



African dynamics at the climate change negotiations

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The climate change negotiations in Cancun saved the multilateral negotiation process under the UNFCCC, but what were the African political dynamics at the negotiations? In this Africa policy brief the international climate change negotiations are analysed as a “political marketplace”¹ where international, regional and national agendas meet and have an impact that goes far beyond the theme of the negotiations. It addresses three questions to understand the African political processes at the climate negotiations. First, why did the African Union endorse the Copenhagen Accord after COP 15? Second, why was Kenya so active in the high-level segment of the negotiations in Cancun? Third, what could South Africa do to bring the negotiations forward in Durban?

The aftermath of the Copenhagen Summit.

In this first section the post-Copenhagen developments will be put in context to analyse the possible reasons why the African Union (AU) endorsed the Copenhagen Accord. In the aftermath of the Copenhagen Summit, the African nations reaffirmed their commitment to the Common Position.² This meant that the AU continued to put emphasis on: financial compensation for natural, economic and social resources that have been lost and the historical responsibility of developed countries with regard to climate change; the reduction of GHG emissions by developed countries by at least 40% below 1990 threshold by 2020 and a

least 80% to 95% by 2050; the firewall between developing and developed countries imbedded in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities; and a two-track outcome. One track should stipulate the future commitments by developed countries party to the Kyoto Protocol, which did not include the US.³ These themes also correspond to the building blocks of the Bali Action Plan (BAP): shared vision, mitigation, adaptation and means of implementation in the areas of finance, technological and capacity-building support.⁴

These themes were still very much present at COP 16, as the demands of the African Group did not change significantly from Copenhagen to Cancun. The emphasis on the link between climate change and economic development, as was already emphasised in the Nairobi Declaration of 2009⁵, has been further stressed by several African actors, from South African negotiator Alf Wills⁶ to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)⁷. Hence the reason for the focus on climate change during the Seventh African Development Forum. For the African negotiators the emphasis still lies on the right to develop and on limiting the impact of climate change on development. The idea behind this right to develop is the fact that Africa is still underdeveloped and their contribution to climate change is marginal⁸.

1 De Waal, A 2009 Mission without end? Peacekeeping in the African political marketplace *International Affairs* 85:1 (2009) 99-113.

2 Compilation of decisions – 13 th session of AMCEN held in Bamako, Mali in June, 2010 UNEP, 25 June 2010, p. 2

3 These negotiations were held in the Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP).

4 Report on climate change and development in Africa, UNECA, 2 March 2010

5 Nairobi Declaration on the African Process for Combating Climate Change, UNEP, 29 May 2009

6 Africa weighs options as Japan prepares to rescind Kyoto Protocol, NEPAD, 4 December 2010

7 Report on climate change and development in Africa, UNECA, 2 March 2010

8 The GHG emissions of the African continent are about 4% of the emissions world wide.

In February 2010, at the first AU Assembly after COP 15, the AU reaffirmed their commitment to the African Common Position after Copenhagen, while also calling for an endorsement of the Copenhagen Accord⁹. However, compared to the pre-Copenhagen position and the radical stance the African countries took before COP 15, the Accord promised very little. Instead of the proposed 40% reductions by 2020 and 80 to 95% by 2050 for industrialised countries, the Accord referred only vaguely to “quantified economy-wide emissions targets for 2020”, which were then notified to the UNFCCC Secretariat in January-February 2010.¹⁰ Instead of the demanded financial transfers of 1.5% of developed country GDP yearly for adaptation and mitigation¹¹, the Accord spoke of only \$30 billion fast-track financing and \$100 billion a year by 2020. It remains unclear why the AU officially endorsed the Copenhagen Accord. There are several possible reasons for the endorsement ranging from internal cohesion to external political and financial pressure.

