 17 agenda, however, should not completely neglect mitigation. As such, there is a need for Africa to speak with a united voice.

### Likely opportunities and challenges for Africa in COP 17

A major advantage shared by African states is that if united, their weight on a certain issue could sway the negotiations in Africa’s favour. Africa’s walk-out from Barcelona proves that a united Africa will benefit the continent during COP 17.

Prevalent gaps in the voices of African civil society were noted as a possible limitation of strong African civil society pressure in COP 17 negotiations. Calls for civil society to unite were thus made. Lack of unity remains a glaring obstacle for African governments as well. Although the 54 African states may appear united in their position, the challenge is that they are merely united on broad issues and not in the intricate details of the issues. It was implied that a docile civil society in the African climate change milieu is as a result of the prioritisation of issues canonically considered political, over subjects such as climate change. However, it was also made known that certain segments of African civil society were active in raising awareness and advocating for environmental challenges to be brought to the political level.

African negotiators are faced with the problem of engaging in negotiations within the United Nations (UN) system, which they played no part in building. This places Africans at a constant disadvantage in UN negotiation settings. The need for Africa to overcome the lack of technical expertise, which plagued many African states during COP 15, was also stated as necessary for making a mark in the conference. With the exception of South Africa, African states also need to be empowered with the necessary human resources for handling the demands of the negotiation process. Linked to this is the lack of financial resources for delegates from LDCs attending negotiations, who (for financial reasons) are unable to be accommodated in the same comfort as their counterparts from developed states. This psychological division potentially creates dissonance of perspectives amongst negotiators.

Concern was expressed about the prospects for getting COP 17 to agree to specific financial pledges, due to the reeling effects of the global financial crisis on most developed economies. More so, the forum pointed out that a leading drawback of the World Bank being the custodian of the Green Climate Fund remains its generic stringent requirements for recipients of funds, which will apply to states seeking access to the Green Climate Fund.

### **Africa's Ambitions and the Realities of Multilateral Negotiations**

During the interactive engagement that followed, doubts were expressed on the feasibility of Africa's continued ambition in the climate negotiations,

given the diversity of African states and the challenge this presents for African interests. In response, it was pointed out that ambition is a necessity for survival. For this reason, it remains imperative that Africa's ambitions are sustained, but also that Africa develops an integrated agenda that circumvents post-colonialist influence and considers Africa's most pressing needs, such as development and political stability.

The discussion also highlighted the rationale behind the transfer of UNFCCC COP 17 leadership from the South African Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) to the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO). It considered the move to be informed by shortcomings from COP 15. The move was perceived to indicate a shift of environmental issues from a merely technical, scientific platform to an international political one.

Questions were posed regarding the practicality of Africa's emphasis on adaptation as opposed to mitigation, given the fact that mitigation is considered by some to be pertinent for development. It was noted in this regard, that while adaptation constitutes an urgent issue for Africa, mitigation does not. The bulk of African states are composed of developing economies that lack the ability to cope with climate change impacts. While South Africa may have the need to discuss mitigation options, Lesotho, Rwanda and Burundi do not.

Issues connected to technology transfer were raised, both the role that technology may play in Africa's responses to climate change risks, and the challenges African states face in incorporating technology into national responses to climate change. It was posited that the high cost of technology remains an obstacle for Africa. Beyond this, Africa continues to lack innovation capability. This is usually due to two reasons: A lack of resources to implement the innovation and a lack of patenting, which presents the risk of the innovation being snatched by other parties.

Doubts were raised concerning the UN's capability to handle the competing interests of major parties in the UNFCCC negotiations. There was general consensus that the UN has weakened over time and that its ability to address multiple competing national interests has diminished. Nevertheless, it was emphasised that there is still need for global institutions to assist in greening economies.

Rather than eliminating South Africa's main energy and technology provider, Eskom, for instance, it is necessary to have a multilateral institution that greens Africa's industries. Furthermore, the UN continues to be relevant in global politics. It continues to ensure that each state has a voice in the multilateral framework. As such, with all its flaws, it remains the most representative and universal setting.

Reservations that were raised earlier about the World Bank being the custodian of the Green Climate Fund, posed further questions on whether suitable replacements to the World Bank existed. This, in light of the fact that the World Bank provides relevant access to funds, fulfills a supervisory role over its dissemination and institutes the necessary scrutiny over the use of funds. In the discussion, some attention was paid to the problematic procedures of the World Bank and to the complication added by the fact that the World Bank already has ten Climate Change Funds. More specifically, it emphasised the fact that the World Bank was likely to use its procedures, such as Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP)s in administering the funds to Africa. As shown in the past, these programmes were not ideal for Africa. Additionally, the fact that the governing structure of the World Bank are its five biggest funders would impact on the dissemination and application of the funds.

The next climate change dialogue will focus on South Africa as a host and chair of the negotiations and what it might do to ensure a successful conference. This dialogue will take place on 18 November at the Kwame Nkrumah Hall, IGD offices.

This will be followed by two back-to-back dialogues on Africa and the emerging power dynamics in the climate change negotiations. Bringing together policy actors and analysts from South Africa, Africa and the developing world, the dialogue will take place in Durban on 24 November 2011. See IGD website for further details.

Ends.

## **Contributors' Profiles**

### *Prof. Godwell Nhamo*

Godwell Nhamo is an Associate Professor and Programme Manager for the Exxaro Resources Ltd sponsored Chair in Business and Climate Change. The Chair is hosted by the Institute for Corporate Citizenship that falls within the College of Economic and Management Sciences (CEMS) at the University of South Africa. Professor Nhamo holds a PhD from Rhodes University and did his postdoctoral work with the University of Witwatersrand (both in South Africa). Professor Nhamo has great interests in Business and Climate Change; Global Climate Change, Climate Policy Negotiation Regimes; as well as General Environmental Management and Policy. Some of Professor Nhamo's current responsibilities are in teaching, research and training in corporate citizenship, sustainability sciences, climate policy, green economy as well as business and climate change.

### *Dr Lesley Masters*

Dr. Masters is a Senior Researcher responsible for management of projects on foreign policy and natural resource governance in international affairs. She received her BAdmin (Hon) at the University of Pretoria before graduating with an MA in Diplomacy and PhD in international relations from the University of Leicester, UK. Recent publications cover the following issue areas: Africa and the UNFCCC; climate change, energy and South Africa's foreign policy; and the international politics of energy security.



