

Africa, Climate Change and Copenhagen:

A Post-Mortem

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Introduction

From 7 – 12 December 2009 over 192 countries converged in the Danish capital of Copenhagen to attend what was largely anticipated as the most significant climate negotiations since Kyoto (1997). The profile of the talks was further enhanced by the presence of over 119 world leaders during the second week of deliberations, ten more than had been present at the high-level talks at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit.¹ Negotiating the future climate change regime has, however, proved particularly arduous. Positions became increasingly entrenched, with negotiators using the conference as a platform to reiterate their respective points rather than engaging in meaningful dialogue. Prospects for advancing a future climate change regime based on equality and fairness were further hampered by the 'climate gate' scandal and the leaking of the 'Danish Text', which only served to drive the wedge deeper between developed and developing countries. In the end, that there was any outcome at all from the Copenhagen climate change conference was the result of small group talks behind closed doors, to the frustration of many negotiating parties. Yet within this forum, it was the Africa bloc that stood out as one of the most unified groups present. As this policy brief indicates, the defining of an African common position at Copenhagen has developed over a period of more than a decade, gathering momentum ahead of Copenhagen. As a result of concerted sustained efforts, the Africa Group was able to clearly articulate Africa's priorities that include among others: the significant reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and the necessity of a future climate change regime alongside strong commitments on adaptation, finance, technology transfer and capacity building.

A successful agreement on climate change remains particularly important for the continent. Africa is responsible for less than 4 per cent of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions internationally, but is the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. As Jean Ping, chair of the African Union (AU) Commission posited, 'it is time for Africa to aggressively engage with climate change negotiations to ensure its interests are met in the designing of global responses'.² Yet the outcome from Copenhagen, contained in the Copenhagen Accord, has not been the success that many had hoped for. Indeed, this weak proposal, which fails to address stronger emission targets, has been a step backwards from the agreement hammered out in Kyoto. This policy brief reviews the development of Africa's common position on climate change and the subsequent fate of the continent within the Copenhagen negotiations in light of the proliferation of small group diplomacy. Against this background the brief then turns to an assessment of the Copenhagen Accord and the omissions and concessions present within the text as they relate to Africa and developing countries more broadly. This is followed by some policy considerations as further climate change negotiations get underway in 2010.

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Developing an African common position on climate change

All African states have ratified the 1992 Climate Convention (Rio Earth Summit) and the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. However, only recently has a concerted effort been made to define an African common position on climate change.³ Indeed, African Union (AU) officials have bemoaned the limitations that have faced the continent in the past due to the lack of a coherent and coordinated position.⁴ The shortfall in defining a common negotiating position has given rise to a greater commitment by states to confer before, during, and even after the various meetings and conferences hosted under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).⁵ The value in adopting a collective position is that it serves to focus capacity in building a stronger platform from which to pursue and protect common interests. By defining a common position, the Africa Group has increased its potential to shape outcomes through the weight of the continent's representation. For instance, it was the strong actions taken by the Group in Barcelona, which saw a walk out by African countries over the attempt to adopt a single track of negotiations (or 'kill Kyoto'), that served to keep the two track negotiations on course.⁶

Ahead of Copenhagen, efforts to develop a common African position gathered pace. In an address to a special session of the Africa Partnership Forum (APF) on Africa and climate change, Ethiopian Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi remarked that '[f]or the first time in its history, Africa will field a single negotiating team empowered to negotiate on behalf of all member states of the African Union (AU) at the climate change deliberations in Copenhagen'.⁷ This is not to say that Copenhagen was the first time these countries had stood together on issues relating to climate change. In 1997, prior to the Kyoto conference, it was the Africa Group that 'made an historic intervention' in setting out the importance of equity and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities as the basis by which emission reductions for both developed and developing countries should be governed. Again in 1998, ahead of the Conference of the Parties 4 (COP4), consultations among African environmental ministers, as part of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), focused attention on determining a common position towards the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM).⁸

The AU has been increasingly active following its first summit on climate change in January 2007.⁹ This was also the year that the Africa bloc released a statement entitled *Africa Position on Climate Change* at the UN Commission on Sustainable Development. This highlighted the importance of finance, technology transfer, and capacity building in supporting and increasing Africa's ability to adapt to climate change.¹⁰ Two years later (August 2009), the AU held its first meeting of the Conference

of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC) and African Lead Experts on Climate Change. In the first instance, this meeting was aimed at addressing the major limitations presented by an incoherent approach towards climate change. Secondly, it filled an important gap by providing continent-wide leadership in climate change negotiations.¹¹ Finally, the meeting allowed for greater political articulation of African leader's interests, to be 'interpreted and translated' into the technical jargon of the climate change regime.¹²

