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**for a living planet®*

The Copenhagen earthquake: a necessary failure for a success in Mexico ?



As we are all waking up a little bit stunned by the political turmoil of Copenhagen, and as the battle of climate change is obviously far from being over, we wanted to tell the story of how we lived these two weeks of marathon from inside. Beyond the great disappointment that followed Copenhagen, the end of this historical summit could also mark the beginning of a new hope through the emergence of a global and collective public awareness of climate change.



HOPEnhagen

The negotiations on climate change that took place in Copenhagen from 7 to 19 December 2009 may mark the end of an era, the era of a society that does not recognize the limits of the planet. This historical summit, bringing together over 100 heads of state, under an unprecedented media pressure, ended with a half-baked agreement, with a very low level of ambition and a legitimacy that was severely challenged by the developing countries that had not been included in the decision-making process. If the result is disappointing, this failure was perhaps the condition for a future success. It may be the necessary condition for the public opinion and the Heads of State to become aware of the magnitude of the task that must be carried out to properly address climate change. Now we must learn from this failure to prepare the conditions for a possible success at the next summit in Mexico in November 2010. We come back here on the main steps of the negotiations that took place as a «drama in three acts».

The battle of the draft texts starts off with the text of the «Danish» Prime Minister Rasmussen, which was seen as reflecting too much the Western and American points of views. This text does not provide long-term financing for poor countries, remains very vague about the emission reduction target of industrialized countries and especially about their legally binding form. Emerging countries counter-attacked with the text «BASIC» (Brazil, South Africa, India, China), but after all, this is just part of the “game”.

**Act 1: the exhibition scene
(7-12 December), negotiators**

Negotiations opened in Copenhagen with a wave of optimism. Throughout the history of climate negotiations, we had never seen such a mobilization: 45,000 registrants, including thousands of journalists, NGOs, hundreds of ministers and heads of state, all gathered in their finest attire in the conference center by Bella Vista («beautiful view»). After the depressing times of the negotiations in Barcelona, we did not expect so much!

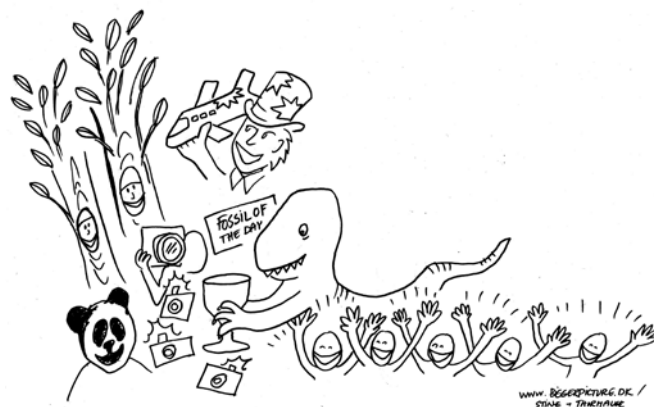


The battle of the drafts

The major emerging countries will not accept a peak in global emissions if developed countries do not take their responsibilities by adopting ambitious and legally binding emissions reduction target. Each block then reveals its regional positions, including the Africa group and the group of island countries who demand to limit

global warming to 1.5 °C as a matter of survival, but also a global peak of emissions, and long-term financing. As usual also, the EU position does not change or only a little, frozen in the European Council decisions. Europe calls for a mandate for a legally binding treaty no later than June 2010 but do not change its position neither on funding nor on the 20-30% reduction depending on what others will do. Everyone is playing out its cards and the game becomes more readable. NGOs are present in the many lobby meetings with national delegations, and also clearly visible in the press conferences and various media meeting.

The dramatization is also in full swing on the French side. Our country stands out as defender of forests, kicking over the traces of the Swedish Presidency of the European Union to denounce the rigged rules that would allow to wipe out of a hundred million tons of greenhouse gas emissions associated with the combustion of bioenergy (wood-energy, biofuels, etc...). NGOs mobilize and allocate the «Fossil of the Day» to Sweden, Finland and Austria for their disastrous positions, and the «Sunshine» to France for its fight in favour of more transparency. Brice Lalonde invites NGOs and the press at the same time. We are mobilizing our WWF networks in Sweden but also in Russia on the hot air issue.



