



EUROPEAN UNION
Delegation to the Republic of South Africa

Press Article (Op Ed)

.../ for immediate release

With political will, Cancún can mark climate progress

by Connie Hedegaard, European Commissioner for Climate Action, November 2010

By 2050 there will be more than nine billion people on Earth. To accommodate this jump in population without stoking dangerous climate change we have no choice but to complete the transition to a low-carbon global economy. That is what is at stake in the international negotiations on climate change, and that is why the UN climate conference in Cancún is important.

An ambitious and legally binding framework for global climate action is needed. The European Union would be ready to agree this at the Cancún conference. Regrettably a number of other major economies, including the US and China, are not.

Cancún will therefore not be the end of the road. Nonetheless the conference can still mark a significant step towards a legally binding global climate deal. It can – and must – deliver progress by agreeing a politically balanced package of decisions on a number of substantial issues that lead to immediate climate action on the ground.

These decisions should capture the progress achieved in the international climate negotiations so far and lay down some major elements of the 'architecture' of the future global climate regime. They should build on the Kyoto Protocol and incorporate the political guidance of last December's Copenhagen Accord.

In recent preparatory meetings for Cancún I have seen a hunger for agreement along these lines. With political will, the conference can translate this into a real step forward.

Decisions are within reach on issues such as adaptation to climate change, the fight against deforestation, technology cooperation and governance rules for a new climate fund.

For the EU, a balanced package must include progress on mitigating global greenhouse gas emissions. In particular, the emission reduction pledges that developed and developing countries have made under the Copenhagen Accord need to be brought into the United Nations framework.

"Anchoring" the pledges in this way will provide a global forum to discuss uncertainties surrounding some of them and to consider ways to make them more ambitious over time. The current pledges are a start, but it is clear that they are not sufficient to keep global warming below 2°C, as the Copenhagen Accord recognises is necessary.

We also need to see progress, here in Cancún, towards reforming and expanding the international carbon market in order to capture the huge potential for emission savings in the major emerging economies. As Europe knows from our own Emissions Trading System, carbon market mechanisms reduce the cost of cutting emissions, can drive investment in

innovative low-carbon technologies and can be important sources of funding for future climate action.

It is key that developed countries deliver on their pledges of 'fast start' funding to help the developing world fight climate change. The EU is doing so. We have mobilised €2.2 billion in fast start funding this year as part of our commitment to deliver €7.2 billion over 2010-2012. The EU will give a comprehensive report in Cancún of how we have implemented our pledge this year.

Building trust also requires greater transparency - transparency in how countries deliver on their emission pledges, and transparency in how developed countries will provide long-term funding to help the developing world tackle climate change. That is why the EU is pressing for agreement in Cancún to draw up stronger monitoring, reporting and verification rules.

A set of decisions in Cancun along these lines would constitute a significant intermediate step towards the robust and legally binding global agreement the world needs. An ambitious global framework will help to accelerate the low-carbon revolution that is under way, spurring 'greener' growth, creating new jobs and strengthening Europe's energy security.

Achieving a politically balanced package will not be easy, but it is within reach. Failure, on the other hand, would raise the risk of the international climate negotiations losing momentum and relevance. With political will, Cancún can succeed. Europe will be working throughout the two weeks of the conference to ensure that it does.

For more information please contact Frank Oberholzer at 012-452-5261