Within the context of the AU, AMCEN has served as a forum for the continent's environmental ministers to actively build an African common position. Ahead of UNFCCC climate change conference in Poznan (Poland, 2008), the 12th Session of the Committee adopted *Africa's Climate Roadmap: From Johannesburg through Africa to Copenhagen* and took a number of key decisions towards the development of a Comprehensive Framework of African Climate Change Programmes.¹³ This shared vision emphasised Africa's interests and priorities including: sustainable development, poverty reduction, and the importance of attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); capacity building, financing and technology transfer; and the stabilisation of GHG emissions globally.¹⁴ This was followed by the meeting of environmental minister in Algiers (November 2008) to ensure that a more clearly defined African voice was heard at Poznan and subsequent negotiations on the climate change regime. The significance of the Algiers meeting was that it consolidated positions that had previously been adopted by the African group of negotiators in Naivasha, Kenya; Abuja; Dakar; Bonn; Johannesburg; Accra and finally Algiers.¹⁵ This was followed by the adoption of the *Nairobi Declaration on Climate* at a special session of AMCEN, May 2009. The outcome from Nairobi provided an update of the common position adopted in Algiers while reiterating Africa's priorities: adaptation, capacity building, finance and technology transfer.¹⁶

While there has been significant progress in establishing a common African position, cognisance needs to be given to the fact that this group is by no means homogenous. Within the group, positions on climate change vary according to whether the state is a small island state; a least developed country (LDC); a member of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC – of which Angola is currently chair); or in the case of South Africa, listed as the 11th largest emitter of GHG emission globally and the largest contributor on the continent.¹⁷ At Copenhagen, for example, the Africa bloc faced a particular challenge in maintaining cohesion in light of the differences that emerged on whether to support the developed country position, which argued for a threshold of 2°C increase in global temperature, or the proposal by the Island state of Tuvalu of a 1.5° threshold.¹⁸ Nevertheless, what makes the Africa grouping unique is that, of all the regional groupings present within the UN (Africa, Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, Latin

America and the Caribbean, Western Europe and Others), it is the only one that serves as a negotiating coalition.¹⁹

Despite the differences among Africa's 53 states, there are still a number of key elements that served to underpin an African common position ahead of Copenhagen. There was widespread agreement that the developed countries (including the US) should take the leading role by committing to a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. Linked to this is the importance of maintaining the two track negotiation process - established in the Bali Action plan of 2007 - to include the Ad hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex 1 Parties under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP) and the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA).²⁰ For Africa, the significance of maintaining these two tracks is to ensure the continued importance of binding targets for Annex 1 (developed) countries to the Protocol and that the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities is not negated.

In addition, adaptation to the effects of climate change remains the highest priority for Africa. As climate change is regarded as an additional burden for Africa's sustainable development endeavours and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, emphasis has been given to the development and transfer of technology in meeting the continent's adaptation needs.²¹ This includes an emphasis on access to finance that is new, additional to current official development assistance (ODA), predictable, accessible, adequate and significantly scaled up. Indeed, prior to the summit there were calls emanating from Africa for US\$67bn per year to help mitigate the effects of climate change on the continent.²² The Africa Group further indicated that in terms of short-term financing for immediate response to the effects of climate change, 40 per cent of the funds allocated between 2010-2012 (US\$10bn per year) should be set aside for Africa, while 50 per cent of the US\$100bn from 2020 should be 'earmarked for the LDCs and SIDS, and that Africa's share should be administered by the African Development Bank'.²³

In terms of mitigation, the emphasis remains on the continued recognition of the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibilities', where developing countries' actions remain voluntary and nationally appropriate. Moreover, throughout the 2009 negotiations the Africa Group continued to reiterate that any actions undertaken towards mitigation would be *conditional*, based on adequate financing, access to technology and capacity support. However, the strong stand Africa took, bringing the December negotiations to a five hour halt at the Bella Centre in defence of the continent's priorities and interests (supported by the G77 plus China), has not provided the final agreement that the continent's negotiators had hoped for. Indeed, the process itself has served to re-emphasise the problem that many of Africa's states remain marginalised in international negotiations despite efforts by the AU to forge a common negotiating position.