The fossil of the day, and the Ray of the day

In parallel, the Environment Minister Jean-Louis Borloo promises to NGOs to push the EU to adopt a 30% target for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions on the soil of Europe, and for long term public funding for least developed countries, the most vulnerable to climate change. Meanwhile, directors of NGOs stayed behind in Paris meet President Sarkozy to hand over 500 000 signatures of citizens supporting the “Ultimatum climatique” campaign. The echo from the President is not necessarily the same as what we heard from the Environment Minister, and we are already seeing a turning point looming for the end of negotiations, when the Heads of State will replace the Ministers of Environment at the negotiating table.



Emission targets with loopholes (forests; offsets; hot air)



Cheating Sarkozy

However, this first “Act” ends rather well, with the presentation of a very clever compromise text from Michael Cutajar, «the sage of the climate,» Maltese President of the negotiations under the Convention. This text includes the key elements to enable the Heads of State to take decisions on the emission targets of developed countries (in the range 25-45% by 2020), on global emissions (50 to 80% by 2050), on funding, and other components on adaptation, technology and forests. The weaknesses of the text: long-term finance, and the MRV system (Measurement, Reporting and Verification of actions). Africa threatens to leave the negotiations but Cutajar manages to convince them to stay. The text was finally agreed by all as a basis for negotiation, except for Japan, refusing the mention the Kyoto Protocol, unwilling to engage in a period of commitment without the United States, but this problem is quickly resolved.

Outside the Bella Center, an enthusiastic crowd invades the streets of Copenhagen; more than 100 000 people who face the cold in the joy and good humor, and very peaceful compared to what was expected, even if the Danish media have tried to make up the sauce. The first week ends with renewed confidence; the process seems back on track, on the two negotiating tracks of negotiations: the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol.

Act 2: the crisis (December 13 to 16), the Ministers of Environment

With the arrival of the Environment Ministers from Sunday, December 13, the process derailed again very soon. The Danish President of the COP, Connie Hedegaard, under pressure from the ultra-liberal Prime Minister Rasmussen, convened the Ministers of Environment of a few countries in order to move the process forward. Denmark wants to enter history with an agreement in Copenhagen at any cost. The ministerial consultation process was initially supposed to be coordinated with the UN negotiations orchestrated by Michael Cutajar for the crucial part of the Climate Convention,

and by John Ash for the Kyoto Protocol part. But on the afternoon of Sunday, the tone rises. The United States make clear that they will not be able to adopt a reduction range from 25 to 45% compared to 1990 (they are up to 17% compared to 2005), that they will hardly accept a legally binding agreement and that they want more transparency and control over what the major emerging countries do, especially China. China do not get why the United States would have the right to interfere in their affairs by imposing standards of verification of their national Greenhouse gas emission reduction actions. The ping-pong game has started between the two largest emitters of greenhouse gas emissions...

Dec 8: US ANNOUNCED DANGER OF GREENHOUSE GAZ



The USA need to reduce their emissions

The Danish Presidency invites to this consultation only some Ministers that were supposed to be «friends». But soon, those who were not present denounced the lack of transparency and democracy of this process, and accuse the Danish Presidency of playing into the United States hands. Immediately after the Monday meeting, the situation becomes explosive and all sessions are suspended for several hours. The Americans want more safeguards regarding the emerging countries actions; emerging countries find that Europeans and Americans do not make enough effort on their own emissions reduction targets, and Europeans find that they already do too much and do not want to commit themselves to a second period under the Kyoto Protocol.

Africans and the islands States complain that nobody is listening to them and that they need long-term finance; and the oil countries are desperate to do everything to derail the whole process

Victims of the climate change demands a compensation



Oil producing countries and Island countries asking for financial compensations, for different reasons...

The negotiation process becomes increasingly chaotic. To remedy the crisis, the Danish Presidency takes the hand on the “hot” issues: emission reduction targets (including USA, EU on one side and large emerging countries targets on the other side), and long term funding. Ministers meet in small committees to resolve problems, but meanwhile the technical negotiators discuss the same topics in parallel sessions! Rather than clearing the way, this operation further exacerbates the lack of confidence of countries in the process. On December 16, the formal sessions of the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol are supposed to conclude with the adoption of texts as a basis for negotiating the final straight, with the arrival of Heads of States the next day. The meeting on the Convention finally takes place between 2 AM and 6 AM, with a text more and more emptied of substances, and full of brackets to indicate that there is no agreement. Even on this non-agreement, there is no closing, after sharp exchanges between the United States, the first oil consumer and oil-producing countries.