The support for the Copenhagen Accord by the AU could be political backing for Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, as leader of the African delegation by the African Union Commission. Zenawi played a prominent role at the Copenhagen Summit, which included the participation of the African Group in the last high-level talks resulting in the Copenhagen Accord¹². Despite the fact that Copenhagen did not produce the expected results and even though a rift between Zenawi and the Sudanese delegation headed by Lumumba Di-Aping undermined the African Common Position, Zenawi was lauded for his leadership in Copenhagen and reappointed as African delegation leader for the next two COPs, in Cancun and Durban respectively. A rejection of the outcome of COP 15 – the Copenhagen Accord – by the AU would have undermined Zenawi’s position. It seems Zenawi has managed to consolidate his leading role after Copenhagen, while Zenawi’s main African opponent at the negotiations, Sudan, no longer holds the prominent position of chair of the G77+China and seems to be isolated within AU on several accounts. The ICC’s arrest warrant

against Sudanese President Omar Al Bashir seems to have isolated him on the continent. Most notably, Al Bashir’s presence was blocked at the Africa-EU Summit in Tripoli in November 2010, at the request of host country Libya¹³. Despite Libyan support to Sudan regarding the South Sudanese referendum¹⁴ and Bashir’s ICC arrest warrant – Libya was one of the first countries to receive Bashir after the warrant was announced¹⁵ – the fact that Libya asked Bashir to stay out of Tripoli was significant, even if the relations between the two countries had been strained for some time over the presence of Darfur rebel leader Khalil Ibrahim in Libya.¹⁶

Leaked diplomatic documents show American and European political and financial pressure on Africa to accept the Accord. For instance, both the European Commission¹⁷ and the Dutch government¹⁸ expressed the willingness to link development aid to the acceptance of the Accord. Prime Minister Zenawi was put under pressure by the US to defend the Copenhagen Accord at the AU. According to disclosed US diplomatic cables there was a meeting between the US and Ethiopia on 31 January 2010 in Addis Abeba where Zenawi said he would defend the Copenhagen Accord at the AU. But he expressed his disappointment that despite President Obama’s personal assurance to him that funding committed in Copenhagen would be made available, he had received word from contacts at the UN that the US was not supportive of Ethiopia’s proposal for a panel to monitor financial pledges regarding climate change.¹⁹ This meeting might have been an additional reason to nominate Meles Zenawi as co-chair of the High-Level Advisory Group of the UN Secretary-General on Climate Change Financing on the 12th of February 2010.²⁰

9 Climate change report, debate and decision, Addis Ababa Highlights, UNEP, February 2010, p. 3

10 Report of the Conference of the Parties on its fifteenth session, held in Copenhagen from 7 to 19 December 2009, UNFCCC, 30 March 2010, p. 6

11 CAHOSCC 2009, concept note African Union of First meeting

12 See J.-C. Hoste, Where was united Africa in the climate change negotiations?, February 2010

13 Govt Outraged After Libya Asks Bashir to Skip Africa-EU Summit, *allafrica.com*, 29 November 2010, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201011290166.html>

14 Sudan secession will be dangerous precedent: Gaddafi, *Reuters*, 10 October 2010, <http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFJ0E69905U20101010>

15 Sudan’s Bashir goes to Libya, defying ICC, *Reuters*, 29 March 2009, http://www.reuters.com/article/2009/03/26/idUSLQ938918_CH_-2400

16 Sudan closes borders with Libya amid growing diplomatic tensions, *Sudan Tribune*, 28 June 2010, <http://www.sudantribune.com/Sudan-closes-borders-with-Libya,35522>

17 US embassy cables: EU raises ‘creative accounting’ with US over climate aid, *The Guardian*, 3 December 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/us-embassy-cables-documents/249185>

18 US embassy cables: Netherlands links aid money to support for climate deal, *The Guardian*, 3 December 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/us-embassy-cables-documents/246026>

19 US embassy cables: US urges Ethiopia to back Copenhagen climate accord, *The Guardian*, 3 December 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/us-embassy-cables-documents/246644>

20 UN Secretary-General’s High-level Advisory Group on Climate Change Financing (AGF), <http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/climatechange/pages/financeadvisorygroup>

African Negotiation Strategy

In this section the African negotiation strategy and the possible reason behind the active role of Kenya in the high-level section of the negotiations will be scrutinised. Kenya is a case in point illustrating that partnerships which are put forward during the climate change negotiations go far beyond the topic of these negotiations. They serve national and regional political and economic agenda's that have nothing to do with the negotiations.