On the periphery once more? Changing international dynamics and the challenge of transparency

In his address at Copenhagen on behalf of the Africa Group, Meles Zenawi noted that,

This is a test as to whether we as a global community are able to rise over parochial interests to protect our common destiny. In a way the climate change negotiations are about a lot more than merely addressing climate change issues. They are test cases as to how humanity is likely to face the emerging challenges of the 21st century.²⁴

For the Africa Group, as well as for many of the other developing countries, Copenhagen demonstrated the continued prevalence of national political and economic expedience by developed countries, rather than an effort to establish a fair and equitable climate change regime for the future. Any optimism that the negotiations would bring substantive results had already started to erode at the annual UNFCCC climate change conference in Poznan. By the time of the talks in Bangkok (October 2009) and Barcelona (November 2009), trust between negotiating parties had ebbed further following the EU's adoption of a position more in line with Japan and Australia in calling for a single track process, which would see the end of binding commitments for Annex 1 countries as well as the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibilities'.

The leaked 'Danish text' at the outset of the Copenhagen conference only served to exacerbate the atmosphere of suspicion between developed and developing countries. The text, crafted behind closed doors by key individuals collectively known as the 'circle of commitment' (including the UK, US and Denmark), once again sought to replace the Kyoto Protocol. In effect the text placed more power in the hands of the developed countries while marginalising the role of the UN in future climate change negotiations; placed conditions on developing countries in their access to adaptation finance; divided developing countries by creating a distinction between the major emitters and the least developed countries (LDCs); and would have forced developing countries to adopt emissions cuts and measures not part of the Kyoto Protocol agreement. The hosts of the conference caused further dismay among developing countries when Danish climate minister, Connie Hedegaard, proposed that a group of 50 core ministers from the 192 states represented at Copenhagen should devise a compromise text.²⁵ While there may have not been substantial progress in determining the future of the climate change regime, the conference did highlight changing international dynamics through the development of this small group diplomacy.

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At one level, attention was primarily on the G2 – China and the US – reaching an acceptable agreement. Certainly it was the spat that developed between the US and China that nearly brought proceedings to a halt. This was based on the US's reluctance to commit to any agreement on climate without China, along with the other fast growing developing countries, adopting significant measures to reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions. While China had indicated a willingness to reduce emission intensity by 40-45 per cent by 2020 (compared to 2005 levels), the US lead climate change negotiator, Todd Stern, indicated that the US was expecting accountability and transparency from developing countries in their commitments to reducing GHG emission. This introduced the prospect of international monitoring, something to which China balked.²⁶

China has, however, shrugged off the notion of a G2, preferring to throw in its lot with the developing countries as the most appropriate platform for negotiations. In this respect the other significant grouping has been in the form of Brazil, South Africa, India and China, or the BASIC group. This loose coalition builds on ties forged at the G5 (Brazil, China, India, South Africa and Mexico), or the Outreach 5, invited to the annual G8 summits. As South Africa's former Minister of Environmental Affairs Marthinus van Schalkwyk indicated, the meeting of this group at the G8 summit in 2008 'produced more detail, clarity and more importantly, unity on climate change than the G8 meeting. For example, the G5 argued that industrialised nations ought to aim for an 80% - 95% cut by 2050, leaving poorer nations with a much lighter load and more resources to lift people's standards of living'.²⁷

In an act aimed at countering the Danish text, the BASIC group released its own version of the Copenhagen Accord.²⁸ This was not, however, embraced by all developing countries, in particular the Alliance of Small Island States and some of the LDCs, which raised concerns regarding the focus on mitigation and financing, and the failure to take into account the particular circumstances of the smaller parties to the negotiations.²⁹ In other words, while these small groupings such as the G5, G20, the Major Economies Forum (MEF) – also regarded as the major emitters forum - and now the BASIC group, may provide focus on particular issues, their proliferation has resulted in the exclusion of a number of developing countries from key decision-making fora. The head of the Nigerian special unit on climate change, Victor Fodeke, even went as far as positing that 'Africa is on death row. It has been sidelined by some countries'.³⁰ South Africa's own prominent position at the negotiating table sparked frustration by those who found themselves in the corridors. This spilled over into the media when it was revealed that Sudan's Ambassador Lumumba Di-Aping indicated that the South African delegation had 'actively sought to disrupt the unity of the Africa bloc'.³¹ While an apology was later made for any comments that may have been made, it does serve to repre-

sent the growing level of dissatisfaction with the lack of inclusion and transparency.