Oil hold up



Emissions kill. Obama Nobel Prize, you should stop them !

In parallel, NGOs are increasingly excluded from negotiations, to make room for the «ballet» of Heads of State accompanied by their courtiers and servants. Shame on the United Nations, an organization that is supposed to stand up for human rights, democracy and freedom of speech ! From 10 000 observers, we go down to 5 000 and then 300 (300 badges are granted and not 90, after tough negotiations between the UNFCCC secretariat and NGO representatives). For the Climate Action Network, that means 54 badges for all environmental NGOs around the world, because we have to share the quota of 300 with private companies, Unions and local communities. For WWF International, that means 2 or 3 badges for 118 people in the delegation. The last days will be very hard. Everything seems to be put in place to facilitate the «greenwashing» of the agreement:

the exclusion of independent observers who would report a watered down agreement and the omnipresence of communications services from governments. Outside, the mobilization becomes better organized but also more radical, with increasingly violent actions; inside, people talk about civil disobedience; some have begun a hunger strike. The Bella Center's is closing its doors and we are isolated from the outside world for many hours.



NGO banished from the negotiations

On the night of December 16 to 17, our WWF team decides to stay inside the Bella Center walls. Nobody has the right to forbid us from doing our work decently. If the police comes to get us, we will go out quietly, as a non-violent action. The aim is not to invite the media to show us as heroes, it is simply about passive resistance, civil and peaceful disobedience to defend our rights. There are rumours that the police will soon send everyone out, including with dogs sniffing for traces of human scent in every corner where we could be hidden! My colleagues tell me to leave- I got a pink badge with the French delegation and if I get caught I won't be able to come inside again the next day- or to bring them their things that would enable them to «survive» the next day if they manage to stay here during the night (blankets, toothbrushes,

etc..) or to get information if they are all sent out. We are a around twenty «pink pandas», people from different WWF offices who got the status of «refugee NGOs» in government delegations, with a badge allowing us to go back into the “bunker” at the Bella Center. We finally decide to leave around 2am, without much hope for the next days...

Act 3: the outcome (17-19 December), the Heads of State

Our pandas colleagues with yellow badges (NGOs) have finally all been expelled from the Bella Center at about 3 A.M. last night. This Thursday, December 17, arriving at the Bella Center, we find the WWF office's door locked, with no one inside. This was the saddest moment of the whole two weeks, thinking about my colleagues who are so dedicated and professional, and who got shamefully kicked out of the negotiations that could decide about the future of our planet. Access is limited and even the rare yellow badges can not go beyond the information center at the entrance. The atmosphere is really strange, NGOs being replaced by the comings and goings of heads of state, surrounded by their many bodyguards and followed by hysterical cameras.

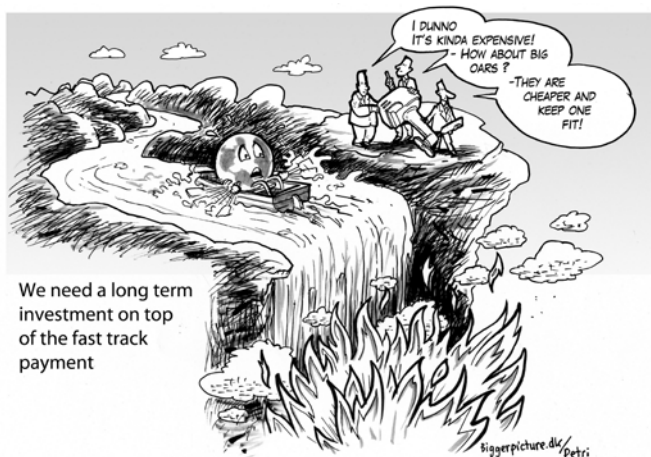


Countdown of the last 24h

But in this strange environment, everything becomes possible again, as if the usual barriers fell down. We get a second pink badge for the leader of the Global Climate Deal initiative, Kim

Carstensen, a Danish who became an adopted French citizen, in the French delegation of the presidential team. Even my Chinese colleague is hosted by the Chinese government that yet suspicious about NGOs. We work with the French and European Green MPs to get the latest negotiating texts. The Environment Minister calls us regularly to give us information on meetings taking place behind closed doors to tell us about what is blocking. While the team of the Environment Minister may also be expelled from its office after the invasion of Sarkozy's presidential team, we lend them one of our offices now empty. Here, Sarkozy's advisers prepare the President's speech and we make them our briefing and commentaries like "do not forget «long term funding» and «legally binding»"...