Before the example of Kenya is analysed, the reinforcement of the African negotiation strategy will be elaborated. Since Prime Minister Zenawi became head of the African delegation at COP 15 he was ready to compromise with the leaders of the industrialised countries as long as they assured him that funds would be made available for Africa to deal with the consequences of climate change. The joint statements he made with France²¹ and the EU²² and the assurances he had from the US²³ are proof of this approach that continued in 2010.

Both Meles Zenawi and the Chair of the African Union Commission Jean Ping noted the need for a united African voice with a strong negotiation team. Aside from reaffirming the African Common Position and reappointing Meles Zenawi as Chair of the Conference of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC), the AU moved forward with strengthening its negotiating structure. To that end the Bureau of the African Group of Technical Negotiators was established in Nairobi.²⁴ The African Union Assembly commissioned CAHOSCC to make a proposal on "Streamlining African Climate Change Negotiating Strategy Structure at the Ministers and Experts Levels", which CAHOSCC discussed at the Ministerial Summit in Bamako on 23 June 2010 and presented to the Assembly in Kampala in July 2010. The proposal included the establishment of a Bureau for the African Group of Technical Negotiators, moving towards

more structural cooperation in the climate change negotiations.²⁵ The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was appointed as Coordinator at Expert level. Although the appointment of a coordinator at expert level was a necessity, its installation clearly indicated the disparity of the African Group between the expert's and the high-level section of the negotiations.

The African Group did not take on a confrontational approach in Cancun. The head of the African expert delegation Tosi Mpanu Mpanu ruled out a walkout at the beginning of COP 16.²⁶ The African delegation continued to work on the basis of the Common Position, but did not have high hopes of seeing a satisfactory agreement signed at Cancun. Observers also noted a distinctly more low-profile approach compared to the tactics used in 2009. On the expert's level, the African Group spoke with one voice, though not always with the same style. There was a stark contrast between Mpanu Mpanu's diplomatic approach and the aggressive and confrontational tone of the Nigerian delegation.²⁷

The consensus of the African negotiators during the technical sessions was contrasted by the divergent African voices heard during the high-level segment. According to observers, many African countries came forward with statements in the name of Africa, often diverging from the common position. It was difficult to distinguish a consistent African position. For instance, Meles Zenawi noted that the Copenhagen Accord should be the basis of the talks at COP 16 in Cancun, a marked divergence from the previously agreed common position.²⁸ This move could be the result of American pressure to support the Accord.²⁹ In general the differences between the African delegations during the high-level segment were significant. Africa still speaks with different voices, especially the stronger regional powers, such as Ethiopia, South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria. However, these differences did not show any big disagreements compared to the

21 On 15 December 2009 President Sarkozy and Prime Minister Zenawi made a joint statement, <http://www.ambafrance-us.org/climate/appeal-by-france-and-ethiopia-for-an-ambitious-copenhagen-accord/>

22 On 16 December the Danish Presidency of the conference the EU and Prime Minister Zenawi made a joint statement Africa lowers climate cash demands to boost Copenhagen deal chances, 17 December 2009, <http://euobserver.com/19/29171>

23 President Obama gave Prime Minister Zenawi assurances in Copenhagen according to the latter. US embassy cables: US urges Ethiopia to back Copenhagen climate accord, *The Guardian*, 3 December 2010

24 Assembly of the African Union - Fifteenth Ordinary Session 25-27 July 2010, African Union, 27 July 2010

25 Ibid.

26 Lead Africa negotiator says continent will stay course in Cancun negotiations, UNECA, 1 December 2010, http://www.uneca.org/acpc/index.php?Page=pr92_2010&Dir=news/2010