The focus on small negotiating groups within the wider negotiation process fuelled concerns that developed countries, particularly the European Union, had been engaged in trying to divide groupings such as the G77 plus China and the Africa Group. A particular case in point was the charge by Indian and Chinese negotiators that South Africa was being coopted by the developed world in return for greater access to CDM projects (read finance), a position adamantly refuted by Pretoria's own negotiators.³² Yet South Africa's president, Jacob Zuma, remained actively engaged in deliberations with his BASIC and US counterparts behind closed doors. A point not un-noticed by the Africa Group which expressed unhappiness that this 'presented a break from the a unified African position'.³³ Divisions within the African bloc and within the G77 plus China were also stirred by the island state of Tuvalu's call for the inclusion of major emerging economies in targets for emission reductions. This position, backed by a number of other small island states and those African countries which are already facing significant challenges from rising waters and severe weather conditions, was ultimately blocked by the larger developing countries.³⁴

With decisions being made once more by the political wrangling of a few, questions have been raised concerning the multilateral process and the wider efficiency and effectiveness of the UN in facilitating negotiations, particularly in light of the urgency of the climate change negotiations. The argument is that in order to attain an agreement, it is necessary to streamline participation to the most significant players and formulate a system where one state cannot disrupt proceedings and block the attainment of an agreed outcome. The US continues to challenge the leading role of the UN in the negotiating process, with Todd Stern continuing to press the view that these talks should be undertaken by a 'stronger group of countries'.³⁵ For Africa and many of the other developing countries, the strategy of closed door negotiations adopted are reminiscent of the World Trade Organisation's Doha Development Agenda, which has seen very little in the way of progress since 2001. The prospect of such delays is something the world can ill-afford in the case of climate change. The UN system represents the most inclusive system, where each state has an equal voice in determining the outcome. As the continent is increasingly exposed to the effects of years of industrial consumption by the developed world, having a seat at the negotiating table to put forward positions and defend their interests is paramount.

The Copenhagen Accord – Concessions and Omissions

At the eleventh hour, the Copenhagen Accord brokered by the US and the BASIC countries, was agreed to by participants. In sum, the process by which the 'Accord' was arrived at was undemo-

cratic, non-transparent and has marginalised the voices of many of those states that are suffering from the unprecedented effects of climate change. The document also retains a divisive element for developing countries, singling out LDCs, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Africa as distinct from the larger emerging economies and other regions such as Asia and South America. Moreover, rather than the legally binding document that had been hoped for, the Accord is more of a political statement with countries 'taking note' of the text. In other words, the document has been given recognition, but it remains outside of the formal UN-FCCC process. The problem is that without the right agreement signalling future commitments to GHG emission reductions, there is no incentive to implement greater GHG emission reductions domestically, meet obligations for financing adaptation, and accelerate the transfer of technology. As this analysis argues, while this watered down agreement does reflect some of Africa's priorities, there is still considerable ground to be covered.

Following the African led struggle to keep the Kyoto Protocol alive, the Accord does make reference to the continuation of the two track process by endorsing the continued work of the AWG-KP from the outset as well as signalling a 'strong political will to urgently combat climate change in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities'.³⁶ In reality, however, there has been very little in the way of progress in moving the climate regime forward from Kyoto. The outline agreement is not legally binding and has failed to secure sufficient support to warrant deeper commitments, particularly from the US, for emission reductions in line with what is required by science (as set out in the IPCC's Fourth Assessment Review report). Moreover, the earlier goal of reducing carbon emissions by 80 per cent by 2050 was removed along with any reference to the 1.5°C ceiling for the rise in temperature as proposed by the small island states. In fact, the text is devoid of any reference to targets, goals, processes or measures for the implementation of efforts to curb carbon emissions and keep it under the 2°C from pre-industrial levels. Disappointment at this outcome has been palpable. Certainly by the middle of January 2010, less than 30 countries (out of 192) had indicated any willingness to sign the Accord within the agreed deadline of 1 February 2010.³⁷

In terms of finance, the Accord noted that through the collective commitment by developed countries, the amount of \$10bn per year, or \$30bn from 2010-2012, of new and additional resources would be made available to assist poorer countries in responding to the immediate impacts of climate change. This is to be balanced between adaptation and mitigation needs and is set to rise to \$100bn a year by 2020. While this recognises the importance of immediate finance for those states most affected by climate change, there has been very little in the way of progress on key issues that are a priority to Africa, including the mobilisation of funds. While the text does indicate the establishment of the Copenhagen Green Climate Fund to support devel-

oping countries with respect to mitigation efforts, adaptation, capacity building, technology development and transfer, there is no indication of where the money will come from or how it will be accessed. Indeed, some developing countries have labelled the amounts stipulated as insignificant compared to what is required and a form of financial 'blackmail' in an effort to draw developing countries into agreeing to undertake binding emission reduction commitments. Certainly, while the amounts may represent an attempt at kick-starting financing for the most urgent cases, this is still well under the 1 per cent of the developed world's GDP that developing countries were calling for.

