

Germanwatch Briefing on the climate summit in Cancún 2010

- Up to the climate summit in Copenhagen, international climate policy followed the strategy to achieve a "big bang" in the form of an international climate agreement covering the commitment period until 2020. At least for the time being, the window of opportunity for such an approach has closed after the moderate results of Copenhagen and the recent political developments in the US. Nevertheless, the UN climate summit in Cancun (29 November - 10 December 2010) must build the foundations for a reasonable new strategy to prevent dangerous climate change. The text presented some days ago by the chair of the LCA working group can - together with a balanced package decision under the Kyoto Protocol - be developed as a good basis for this ground work.
- At the negotiations, the mantra "nothing is decided until everything is decided" which has prevailed until now must be replaced by "nothing is decided until enough is decided".
- The negotiations in Cancún, Mexico, have to be assessed in the light of action currently going on in the different regions of the world and the dynamically evolving landscape of coalitions; currently, there is much more going on in these areas than in the UN climate negotiations.
- An "upward spiral" for the coming years has to be initiated in Cancún. Its first upward turn should be initiated in Cancún (2010) and South Africa (2011). At first, in a bottom-up process, the results of negotiations achieved until now should be safeguarded by decisions. In so doing, it is important to come to decisions formalising the voluntary commitments of industrialised countries, emerging economies and developing countries not as maximum but as minimum goals. Furthermore, it is important to decide first packages of action (such as financing, rain forest protection, adaptation or technology cooperation) and to start "immediately" with the implementation. At the same time, the foundations for the next upward turn of the spiral should be laid. It consists of a science-driven top-down approach by which the targets could be tightened in 2014-15. In order to make this happen, the two-degree limit - again as a minimum - has to be embedded in the "shared vision". Cancún should agree upon the 2°-Limit. Not later than in South Africa there should be agreement on comparable rules for reporting and accounting. At the same time, a review process must be initiated in Cancun. It should initially (2011-2012) analyse how large the gap is between the targets and action packages for 2020 which will be (hopefully) accepted in Cancún on the one hand and the 2°C (or even 1.5 °C) limit on the other; in the second phase of the review process a strategy should be developed how this gap can be closed. Finally it should lead to (one or two) legally binding agreements in 2014-2015 which, accordingly, do some touching-up on the minimum targets, action packages and finance targets agreed upon in 2011/12.

Phase three: Top-down approach

- improving of reduction and finance goals
- and of action packages
- legally binding

Phase one:

Bottom-up approach

- voluntary commitments and action packages are formalised
- first packages (rainforest etc.) are implemented
- phase three is set drawn up

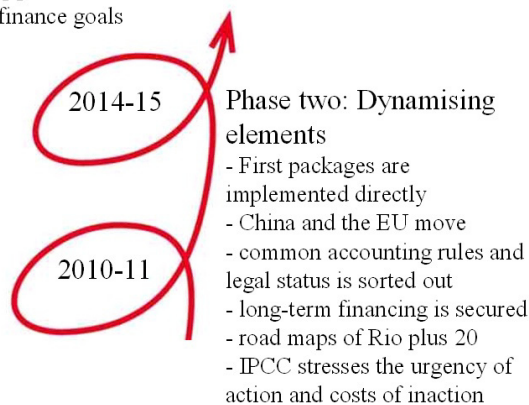


Figure: The bottom-up approach formalises decisions on the basis of existing willingness for targets and negotiation packages. It safeguards international climate protection against a "back sliding effect". It can operationalise many of the decisions immediately - without a time-consuming ratification process. On a scientific basis, the top-down approach closes gaps produced by the bottom-up approach. It secures globally valid and therefore comparable standards and accounting rules as well as legal bindingness. The dynamising elements create pressure for action and dynamics - and thereby increase the readiness to actually decide the necessary implementation strategies and tightenend goals of the top-down approach.

- But why should countries be ready for accepting tightened goals in 2015? Because dynamic elements can be initiated between the two turns of the spiral in 2010/2011 and 2014/2015. The following should be part of them: Climate action packages (e.g., for rain forest protection, adaptation, technology cooperation) are operationalized immediately. Long-term financing and innovative finance instruments are agreed upon in 2011/2012; a fair decision on international aviation and shipping should be part of this package. In 2012, the EU and China accept tightened commitments and actions, respectively, in the debate about the 30% target (EU) and in the new five-year plan (China). At the Rio-plus-20 summit in Brazil (2012), road maps for green economy and sustainable development are agreed upon; The next IPCC report (2014) points to the urgency and economic advantages of ambitious action, as can be already anticipated today when looking at recent scientific results published in peer-reviewed literature on climate change. Only on the basis of such a package (including additional elements) which triggers positive dynamics, is there the political chance for the necessary improvements of the international climate package.
- Above all, a failure of Cancún is possible due to the unsolved questions
 - on the legal form (Does Kyoto continue? Do we get a second legally binding agreement with China and the US? Do we get a common agreement - either as a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol or a new agreement under the Convention? ...);
 - on the comparability of obligations (Does the US have to accomplish progress comparable to the other industrialized countries with regard to the reduction and finance targets? Do the obligations of China and other emerging economies need to have same legal status as the ones of industrialized countries - even if the obligations can have a different quality with regard to their substance?) .
 - The disappointment over the intransparent and to a large extent not "new and additional" fast-start financing agreed upon in Copenhagen can also lead to total blockade.
- Hence, a complete failure of Cancún cannot be excluded.

This would not threaten the UNFCCC process as such, but it would question its relevance and the problem-solving capacity of the UN.

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The full briefing paper is available in German at:

www.germanwatch.org/klima/c16bp.htm

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