

## **Background to the Germanwatch Press Release of 9 Oct. 2009**

### **Breakthrough or failure?**

**The climate talks in Bangkok have shown that only much stronger political will can rescue the Copenhagen climate treaty**

Bangkok, 9 Oct. 2009. With the closure of the climate talks in Bangkok the UN climate negotiations have now reached a critical phase in the run-up to the Copenhagen summit. A success in Copenhagen has become questionable. Although the negotiation text is now in a state that generally enables making an agreement in Copenhagen, some of the most pressing questions still remain unanswered: How ambitious will emission reduction targets for industrialised countries and emerging economies be? How much money will industrialised countries mobilise for supporting climate protection, the adaptation to the growing number of weather-related catastrophes and rain forest conservation? Through which institutions will this assistance be provided?

Over the last two years, significant climate change policy dynamics have evolved at the national level in a large number of countries including China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, South Africa, Japan and the USA. Norway announced in Bangkok to reduce emissions by 40% until 2020. However, it is not clear whether this momentum will transform into a new and ambitious international climate treaty. "After Bangkok the probability of failing to reach an agreement in Copenhagen are higher than ever before. Now governments worldwide are asked to demonstrate that the announcements they made at the UN General Assembly in New York will be followed by concrete actions," says Christoph Bals, head of the Germanwatch team in Bangkok.

### ***Hurdles to overcome on the way to a Copenhagen treaty***

#### **Fundamental controversies in negotiating the new climate policy architecture**

- The USA who signed the 1997 Protocol but never ratified it constitute the starting point of the problem. In order to ensure that an ambitious Copenhagen agreement will actually be ratified by the Senate the US government aims to first decide domestically on national emissions reduction targets as well as concrete implementation measures. The results can then be integrated into the international negotiations following a "take it or leave it" strategy. Under international law the US mitigation obligations would thus only have the same status regarding the level of commitment as the targets taken on by the emerging economies.
- The other industrialised countries that are currently obliged to reduce emissions under the Kyoto Protocol seek to re-integrate the USA into the international climate regime without granting it any special treatment. That is why they reject proposals that include new and more ambitious emissions reduction targets for all industrialised countries while granting special treatment to the USA. Instead they aim at replacing the Kyoto Protocol with a completely new treaty that is to be negotiated with the USA and the developing countries at the table. This approach, however, is dangerous for two reasons: First of all, the level of commitment would decrease for all industrialised countries, which means that the credibility of the agreed-on mitigation targets becomes questionable. Secondly, the emerging economies fear they may be forced to accept the same obligations and face the same sanctions as the industrialised countries.

- Against this background, emerging economies are not willing to terminate the Kyoto Protocol and enter into negotiations for a new agreement. They anticipate that with negotiations on a new agreement they can only lose - either because the new treaty's level of ambition overall sinks or because they are assigned the same mitigation obligations as the industrialised countries which would contradict the arrangements made at the climate conference in Bali. "The train to Copenhagen is in danger", warned the head of the Chinese delegation in the attempt to convince the industrialised countries to hold on to the Kyoto Protocol. "In bilateral talks with the USA the EU must now find a solution to the dilemma and ensure that the legally binding emission reduction targets under the Kyoto Protocol will survive", Bals emphasises.

### **The mitigation targets and financial commitments of the industrialised countries are insufficient**

- The emission targets that are currently discussed by the industrialised countries are likely to entail an increase in global mean temperature of three to four degrees and thus clearly insufficient to prevent crossing the dangerous temperature threshold of two degrees. Furthermore, the proposed financing strategies are inadequate compared to the level of support that is needed to promote low carbon dynamics in the emerging economies and the developing countries and to provide help to the people that are most affected by the adverse consequences of climate change.

The negotiations in Bangkok failed to generate answers to these key political questions. Given the existent mandates the negotiators did a good job but the lack of political will impedes the granting of less restrictive mandates that would enable the necessary progress regarding mitigation targets, finance mechanisms and finance obligations. "The new German government now faces an important challenge as it is one of the few governments that is able to take over the much needed leadership." Christoph Bals wonders: "Will the German government meet the world's expectations?"

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