

# The Summit at Doha: The Climate Boat casts off without Mast and Sail

On the 8th of December 2012 at 7 pm local time, after a long time of waiting and trembling, the moment had finally come: the package of decisions prepared within two weeks of negotiations at the 18th UN climate summit was in the end adopted by the Parties to the Convention. Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah, president of the conference from the OPEC and host country Qatar, who had been considered rather critically during the conference, made an essential contribution to this by virtually hammering through the remaining decision texts – with little regard for the brakesmen but all the more regard for the international community. The whole package was presented to the public as „Doha Climate Gateway“.

Main elements of the package are the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, decisions on international climate finance as well as a decision on the continuation of the work programme and the establishment of an institution to deal with climate-related loss and damage. Moreover, the strand of negotiations about long-term cooperation (AWG-LCA) that began in Bali in 2007 was finished, and corner points for a negotiation plan on a new international climate agreement in 2015 were concretised by the „Ad-Hoc Working Group Durban Platform for Enhanced Action“ (ADP) that was installed last year.

The Doha agreement – although disappointing compared to the scale of action that is actu-

ally needed – finally prevented a big damage to the international efforts to fight the climate crisis. However, considering current negotiation strategies of the most important countries the dynamic that would be essential to react in a serious and ambitious way to the increasingly urgent problem of climate change and to combat the energy- and food crisis connected to it will not be able to emerge. The EU also has to accept a certain amount of criticism – despite the dedicated behaviour of the German Federal Environment Minister Altmaier during the decisive hours of the summit.

## Kyoto II – the remaining body of a big tanker ship

The second commitment period (CP2) of the Kyoto Protocol is only the remaining body of a former big ship. It will only cover about 15 percent of global emissions, with the EU at its centre. In addition countries like Norway, Switzerland and Australia – amongst others – will participate. Not included will be Russia, Japan and New Zealand. Canada withdrew from the Kyoto Protocol already last year.

After controversial negotiations it was decided that the CP2 should last till the end of 2020, not only till 2017 as demanded by many developing countries. Countries that do not bring in an emission reduction commitment will not be able to participate in the flexible mechanisms in which the reductions of CO<sub>2</sub> emission from projects in developing countries can be credited against the own climate change objectives. This had in particular been demanded by Japan. Utilisation of so-called „hot air“ (excessive emission allowances) from CP1 has been restricted and by this an excessive swelling of loopholes could be avoided. However, this could lead to the exit of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and the Ukraine. A mechanism to raise ambition was agreed for 2014 that is supposed to lead to more stringent emission reduction commitments. By this the Kyoto architecture is persisting, and the question arises which of its good elements will be included in the future agreement.



A demonstration of civil society groups during the climate summit on the streets of Doha.

Photo: Lisa Meier

## Mitigation in industrialised and developing countries: no concrete steps

Besides the Kyoto Protocol mitigation in industrialised and developing countries was also negotiated in the context of the termination of the AWG-LCA as well as the ADP. The result was restricted to two work programs with the aim of further clarification of the current climate protection pledges. With the termination of the AWG-LCA the first of the so-called periodic reviews is initiated that is supposed to deliver the basis for raising commitments through inclusion of the findings of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change between 2013 and 2015 amongst other things.

There has been no progress concerning the question of a global peak of the emissions („peak year“), just as little as concerning a global reduction goal. Just as much disappointing are the developments in the international shipping and aviation sector. The negotiated text concerning this topic, written according to the Kyoto Protocol in a rather soft language, was even completely cancelled in the end.

## Climate Finance

The period of fast-start finance – the promise of the industrialised countries in Copenhagen to provide 30 billion US-Dollars between 2010 and 2012 for activities in the mitigation and adaptation area in developing countries – closes. Therefore it was on the agenda of Doha to get reliable commitments for the next years as well as to agree upon the first steps towards a reliable pathway towards 2020. By then 100 billion US-Dollars per year should be mobilised by the industrialised countries for climate ac-

tion in developing countries. The result of the finance negotiations in Doha has finally to be considered as disappointing. Some industrialised countries, including Germany, have made concrete commitments that add up to 8 billion US-Dollars per year in 2013. It remains unclear if the industrialised countries really aim to achieve their promise from 2009 related to 2020. The decision of the continuation of the work program on long-term finance is a possibility to negotiate a road map for raising climate finance, not more. Important though is the request towards the industrialised countries to present their strategies of raising until 2020 at the next climate summit. This is an important step especially as the USA so far rejected all necessity of being accountable internationally on these matters. Moreover, there will be a high-ranking round table of ministers in particular on the topic of climate finance at the climate summit in Poland (COP 19).

## Climate-related loss and damage attracts an unseen political attention

That the „bigheads“, high-level climate negotiators, do not only deal with mitigation and finance, but also with the effects of climate change has been unusual so far. The more important appears the negotiation dynamic that developed in the last night of the conference around the topic of „Loss and Damage“ (see e.g. [www.lossanddamage.net](http://www.lossanddamage.net)). This is especially about negative impacts of climate change that can no longer be prevented by mitigation or adaptation efforts. Especially the Small Island States - many of them threatened by the physical destruction through climate change - and the poorest developing countries (LDCs) highlighted the need to address this growing problem and demanded the establishment of an international mechanism.