27 Interview of the authors with an observer at the negotiations in Cancun in Brussels on 29/03/11

28 Cancun climate change summit: How Africa's voice has been hijacked, *The Guardian*, 10 December 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2010/dec/10/cancun-climate-change-summit-africa>

29 US embassy cables: US urges Ethiopia to back Copenhagen climate accord, *The Guardian*, 3 December 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/us-embassy-cables-documents/246644>

fundamental fissure between Sudan and Ethiopia in Copenhagen. This should not be surprising, though: the main purpose of COP 16 was to save the UNFCCC process. After the debacle in Copenhagen, faith in the multilateral process had been all but lost. The comparison with the Doha Development Round was striking: the failure of the Doha Round to come to a global trade agreement continues to undermine the credibility of multilateralism and has led to its international neglect.³⁰ If Cancun³¹ did not produce an agreement, the UNFCCC and even climate change in general could become a lower priority for governments.³²

Interestingly, Kenya was a noteworthy actor in Cancun at the high-level segment of the negotiations. Kenya had been somewhat absent from the international arena since the 2007-2008 crisis. The country is still coming to terms with the fact that they are no longer considered as Kingmakers in the Horn of Africa. Furthermore, Kenya had not played an important role in the climate change negotiations over the past years. That is why its prominent presence in Cancun came rather as a surprise. Kenya was quite actively looking for political support in the run-up to Cancun, as France and Kenya announced a joint initiative to provide fast-track financing for clean energy in the East African country.³³ Later, France also expressed support for the expansion and strengthening of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and its headquarters based in the Kenyan capital Nairobi in the framework of the Franco-Kenyan global partnership.³⁴ This partnership should also be seen against the backdrop of the move towards more African representation in the G20 and the UN Security Council (UNSC). As Chair of the G20, France has been pushing for UNSC reform,

including the possibility of two African permanent seats.³⁵ Kenya's search for political support has an impact that goes far beyond the climate negotiations. Kenya wanted to show itself to the international community as a resurfacing player in East Africa besides Ethiopia, that had taken centre stage at these negotiations so far.

What Kenyan Prime Minister Raila Odinga said in Cancun was all the more remarkable: he stated that a second commitment under the Kyoto Protocol was not a priority.³⁶ This statement was oddly similar to the Japanese announcement that they would not support a second commitment period for the Kyoto Protocol. Observers noted that Odinga's statement was drafted by a Japanese official suggesting an alliance between the two countries.³⁷ Growing financial ties between Japan and Kenya, and Kenya's drive to increase its economic influence in the region, specifically in South Sudan, could be behind this move. Kenya has been trying to increase the political and economic ties with South Sudan in the run-up to the latter's independence.³⁸ Nairobi and Juba have been discussing a 1,400 km pipeline running from South Sudan's capital Juba to Kenya's Lamu port on the Indian Ocean. This pipeline would provide landlocked South Sudan with an alternative to Port Sudan on the Red Sea. The Japanese company Toyota Tsusho has made plans to invest \$1.5bn in the pipeline, making Japan a major investor in Kenyan-South Sudanese economic relations,³⁹ though China might help fund the project as well.⁴⁰ Despite Sudanese protests⁴¹, these economic relations with South Sudan seem to be intensifying, as aside from the pipeline, three other major proposed projects will connect South Sudan and Kenya: the new Kenyan seaport in Lamu; a railway network connecting Uganda, Ethiopia and Kenya to Juba; and an extension of the Trans-

30 The world will regret its neglect of Doha, Financial Times, 26 January 2011, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/7b120acc-2986-11e0-bb9b-00144feab49a.html#axzz1aW7D3CoT>

31 The Cancun Accord includes a general framework instead of detailed decisions on adaptation, mitigation, technology transfer or monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV), nor did it provide a lot of progress on financing issues. There were no agreements on the sources of financing and the structure of the Green Climate Fund (the design of which was left to the Transitional Committee to devise), while the additionality and public sources of the fast-track financing were not ensured. It was only on more technical and politically less sensitive issues like REDD+ that Cancun managed to present some progress.

