



Cancún establishes the basis for an upward spiral in international climate protection

A brief evaluation of the climate summit 2010

The 16th Climate Summit in Mexico (29 November - 10 December 2010) has reached a respectable result through the Cancún Agreement.

The Mexican presidency, led by Foreign Minister Patricia Espinosa, has performed her job very well and, with foresight and good communication, guided the overwhelming majority of the community into a forward-looking consensus. Although Bolivia's sole vote against allowed for no unanimity, this should not lead to problems due to the generous interpretation of the "UN consensus". Content-wise, Bolivia's protests point more symbolically to the still insufficient ambition in the climate process.

One can perhaps say that, with Cancún, the major emerging economies have, to some extent, assumed the lead in the global negotiation process. After Mexico, namely South Africa (next Climate summit in 2011) and Brazil (Rio-plus-20 summit 2012) carry the central responsibility as the hosts of the next major summits.

Already in Copenhagen, it became clear that the "big bang" approach in the form of a comprehensive top-down approach to international climate protection has failed for the foreseeable future. This failure became definite when the US, by letting its climate bill fail, placed itself on the sidelines of international climate policy. In Cancún, a strategic realignment of international climate policy was attempted. On the one hand, this consists of the combination of bottom-up and top-down approaches. (One attempts to agree on further global goals in a legally binding agreement and insists that national targets be improved accordingly. However, the improved goals depend foremost on national, regional and plurilateral constructive dynamics from the bottom.) On the other hand, it consists of the gradual construction of an upwards spiral.

The comeback of international climate policy in Cancún could serve as a basis to setting such an upward spiral in motion on the international level. Such a success was not only necessary to set a new impulse for climate protection, but it was also useful in proving, for a second time - after the Nagoya biodiversity summit in October 2010 - the UN's capacity to act. In hindsight, the success of Cancún, however, depends largely on whether the intended upwards spiral has actually been set in motion. All the world is watching the - apart from the US - largest climate powers: China and the EU. In the coming year, will the EU decide, without ifs and buts, on a 30 percent emission reduction target for 2020 (compared to 1990)? Will Germany, due to the Cancún agreement, dissolve the block of its special budget for international climate finance? Will China improve its already announced action package, for example by the introduction of an emissions trading system, and its goals, such as for renewable energies, through the coming Five-year plan in March 2011? If these two giants move, it would be a sign that the rectification process for the now clearly too weak goals is underway. We are now heading for a temperature increase of four degrees Celsius. However, according to the Cancún Agreement, we shouldn't be at more than two degrees. By 2015, we should consider whether this needs to be constricted to 1.5 degrees. In the coming year it should also be determined when the peak for global emissions should be reached and which global emission reduction goals will be set for 2050.

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16 December 2010