

UNDERSTANDING THE AGREEMENTS OF THE CANCUN CLIMATE SUMMIT

Posted on 17/12/2010 by Naider



The expectations placed on the [COP Summit Denmark in 2009](#) (COP15) were very high and their failure called into question the capacity of the multilateral negotiation system sponsored by the United Nations. The international community arrived in the Mexican city with the clear awareness that another failure could definitively derail the multilateral process on climate change. The attitudes of the decisive countries have been more constructive and negotiating. In particular, China and the United States, the two largest emitters, have carefully avoided a

confrontational attitude like the one they staged in the Danish capital in 2009. The European Union has played an essential mediating role, building bridges and facilitating agreements. Mexico, for its part, has emerged diplomatically strengthened with the unanimous international recognition of its good work.

The results of the Cancun Summit are reflected in the so-called "**Cancun Agreements for a new era of international cooperation on climate change**", signed by 193 of the 194 parties belonging to the Framework Convention on Climate Change United Nations Climate Agreement (Bolivia has not signed and has announced that it will appeal the document before the Tribunal in The Hague). The most important aspects reflected in the **Agreements** are:

- For the first time, a United Nations legal document acknowledges the need to keep global warming below 2°C relative to pre-industrial temperatures. It even includes the provision to review in the coming years, 2015, this increase to limit it to 1.5°C, in the event that scientific knowledge so requires.
- The voluntary emission mitigation targets that 85 countries -of the 140 that have signed the Copenhagen Accord- had submitted in the framework of their accession to said agreement, have been integrated into the United Nations legal document approved at the Cancun Summit. The countries that have shown their willingness to mitigate their emissions or reduce their intensity in relation to the growth of their GDP represent 80% of global emissions. It should be noted, however, that in some cases this mitigation decision is conditioned - for example, in the case of the United States - to the approval of a law by Congress.
- The transparency of actions aimed at reducing or limiting emissions is significantly strengthened, in order to carry out more effective monitoring of the progress achieved. This was one of the red lines established by the United States, since it considered that the monitoring, supervision and control processes had to ensure full transparency of the processes and results. China had strongly opposed any claim to have its mitigation reports and achievements monitored by international experts. Finally, the stumbling block has been overcome with a nuanced wording that leaves the different parties sufficiently satisfied.
- A Green Climate Fund is created. The objective of developed countries to allocate 30,000 million US dollars annually between 2010 and 2012, and 100,000 million dollars annually from 2020 to finance climate actions in developing countries, is confirmed. However, there is a lack of specification regarding the origin of these funds, which, in any case, will be public and private. The Green Climate Fund will channel an important part of this financing. The World Bank will act as treasurer of these resources during the first three years. The confirmation of the will to allocate significant funds to help developing countries was one of China's red lines, although that country has expressly renounced being a beneficiary thereof.
- Adaptation activities are reinforced in the face of the impacts of climate change. A broad and comprehensive frame of reference is created in this direction.
- A REDD+ mechanism is established to reduce emissions caused by deforestation and forest

degradation in developing countries. From an environmental point of view, this is potentially one of the most relevant achievements of Cancun. The REDD+ mechanism tries to produce a decisive change in the value assigned to tropical forests, through a substantial transfer of funds from developed countries to those countries of the South that decide to preserve their primary forests. It must be taken into account that the deforestation of tropical forests is responsible for approximately 12-15% of the total emissions into the atmosphere, an amount greater than all the emissions of the European Union, EU-27. Behind the REDD+ process is a European country, Norway, which for several years has been working discreetly, especially with Brazil and Indonesia, to lay the foundations of the agreement. It is well known that tropical forests are home to the greatest biodiversity on the planet, so their preservation is not only one of the most effective and efficient ways to avoid GHG emissions, but also means protecting crucial ecosystems for the preservation of biological diversity. from the earth. The REDD+ reference framework has been strengthened in the Cancun agreement, although it still requires further development of technical aspects before being fully operational. The European Union should give priority to this process.

- An agreement is established regarding the convenience of establishing new mechanisms for the carbon market that are not limited to a project-based system.
- A reference framework for technology transfer to developing countries has been approved. A Technological Executive Committee and a Center for Climate Technology and its corresponding Network are created, with the aim of promoting the development and transfer of technology.

The Cancun Agreements, Global Emissions and Rising Temperatures

Days before the conference, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) presented a report prepared by 25 international scientific organizations that puts detailed figures on the emissions that must be avoided in the immediate future (2020) if the goal of maintain the temperature increase at a maximum of 2° C. The **key figures** are the following:

- The **total greenhouse gas emissions** in the reference year, 1990, were 38,000 million tons of CO₂ equivalent.
- In the year 2005, the latest integrated data available, **total global emissions** were 45,000 million tons of CO₂ equivalent, an increase of 18% compared to 1990.
- Without mitigation agreements, a **business as usual**(b.a.u.) scenario will lead to a level of emissions in 2020 of 56,000 million tons of CO₂ eq., an increase of 47 percent with respect to the reference year, 1990.
- To keep the **temperature increase** below 2°C, it is necessary that total global emissions in 2020 do not exceed the amount of 44,000 million tons of CO₂ eq. In other words, an international mitigation commitment is needed that involves at least 12,000 million tons of reduction compared to the b.a.u. scenario.
- The commitments made by the 85 countries in the framework of the Copenhagen Agreement, now included in the Cancun Agreement, if they are carried out impeccably, maximizing their mitigation potential, will lead to a reduction in emissions compared to the b.a.u. scenario. of 7,000 million. In other words, even with a "perfect" execution of the Copenhagen-Cancun agreements, global GHG emissions would exceed 5,000 million tons of CO₂ eq. in 2020, compared to the level demanded by the international scientific community.
- In other words, the commitments made so far by the international community only reach 60% of what is demanded by scientific knowledge. The remaining 40% is missing. It must be added that these commitments are for the moment voluntary and are subject to numerous vicissitudes.

It is important to keep these figures in mind to relativize the achievements obtained at the Cancun Conference, since it must not be forgotten that the substantial element of the entire multilateral process on climate change ultimately revolves around the objective defined by the United Nations Framework Convention on "avoid serious anthropogenic interference with the climate system". These serious interferences have been limited to 2°C. **And in the Cancun Conference there has not been sufficient progress in the substantive content of the negotiations.**

Bearing in mind that the first report of the Intergovernmental Panel of Experts on Climate Change (IPCC) was issued in 1990, bearing in mind that the Earth Summit in Rio that gave rise to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change took place in 1992, it seems evident that the rate at which the decisions of the international community progress is insufficient with respect to the requirements derived from scientific knowledge.

[Michael Jarraud](#), President of the World Meteorological Organization for the United Nations, addressed the Cancun Conference announcing that 2010 will be the warmest year, both in average temperature of the atmosphere and of the oceans, since measurements began in 1850. Also, that the decade that ends has been the warmest since records exist.

There are no comments yet.