The speech in the plenary will be more ambitious, calling for a quick emergency meeting among Heads of State to finalize the agreement. But it's the cold shower the next day when we hear Barack Obama who is mostly talking about national energy security. Hillary Clinton had announced the day before the need to raise 100 billion dollars per year over the long term, but this time Obama came with empty hands, with a cold and pragmatic speech obviously written to reassure a Republican Congress.



The need for long-term finance to avoid disaster

China and India do not show very much good will neither. Only Lula, from Brazil, is still asking for an ambitious deal. «The green alliance», which

we believed could counter-balance the Chinese and American giants have not held the shock. This alliance could involve the most progressive countries such as France, the United Kingdom, Norway in Europe, South Africa, Ethiopia and Senegal in Africa, Mexico, Brazil, Costa Rica Colombia in Latin America, India, Indonesia and the Maldives in Asia. Jean-Louis Borloo talked about a joint statement of 8 countries, including Sarkozy, Brown, Zenawi, and Lula, but we never saw this statement out if its many bilateral versions: the Brazil-France declaration France-Ethiopia, France- Indonesia, but these texts had little substance. Working on the basis of a balanced and solid text from Cutajar, the green alliance could have then left hand to Obama to convince China in the final straight.

But on the night of December 17 to 18, it was decided otherwise. Rasmussen, Danish Prime Minister, without very much experience in diplomacy, convened a meeting from 11pm to 2:30 am in a small room without translation, exacerbating the perception of a process dominated by the western Anglo-Saxon "camp". In the room, there are 27 Heads of State and Government of major regional blocs:

- > For Europe: United Kingdom (Brown), Germany (Merkel), France (Sarkozy), Sweden (Reinfeld), Spain, Denmark, Norway + EU Commission representative;
- > Other countries 'umbrella' USA (Clinton), Japan, Australia, Russia (Medvedev);
- > Emerging markets: China, India, Brazil, South Africa;
- > Other countries in Latin America: Mexico, Colombia;
- > Other Asian countries: South Korea, Indonesia;
- > Group Africa: Ethiopia, Algeria;
- > President G77: Sudan;
- > Least Developed Countries: Lesotho, Bangladesh;
- > OPEC: Saudi Arabia;
- > Island countries: Grenada, Maldives.

So it was a G27, or a kind of «G20» expanded, involving the main countries the largest emitters of greenhouse gas emissions, with a geographical representation of key negotiating blocs, in short, a sort of « Security Council for climate change ». Also a good idea to try to save the negotiations in this last night before Obama's arrival came not to negotiate but to endorse an agreement to be already prepared, having only 4 hours to spend on Danish soil .

But negotiations are not moving ahead as China refuses to keep in the text the mention to the 50% emission reduction by 2050, and a mandate for a legally binding treaty also apply to emerging countries. Sarkozy left the negotiations relatively satisfied that night, thinking that there was an agreement with Zenawi (Ethiopian Minister) African representative to write a joint text during the rest of the night, but the Sherpas did not follow these instructions and the next morning there is still no text.

Last day, on December 18th, we see again some new texts coming out more and more quickly, the Danish text, then a text from the European Union much more ambitious but quickly refused for his lack of diplomacy towards China and other emerging countries ...