32 Scenarios: Fallout of success or failure at Cancun talks, Reuters, 8 December 2010, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/12/08/us-climate-scenarios-idUSTRE6B76QP20101208>

33 France Backs Push for UNEP Upgrade, *allafrica.com*, 23 February 2011, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201102240177.html>

34 France says Africa must be on Security Council, Reuters, 31 May 2010, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/05/31/us-africa-summit-france-idUSTRE64U2XY20100531>

35 Statement of RT. Hon Raila A Odinga, EGH, MP, Prime Minister of the Republic of Kenya at COP 16, 7 December 2010

36 Cancun climate change summit: How Africa's voice has been hijacked, *The Guardian*, 10 December 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2010/dec/10/cancun-climate-change-summit-africa>

37 Kenya reaps billions from Sudanese separation plan, *Business Daily*, 1 June 2010, <http://www.businessdailyafrica.com/Company%20Industry/Kenya%20reaps%20billions%20from%20Sudanese%20separation%20separation%20plan/-/539550/929646/-/view/printVersion/-/7i0fnwz/-/index.html>

38 Japan group eyes oil pipeline plan, *Financial Times*, 3 March 2010, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/73668096-26ee-11df-8c08-00144feabdc0.html#axzz1aW7D3CoT>

39 Bids invited for new Kenya port, *BBC News*, 13 September 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-11288404>

41 Kenya-Sudan Oil Pipeline Still Possible, *Voice of America*, 13 July 2010, <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/africa/Kenya-Sudan-Oil-Pipeline-Still-Possible-98346414.html>

African Highway Network linking South Sudan to Mombasa, Kenya.⁴² Furthermore, Kenya is facing elections in 2012 and the move of the government towards greater international standing could be seen as an attempt at securing the domestic vote.

Kenya also stands to benefit from greater regional influence in the Horn of Africa as it has been driving the so-called Jubaland Initiative, in order to create a buffer zone between itself and the conflict in Somalia.⁴³ Kenya is home to almost 500,000 Somali refugees and could be destabilised by a growing amount of refugees, piracy money and arms passing the border. However, Ethiopia has voiced its opposition to the initiative, stating that the Kenyan move could stoke secessionist movements in Ethiopia's Ogaden region. The region is of great concern to the Ethiopian government as the relations between the Somali majority in Ogaden and the Ethiopian central government have been strained and an armed insurgency has been waging there for decades. In order to have a chance to push its initiative through Kenya needs to gain international clout to face Ethiopian opposition. The issue of the refugees is certainly not new, because these two countries have been arguing about it for years, but Kenya clearly saw a momentum.

Kenya might thus have tried to use these political and economic partnerships to reinforce its position in relation to its direct neighbours Ethiopia and South Sudan with regard to issues that have nothing to do with climate change. The same applies for Kenya's partners at the climate change negotiations, Japan and France. They knew very well that the partnership with Kenya had economic and political interest for them that went far beyond the statements made at the climate change negotiations. What is surprising is that these industrialised partners did not realise that those partnerships can shift easily. If another country comes along with a proposal that goes beyond the economic and political interest of the former, the partnership changes. This is what happened at Copenhagen when Sudan was promised the prospect of loans or investments by China when it would adhere to the Chinese diplomatic line.⁴⁴ That was one of

the reasons why the African Common Position at Copenhagen collapsed. At Cancun this was not the case because the common interest of the negotiation partners was to save the UNFCCC process.

The BASIC group: where does South Africa fit in?