There has also been controversy surrounding the source of funding. Developed countries, and the US in particular, have indicated that this would be primarily from the market and private capital rather than public capital (government). This would also not be available to the more developed emerging economies such as China, India and even South Africa. Furthermore, the visible lack of political will in agreeing to emission reduction targets at Copenhagen will have a knock-on-effect on the very markets that are being called upon in support of enhancing cost-effectiveness and promoting mitigation actions. The reason being that the Copenhagen Accord does not offer the long-term stability and predictability that the carbon markets require. There will also be further hesitation in the financing of CDM projects, an area where Africa has been fighting hard to increase its share.

In addition to Africa's prioritisation of finance, the continent has been a vociferous proponent of the importance of technology development and the transfer of technology between developed and developing countries to meet adaptation requirements. The text of the Copenhagen Accord does highlight the importance of technology development and transfer as well as the intention of establishing a Technology Mechanism aimed at speeding up the rate of development and technology transfer. However, without the legally binding commitment to reduce carbon emission there is the real danger that technology development will not progress at a higher pace and will remain exorbitantly expensive, placing it out of the reach of those countries that need it most.

Conclusion

If Copenhagen was the test case of how the world will face its shared challenges, then globally we are close to failing the test. The conference itself has seen the deterioration in trust between developed and developing countries, as well as the move towards negotiation processes that have become increasingly exclusive. The conference itself was reduced to providing the means for grandstanding well known positions and inhibiting any real progress. Africa's efforts at defining a common position allowed for the creation of a shared voice in opposing the move towards a single agreement and ensuring the future of the two-track process. Moreover, pressure from the group saw the inclusion of

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a number of Africa's priorities within the Accord, even though they were substantially watered down. Yet the Africa Group was also confronted by the changing geo-political realities that saw the development of the BASIC grouping, leaving many of the smaller countries on the periphery.

For all of its shortcomings the AU has urged states to adopt the plan, although Sudan remains strongly opposed to signing. All the undertakings set out in the Accord have important implications for Africa, which is already facing the effects of severe changes in weather that have led to drought, flooding, food insecurity, increased challenges to health, migration, as well as constraints on social and economic development. The first half of 2010 thus offers a period where further talks can begin to flesh out the Accord, based on equality and fairness, without the hype and pressure that surrounded Copenhagen. Here the focus will need to be on building momentum and moving beyond declarations to seriously negotiating the future of the climate change regime.

Policy considerations –

Africa as a key player - Draw on and celebrate knowledge and action that is being undertaken regionally and locally. Africa continues to be portrayed as merely a hapless victim of circumstances, rather than the active and resilient player that it could be.

Take action – This will be particularly important at the local and regional level. Although Copenhagen did not produce the legally binding commitments that African countries had hoped for, the continent's people need to continue placing pressure on their leaders. In addition, more attention should be given to the benefits that can be derived from networks between NGO groups and civil society organisations internationally, where people and organisations are already facilitating adaptation and mitigation efforts (coordination with concerned international constituencies)

Highlight less abstract issues (change the emphasis) – For many, climate change is too broad and abstract a concept. A focus needs to be created on the tangible impacts of climate change in relation to policies – i.e. the impact of air pollution on health, agriculture – which can easily be identified and addressed.

Continue to build on a common African position – on adaptation, mitigation, transfer of technology and finance that will underpin continued negotiations throughout 2012. After the 2010 UNFCCC meeting in Mexico, 2011 will see COP17 heading to Africa. From the 28 November to 9 December 2011 South Africa will host the climate change conference. This offers further opportunities for the Africa bloc to highlight the continued impact of climate change on the continent as well as push forward the urgency of attaining global agreement on the future shape and direction of the climate change regime. Calls for 'compensation' should be avoided since this concept has the potential to undermine the goodwill that has been building

between civil society in developed and developing countries as well as divide developing countries.³⁸

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