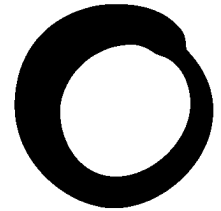


Briefing Note



**Friends of
the Earth**

Copenhagen - what next

Ahead of the UN climate change talks there was an almost universal acceptance that what was needed was a legally binding global agreement on climate change that would keep global temperatures rises well below 2 degrees centigrade above pre-industrial levels. It was also widely accepted that there needed to be substantial finance to developing countries to adapt to climate change and develop low-carbon economies. Within this broad agreement there were of course differences on, for example, on how much money rich countries would provide, how much cuts rich countries would commit to, and how far to keep below 2 degrees. But the broad thrust of what was necessary was clear.

The outcome of the talks is a million miles from achieving this and will probably make achieving it more difficult.

Friends of the Earth International has worked hard over many years to try to get the conditions right for an agreement – before and after Kyoto and right up to Copenhagen. Over the past two years we intensified that effort and attended all the negotiating sessions following the UN meeting in Bali that set this process underway. We carried out research. We lobbied. And we alerted the public to the need for a strong agreement.

The Copenhagen talks

The talks started badly.

The Danish hosts of the event were exposed for excluding developing countries from vital negotiations. They were also exposed for drafting a final text of an agreement in secret.

The chief negotiator for the United States, Todd Stern, said that it wasn't going to take responsibility for historic emissions. As far as the US was concerned the fact that climate change was happening as a result of emissions from rich countries had no relevance to the negotiations. In its view it was not the historical responsibility of developed nations, it was everyone's shared responsibility to sort out the climate mess.

As the talks progressed, developing countries fought back against the bullying, arm-twisting and threats made by rich countries. African countries forced a suspension of the talks because the Danish hosts were preventing adequate space for discussions on the Kyoto Protocol, the only legally binding climate agreement in existence. Friends of the Earth organised a vocal protest in support.

The EU heads of state met and decided not to increase their offer of emissions cuts by 2020 from 20 per cent to 30 per cent below 1990 levels, and even these cuts included a massive offsetting loophole.

Increasingly it became obvious that rich countries were not going to move at all even though it was well known that their offers on emissions cuts and finance fell well short of what was necessary to prevent climate chaos and deliver on their responsibility to lead. The UK refused to move unilaterally by increasing its commitments and instead chose to hide behind the skirts of EU indecision.

Ministers and world leaders jetted in, with the aim of breaking a deadlock. Rumours spread that progress was being made, but the reality was that US intransigence prevented any breakthrough.

A leaked UN analysis showed that developing countries were offering greater reductions in emissions than rich countries, and that all the offers on the table combined equated to global

warming of at least 3 degrees.

On the last day President Obama arrived and delivered an address that infuriated much of the conference. In short he said, we've decided what we're going to do, we won't move. He also said that the problem is China (a blame game rich countries have taken up with gusto).

The Chinese had offered significant reductions in their emissions growth in advance of the talks and also said they weren't seeking money from rich countries – despite having much lower per-capita emissions than rich countries and having millions of people without electricity. Where China drew the line was the attempt to weaken the common but differentiated responsibilities as outlined in the UN Climate Convention by subjecting developed and developing country cuts to the same obligations which would result in the killing of the Kyoto Protocol. Obama and his team drafted a face-saving and weak voluntary agreement with China, India, and South Africa. In doing so he ignored democratic procedures and went back on his inauguration promises to engage constructively in multi-lateral processes. He emerged in the last hours of the last day of the negotiations and announced the deal. He spoke only to the friendly journalists that travel with him on his presidential plane before jetting off again.

There were then bitter debates within the conference. The debate centred on whether it was better to have no deal than a bad deal, as well as about the underhand process that led to the “accord”. If there was no deal than there would be immense pressure to agree a decent agreement in 2010. A bad deal would reduce this pressure and make a strong and fair legal agreement more difficult in the near future. The UK played a key role in getting Obama's bad deal noted by the Conference (it has no legal standing but has already become the de-facto agreement in the eyes of rich countries).

The Copenhagen accord

The “accord” as it is now known is extremely weak. It is a voluntary agreement not binding, so countries signing up don't have to deliver. It calls for global temperatures to be kept below 2 degrees above pre-industrial levels, yet the cuts that countries are offering point to a temperature rise of 3 or 4 degrees. The money on the table is much less than what is needed. Our analysis shows that much of the short term funding has either already been given or announced, is not additional to existing aid finance, and is loans not grants. The longer term finance is about as certain to be delivered as it is certain there is life on the moon.

Rich countries are now bullying developing countries to sign-up to the accord by 31 January 2010, and are saying that if they don't sign they won't get access to any funds.

In summary, we have reached the end of the Copenhagen conference with no legally binding agreement. Instead we have an accord drafted by a few countries that is being forced upon other countries. There is no timetable to lead to a legally binding agreement. The very existence of the accord will weaken pressure for a legally binding agreement. The process that led to it will make it more difficult to deliver on any fair multilateral process in the future. The poorest and most vulnerable countries will be bullied by the rich and now even by the fast-developing countries.

It is not yet certain that global temperatures will exceed 2 degrees, and less certain that they will exceed 3 degrees. But the job of getting a strong and fair international agreement is much harder than it was just two weeks ago.

Friends of the Earth and campaigning

Friends of the Earth International worked alongside others in creating enormous pressure for a strong and fair climate agreement and worked to build a stronger climate justice movement to take our campaigning forward.

Inside the conference centre we stood shoulder to shoulder with the poorest nations that are at the front-line of climate change. We shared briefings and intelligence with them. We supported their press conferences. We spoke out when we saw that they were being bullied by rich countries. We lobbied. We carried out high profile demonstrations in the conference centre. We carried out legal analysis. We pushed for open, fair and transparent negotiations. And we told the truth about the

outcomes.

Outside the conference centre we supported a counter-conference – the ‘Klimaforum’. The forum brought together grassroots groups from across the world. We organised debates with leading thinkers such as Vandana Shiva; Henry Saraigh from La Via Campesina; Naomi Klein; George Monbiot; and Friends of the Earth International’s Nnimmo Bassey. We discussed strategies and plans for alternative solutions to the climate crisis and brought up to the minute analysis of what was happening in the conference centre to over 20,000 activists every day.

We worked as Friends of the Earth International to stage an amazing mass action of over 5,000 people, calling for an end to offsetting in the negotiations. We joined a mass demonstration of over 100,000 people who marched peaceful to the conference centre.

Back in the UK, we linked up Friends of the Earth groups across the world in taking daily email actions with the support of thousands of people targeting key negotiators and influential countries to persuade them to change their positions. We reported back daily to our supporters and activists through an up to the minute blog. We took part in a daily picket of key embassies around London.

We did not win this time. But we did not lose either. Rich countries have found it impossible to sell the final outcome as a triumph. Their dodgy dealing and secret negotiations have been exposed as never before. The voices calling for a just a fair agreement have never been louder or more unified. Poorer countries have been emboldened with even greater support than ever. They are not going to lie down or shut up. And neither are we. We move forward with thousands of organisations and groups with a common purpose of building an even stronger call for climate justice in 2010.

Over the next few weeks we will be building our strategy for the way forward. We will need your help. The fight for environmental sustainability has never been more urgent. The fight for environmental justice has never been more timely. And the need for ordinary people to stand up for our beautiful planet and the millions that live on it has never been greater. The world needs a global climate justice movement and we need you to help us build that movement.