The following two sections will analyse what role South Africa could play as the host country, major African country and member of BASIC to bring the negotiations forward in Durban. In 2009, BASIC became a new player. The grouping of several emerging economies – Brazil, South Africa, India and China – played an important role in the Copenhagen Summit and the brokering of the Copenhagen Accord. In the course of 2010, the Ministers of the BASIC countries met four times to further coordinate their negotiating positions and cooperate on mitigation and adaptation actions, though no concrete goals or positions have been voiced. They continued to push for a two-track approach and stressed the importance of the Bali Road Map, while still endorsing the Copenhagen Accord as a useful political understanding. BASIC continued to present itself as a group of leading developing countries and stress their alignment with the G77+China.⁴⁵ BASIC reached out to the broader G77+China in the form of the “BASIC-plus approach”. It invited representatives from Yemen (Chair of the G77+China) and Argentina (upcoming Chair of the G77+China), Ethiopia (representing Africa), Grenada (for AOSIS) and Egypt (for the Arab Group) to participate as observers during the last meeting before COP 16.⁴⁶ However, the economic and political differences between the BASIC countries are so vast, that it remains unclear how strong this alliance can be. South Africa and Brazil can be seen as the more moderate actors in the BASIC group: South Africa because of its relations with the African countries and their sense of urgency; Brazil because it has shown an openness to compromise and has already heavily invested in renewable energy.⁴⁷ India and China have

42 Sudan: Regional Perspectives on the Prospect of Southern Independence, International Crisis Group, 6 May 2010, p. 3

43 Former Somali Defense Minister Named President of Jubaland, Bloomberg, 4 April 2011, <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2011-04-04/former-somali-defense-minister-named-president-of-jubaland.html>

44 See J.-C. Hoste, Where was united Africa in the climate change negotiations?, February 2010

45 Third Meeting of BASIC Group Issues Joint Statement, IISD, 25 April 2010, <http://africasd.iisd.org/news/third-meeting-of-basic-group-issues-joint-statement/>

46 Fifth BASIC Meeting Focuses on Preparations for Cancun, IISD, 11 October 2010, <http://climate-l.iisd.org/news/fifth-basic-meeting-focuses-on-preparations-for-cancun/>

47 Marie Olsson, Aaron Atteridge, Karl Hallding and Joakim Hellberg, Together Alone? Brazil, South Africa, India, China (BASIC) and the climate change conundrum, Stockholm Environment Institute, 2010

traditionally been less willing to accommodate to industrialised countries demands, specifically with regard to mitigation actions that could threaten their economic growth.⁴⁸ In Cancun, these differences led to a split between India and China on one side and South Africa and Brazil on the other.⁴⁹ However, South Africa put pressure on India and managed to force them to take a more moderate position - which was facilitated by the pragmatism of the then Indian Minister of the Environment, Jairam Ramesh.⁵⁰ The BASIC countries took a more constructive role than before and stated they were “very happy” with the Accord.⁵¹ However, this moderate tone did not last long: during the first BASIC meeting after Cancun in February, the Ministers of the BASIC countries stated that “the Cancun Agreements were not a substitute for the Bali Road Map” and “further stressed the importance of the second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol.”⁵²

The position of South Africa within the BASIC group remains difficult to assess. During and after Copenhagen, South Africa’s position was at best ambiguous. It criticised the Copenhagen Accord and the negotiations, but remained part of the process in order to influence it from within.⁵³ And it seems to have kept its promise, by putting pressure on India to be more cooperative in Cancun. However, South Africa still has to balance the interests of the African Group and the agenda of BASIC, as well as domestic interests. Because of its heavy reliance on coal, South Africa is the heaviest emitter in Africa, with per capita emissions on the same level as those of the EU.⁵⁴ It stands to benefit from a more lenient regime for emerging economies, in order to have time to transform its energy sector and reach its own commitments worked out in the National Climate Change Response Green Paper published late 2010 and the following White Paper, which was released on 19 October 2011. South Africa acknowledges its heavy emission burden, generated mainly by its

coal-powered energy production.⁵⁵ Even though the country recognises the economic benefits of renewable energy, the South African government fears that letting go of coal energy could jeopardise its economic growth, as the “abundant and cheap coal as the main feed stock to power [South Africa’s] economy has been a key source of [its] competitiveness.”⁵⁶ South Africa committed to an emission peak between 2020 and 2025, stagnating for a decade and finally hoping to cut emissions from 2035 on. It bases these commitments on “the necessary finance, technology and support from the international community”. Based on the contents of the Green Paper, South Africa is – together with its BASIC allies – unlikely to sign up to an agreement that would require them to make legally binding mitigation actions. However, developed countries will not sign an agreement that would opt out some of the greatest current emitters in the world. And it remains to be seen whether the other developing countries – the African Group, the LDCs and AOSIS – will continue to stand by while the emerging countries continue to block progress.