At this time Obama gives a disappointing speech, followed by a crisis meeting with all the European Heads of States who are unable to agree to move up to a 30% emission target; they even stop speaking about the 30% to only discuss the issue of comparability of their objectives with those of China and the United States. Nicolas Sarkozy leaves the EU flag in declaiming: "Negotiations are very difficult; we don't want a bad agreement!". The 26 or 27 Heads of state are locked in all day in this little room, trying to finalize an agreement, writing a piece of paper with their own hands. What about the hundreds of pages of work prepared by the climate negotiators over the last two years ? Noboday knows where they went, what a waste! NGOs are close to the room but have less and less information, and getting totally exhausted after two weeks of working days

and nights, and for the last few days, trying the achieve the same amount of work with only one fourth of the staff still inside the negotiations center...

Around 8 pm on Friday night, we hear that the press conference with Obama is cancelled, then the UNFCCC press conference is also cancelled; there are rumors that many Heads of State have already left; and that Ministers of China, India and Brazil have already left; Medvedev went home to Russia... The word «failure» is on everyone's lips. Then at the last moment, Obama meets with Merkel, Sarkozy and Brown and then calls the Chinese and Indian Parties who were already on their way to the airport. They wrote a few lines of text on transparency, on a piece of paper. An agreement was reached with the major emerging economies. France decides to support the Copenhagen agreement, after debating whether or not it would be better to boycott a watered-down agreement... But President Sarkozy wants to "save the face" in front of the media and the public opinion and prefers to defend "half a success" rather than a total failure.



Rotten deal

We will probably never know everything that was said in those last few hours and minutes leading to this «Accord». Strange Accord, as it was not formally signed by the 27 Heads of State present in the small negotiating room, and not even adopted by all the countries seating in the plenary. When Rasmussen asked who would be against it, only 4 countries said they would

vote against it. But all night, many developing countries gave some very angry speeches to protest against the process, especially Tuvalu, Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Cuba, but also Sudan. This agreement was not considered as legitimate, coming from a process that was neither democratic, nor transparent, and with far too low ambitions to ensure survival of the most vulnerable countries.



Angry Tuvalu

The Copenhagen accord is available online: <http://unfccc.int/2860.php>

This agreement is the lowest common denominator; it doesn't have any overall target for reducing global greenhouse gas emissions, but only an empty annex, with a list of national targets to be finalized no later than February 1st, 2010.

It does contain promises of funding in the short and long term, but without any guarantee that such funding will be disbursed, or that it will not just be recycling existing development aid funds and loans under the climate "label".



Recycling development aid

Last but not least, this Accord doesn't answer the question of the legal form of this new arrangement, and nothing is said about the future of the existing legal instruments such as the Kyoto Protocol, with its commitment period ending in 2012. Many problems still need to be resolved, and there is still a long way to go if we want to reach a better agreement in 2010 in Mexico.

In any case, the real political earthquake of Copenhagen had the merit to raise public awareness well beyond our expectations. For years, climate change was a battle of belief between NGOs and governments, between governments or NGOs and industries, or and the EU and the USA. Now it has become the battle of everyone; everybody agrees that we should tackle climate change, but we haven't managed to figure out how we can do it together, in the most efficient and equitable way.

The imperative of staying below 2 ° C (1.5 ° C) is a question of survival, whatever our nationality or our label, it has become a common goal and consensus for all humankind, beyond national borders. The fact that 27 countries were able to agree on a text, although they represent very different regions, cultures, and very divergent interests, that fact should not be lost even if the final Accord doesn't match our level of expectations. This may be the beginning of a new area beyond the usual dividing lines. Up to us to seize this opportunity to make this failure a future success.



Building a stronger deal in 2010

The Copenhagen summit has put the light on several dilemmas that will need to be resolved beyond the lines of countries, regional blocs and interest groups:

- > How are we going to close the gap between science and politics, between what is recommended by science (a 40% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 for industrialized countries) while all political targets of industrialized countries combined are struggling to reach 20%?
- > How can we convince ourselves that we must radically change our lifestyles while also gaining in quality of life?
- > How can we convince the big emerging countries that they should not do the same mistakes as we did?
- > How to ensure that a new «deal» is not reached just among major economies, while excluding smaller countries?
- > Can we build a new system of global governance to ensure that decisions regarding the future of our planet are taken seriously and democratically, and not within a few hours among 27 or 28 Head of States who certainly represented around 5 billion people and 90% of global emissions but decided without any information or transparency?

We will need to answer all these questions (and probably also many others!), if we want to build a stronger climate agreement in Mexico in 2010.

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Big countries decide for small countries

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