In the light of the foreseeable miserable results in the field of mitigation the topic suddenly developed towards a dealmaker or rather dealbreaker, which led to the appearance of the US-negotiator Todd Stern, surrounded by several advocates, at two o'clock in the morning in the corresponding negotiation space. The UNFCCC executive secretary was there as well and a short time before this the EU Climate Action Commissioner made a statement on the topic. Because of the high pressure that the concerned developing countries as well as civil society were able to develop even the USA fi-



Delegates of the youth organisation „youthinkgreen“ with Federal Environment Minister Altmaier (left) and Christoph Bals (right) during a press conference.  
Photo: Lisa Meier

nally had to approve the decision that basically decides on the establishment of a specific institution on „Loss and Damage“. How this will look like, whether it will become an international mechanism, will be subject to discussions in 2013.

Moreover there were decisions made about the support of the Least Developed Countries in their development of national adaptation plans and about the three year work programme of the Adaptation Committee.

## Without tailwind on the way towards 2015

For the negotiation process towards a new climate agreement including all Parties, main points for a road map towards 2015 exist now. However, this road map is less concrete than demanded by many countries. It can not be talked of a real political tailwind from the USA, from China or not even from the EU. At the climate summit in three years in Paris a new agreement is supposed to be approved that should include differentiated commitments for all countries and is supposed to come into effect in 2020. Already one year in advance an accepted draft text as a basis for the negotiations is supposed to be available, that from mid-2015 would than be the official negotiation text and to serve as a basis of the COP 21 at the End of 2015.

The year of 2014 could become a nucleus of the dynamics in climate policy. Not only the last parts of the 5th IPCC Report are to be published. In addition, it was agreed that the countries that take part in the CP2 of the Kyoto Protocol revisit their emission targets. Of course a raise in the ambition of the countries not included in the CP2 should be discussed as well. To support the negotiations politically there is supposed to be a ministerial roundtable at the preliminary negotiations in Bonn in June 2014 as well as in September a meeting of the Heads of States or Governments initiated by an invitation of the UN Secretary-General. The fact that in the provisional negotiation text in Doha the goal for this summit - the mobilisation of political will for more ambition - was removed in the end speaks volumes about the insufficiently constructive negotiations of some states.

## Do climate summits still make sense?

A look into the national and international media after such a climate summit with insufficient



Jan Burck and Christoph Bals together with Wendel Trio of CAN International are presenting the Climate Change Performance Index 2013. Photo: Lisa Meier

results leads to the (repeated) question: How much sense does this process make that brings together more than 10.000 people in one place of the world at each end of the year (with a corresponding amount of flight emissions) and which results each year fall short of the urgent needs? Almost instinctively nearly every year the question is posed if other processes, e.g. the G20, could be a better alternative.

In the opinion of Germanwatch this question misses the point. If the size and severity of the challenge of climate change is taken into account it is absolutely clear that necessary changes are only to be achieved with a sufficient political will. If this political will does not exist, as in the present situation, there is no political process that can compensate this deficit. The G20 as the global political centre of power over the last years has dealt with climate issues again and again. All in all the results were extremely poor. Also the promise to allow the subsidies for fossil energies to expire was put into action by very few activities so far. During the discussions on innovative sources of climate finance the Finance Ministers were rightly involved, however with no concrete results so far.

The G20 lacks on the one hand a legally-binding assertiveness and on the other hand a politico-moral pressure on the part of the world public and the particularly vulnerable developing countries that do not have an as strong voice as at the UN climate negotiation anywhere else. Therefore the climate summit also offers a unreplaceable chance for the global public opinion. At least once a year the topic appears as prominent in the medias as during the summit, the governments all over the world are in the spotlight and have to show how they face this problem.

Neither G20 nor UNFCCC are able to find a short-term solution to the problems if the political will is missing. These general circumstances do not supersede both of them, but help to assess their effectiveness and the expectations towards them (and nevertheless point at the insufficiency of their results). Of course it has to be worked on how to make these processes more efficient and effective. International law can only be established by the UN process, not by the G20.

However, the necessary dynamic does not come from these summits. Countries have to take a leading role. Germany with its energy turnaround is in a key position. Moreover, alliances between different pioneer states have to be established that advance the whole process and bring dynamic back to the summits. In addition, for the next years it is central that these alliances also bridge the gaps between the old blocs of industrialised countries and developing countries. As long as the situation is experienced as a negotiation constellation „north against south“ a blockade of the climate policy is pre-programmed. At this point an intelligent alliance strategy is needed that includes particularly affected states as well as particularly ambitious countries and at the same time develops a connection towards the relevant stakeholders. Without such a dynamic there will be no considerable progress in international climate mitigation. The UN process in turn represents the haven to transform this progress into international law.

## The way towards 2015: Europe in the focus

The next years will decide on the question if it is still possible to reach the two-degree-target or if this goal has to be buried at the climate summit in 2015, with all the humanitarian and ecological disastrous consequences resulting from this. The EU is playing a key role in this. It has to prepare for the next climate summits in a completely different way and has to achieve the CO2 reduction target of 30 percent. Two of the three summits to come are taking place in EU-countries, 2013 in Poland and 2015 in France. There is a need of a well coordinated, three year strategy of the EU to massively advance international climate policy. In particular the eyes of many countries turn hopefully towards the German chancellor.

The EU has to develop an over-all strategy that also places the aspect of building alliances to the forefront. The EU diplomatic service has to support the negotiators of the EU systematically and strategically over the next three years. Moreover it is central to carry on serious negotiations with Poland and close them as soon as possible. The results have to offer the possibility to Poland to combine ambitious climate objectives with a strategy of energy security and their own sustainability goals. It would be a fire signal for the ability to act of the EU if Poland as the host of the next climate summit would present itself as problematic as this time. If the EU with its leading position presents itself as feeble as in Doha it will turn from the major beacon of hope towards the failure of climate policy.

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**Germanwatch team during the climate summit at Doha.**  
Photo: Lisa Meier

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