What could happen in Durban?

All eyes are on South Africa, as it is facing a lot of pressure. Not only does it have to find a balance between its domestic interests and its relations with both BASIC countries and the African Group, but as host country, it will have to try and find a compromise agreeable for all. South Africa has seen itself as a bridge builder between developing and industrialised countries.⁵⁷ COP 17 will give South Africa the opportunity to live up to this reputation. Will it be able to be a competent president, able to organise a successful summit and to rise above its emerging/developing country status? And what methods will it use? BASIC has preferred to work informally and behind closed doors, while African countries have called these methods undemocratic and preferred an open, multilateral approach. And what will its goals be? South Africa has already made clear that it does not aim at reaching a comprehensive agreement, but sees Durban as a next step towards an agreed

48 Ibid.

49 Cancun setback: India, China isolated, NDTV, 9 December 2010, <http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/cancun-setback-india-china-isolated-71437>

50 SA sets sights on climate targets, Mail & Guardian, 17 December 2010, <http://mg.co.za/article/2010-12-17-sa-sets-sights-on-climate-targets>

51 BASIC nations “very happy” with Cancun texts: Ramesh, Hindustan Times, 11 December 2010, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/BASIC-nations-very-happy-with-Cancun-texts-Ramesh/Article1-637060.aspx>

52 BASIC Ministers discuss Cancun outcome, IISD, 28 February 2011, <http://climate-1.iisd.org/news/basic-ministers-discuss-cancun-outcome/>

53 South Africa blasts Copenhagen failure, Associated Press, 22/12/2009

54 How do South African emissions compare with those of other countries?, Energy Research Centre

55 National Climate Change Response Green Paper 2010, Department of Environmental Affairs, Republic of South Africa, 25 November 2010

56 Ibid.

57 Marie Olsson, Aaron Atteridge, Karl Hallding and Joakim Hellberg, Together Alone? Brazil, South Africa, India, China (BASIC) and the climate change conundrum, Stockholm Environment Institute, 2010

outcome.⁵⁸

Furthermore, what will be the consequences of its actions in Durban for its relations with the rest of Africa? South Africa has considerable influence on the African continent but will that be enough to get the support of the African Group when difficult decisions have to be taken? What is even more uncertain is South Africa's position in BASIC. It has been able to put pressure on India and break the Indo-Chinese axis in Cancun, but will South Africa be able to sway China, not to mention the USA, Russia, Japan and Canada?

Despite increasing cooperation, the African Group has not yet shown it is able to speak with one, coherent voice. It is still to be seen whether it will take the centre stage like it did in Copenhagen once more and whether it will stay united or be divided. Furthermore, it remains unclear what stance it will take. Even though several leading African countries are participating in the Cartagena Dialogue, the Africa expert group has announced an alliance with the Bolivarian Alliance for the People of Our America (ALBA) – known for its radical position in the climate negotiations – and the G77+China in Durban.⁵⁹ This development could mean that the African Group will take a very tough position at expert level while the South African Presidency will try to find a compromise towards an agreement in high-level segment and in the plenary sessions, which could lead to division within the African Group.

All eyes are on the South African delegation and how they will manage to bring these very diverging interests together.

Policy Considerations

As general chair

- Steer away from the political strategy to drown the objectives of the conference in agenda setting and expert details. The most important step now is to come to a framework for a new agreement under the Convention, including a

basis of commitments, for financial and technological transfers and if possible the future legal status of the agreement in the near future (2020 for example)

- Build a “Climate Change Coalition” with African countries, LDCs and AOSIS, as well as other emerging economies – notably Brazil, an important leader in the regime – and the EU. South Africa as host could play a pivotal role together with the EU, as the latter's reputation stands to benefit from such a prominent role.
 - The EU's international reputation has been damaged by the cowboy tactics of China and the US in Copenhagen and by the current financial and political crisis. Of course, this includes engaging France, the UK and Germany, as well as the Commission and Council in committing to such a strategy. South Africa should ensure that Europe is able to speak with one voice as well, as a united EU could be a strong ally.
 - By ensuring the EU's commitment, getting adequate financial and technological support is more likely.
- Stop ideological discussion on Kyoto and the 2-track negotiations.
 - The EU might be persuaded to step into a second commitment period of the Kyoto protocol but only if an agreement can be reached under the Convention for a long term agreement including all parties
 - To champion the new agreement under the Convention South Africa could play on one of the key African demand “*common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities*” a principle that is also important to the G77 +China. As host, SA will have the political capital to do so.
 - The new agreement should apply to everyone. This could be realised by making 3 or more categories of obligations with corresponding emission rights to make it easier to accept for most countries for example:
 - » Developing countries
 - » Emerging economies
 - » Industrialised countries
 - Obligations could even be tailored to the existing situation of countries without having to resort to separate national goals that nobody can verify.
 - The EU will be a partner for the second commitment period of Kyoto and the new agreement under the Convention because they want to get rid of the loophole of the existing emission rights within the EU and the lack of commitment from China and India

58 SA climate change negotiation position, Department of Environmental Affairs, Republic of South Africa, November 2011

59 On the 13 October 2011 this new alliance was announced to the press in Caracas www.avn.info.ve/printpdf/81933. On the 14 October 2011 this statement was repeated by the African Group during a meeting at the European Commission.

- Canada was all for “the one track negotiation” in 2009 so they could be asked a more serious commitment in terms of actual GHG-emissions
 - Japan publicly announced they wanted to get rid of Kyoto; what do they want in return?
 - Russia will loose out the most so to prevent them from abandoning the process they should be given a compensation. The abandonment of the Kyoto Protocol was already an important Russian demand, but if this is not sufficient a status similar to emerging economy could be possible.
 - China and India lose but might be persuaded by the application of the principle of “*common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities*”.
- Agree on a reference year for reduction of emissions - previously the threshold was 1990 - this has to be agreed upon before credible reduction targets can be set.
 - Call for realistic reduction targets that are effectively executed based on scientific evidence AND political commitment rather than vague promises.
 - Include NGOs in process, as excluding them undermines the legitimacy of multilateralism. Mexican and Danish presidencies were criticised for their lack of transparency.
 - Bilateral talks with main actors is still important as it can put extra pressure on them.

As BASIC

- Try to convince India and China of the urgency and of the opportunities this will create in the current crisis. Make a case that if China and India refuse to compromise based on national interests, their leading position in the Global South will be undermined, as Africa, LDCs and SIDs (+80 states) are calling for an urgent solution.
- Keep in mind that the position of China and the US – the G2 – are vital.

As Africa

- Steer away from the rhetoric of North-South polarisation. The situation is more complicated, as EU is an objective ally, while OPEC countries are reluctant to commit.
- Plead for effective measures on the African continent that do not have to cost a lot of money but can set an example that Africa takes

sustainability and climate change seriously and is not just looking for money. Climate change is a great risk for Africa’s development and should be integrated into national decision making.

- Invest in renewable energy, instead of holding on to coal and oil based energy production. Cfr. Recent coal power plant
- Look into private partnerships with the EU and others
- The operationalisation of the Green Climate Fund depends on the institutional, technical and managerial capacities in receiving countries, so governance should be developed.

This might be a way to get funds by setting the example. By giving concrete projects, ownership over them will be greater and donor countries will be more likely to commit to the financial and technology transfers needed.

- Improve links with energy and forest governance, two major aspects of carbon emissions.
 - Especially in the Congo Basin, efforts should be aimed at improving the REDD scheme.

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