Was the Doha climate conference a success or a failure? As usual, the assessment depends on the observer’s viewpoint. From Climate Alliance’s perspective, the minor successes achieved in Doha constitute a step backwards in international climate policy. While the Kyoto Protocol has formally been extended, it now covers just 15% of global emissions. As the former pioneer of international climate protection, the EU is merely happy that any compromise could be reached. While the EU will soon achieve the 20 per cent reduction target, a more stringent target (30 per cent) could not be agreed. This would have provided a positive signal for the international negotiations, to show that at the European level this is achievable and that this success might be replicated elsewhere. The very country due to host the climate conference in 2013 almost contributed to the failure of the overall negotiations: Poland refused to agree on the compromise until the very last minute.

The second round of negotiations related to the so-called “Durban Platform”, which aims to arrive at a new global agreement in 2015 that is to be ratified by 2020. The question still remains: Why something that has not been achieved in the past 20 years of the climate process should succeed in 2020? To sell the agreement as a success, it was christened the “Doha Climate Gateway”. The 2007 “Bali Roadmap” and 2009 “Copenhagen Accord” also count among the series of optimistically-named agreements that ultimately did not yield any major breakthroughs.

And yet the signs of climate change are increasingly alarming: Hurricane Sandy left a trail across the east coast of America, still visible in many places today. During the climate conference, there was a storm in the Philippines with countless dead and extensive devastation. In 2013, the IPCC scientific advisory board will publish the fifth assessment report (SAR) on the speed of the advancing climate change with findings that are expected to be dramatic. The political aim of limiting climate change to 2°C becomes an increasingly distant dream; a rise in temperature by 4°C or more is no longer being ruled out.

Over the last few years, many people placed their hope in market mechanisms: CO₂ must merely be given a price then everything can be regulated by supply and demand. This seemed the ideal solution for all problems: environmental protection and economics co-living in perfect harmony. Hence several such tools were set up (e.g. the “Clean Development Mechanism” and “Joint Implementation” mechanism) and providers of voluntary compensation and
“climate-neutral” products shot up like mushrooms. Such a miracle tool was also meant to halt the dramatic deforestation, generate profit and contribute to climate protection in forested areas: REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) was the magic concept of the recent years. However, the global surplus of certificates and “hot air” from the collapse of the economies in the east led to a dramatic drop in the price for a ton of CO₂. The entire emissions trading institution is now crumbling and the first major providers of compensation products are already closing their doors. In Brazil, the government has declared agreements reached with indigenous groups - to generate certificates.

What is happening with REDD+, Clean Development Mechanism and other market mechanisms?

The following question now poses itself: what will happen now with the many wonderful tools developed in the past few years to achieve several aims at once? The purpose of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) was to generate certificates for companies requiring additional pollution rights. The sale of these certificates generated by projects in developing countries and emerging nations should have simultaneously boosted sustainable development in these areas. Economics brings climate protection and global sustainable development together – that was the promise. But in reality, the outcome is rather more moderate: emerging economies such as China, Brazil, India and South Africa, who would have undoubtedly had their own resources to realise their projects, have benefited. The world cannot fight climate change without emerging economies fully committing. Next to nothing has been invested in the poorest regions. Moreover, additional certificates have been generated, which has eased the pressure to complete the necessary transformations. The latest tax evasion scandal involving the Deutsche Bank primarily relates to illegal transactions in the trading of CO₂ certificates.

REDD+ additionally aimed to generate funds for forest protection via the market. Since 2007, it has raised high hopes of a new billion euro market. Companies were established for project development and the marketing of forest certificates. Indigenous groups around the world were tricked with a few miserable dollars to sign long-term agreements guaranteeing companies the CO₂ marketing rights. The UN and World Bank are currently competing with pilot projects and the financing of preliminary measures in selected countries.

In Doha, no resolutions were reached for further development of REDD+. Instead this was postponed until the 2013 conference due to take place in Warsaw, Poland. No progress was made in Doha on the necessary reform of the CDM instrument either. The question is whether this mechanism will even survive the coming year, as its ability to generate funds depends on the scarcity of certificates and ambitious climate protection aims. Because of the collapse of the economies of the former Soviet Bloc, the surplus of certificates has been retained in the system. Companies with a high level of CO₂ emissions have been assigned with generous additional certificates to ensure their competitiveness. And through the CDM instrument new certificates have been generated. All these decisions have contributed to the drop of the price for certificates from over € 20 to less than € 7. The reduction in the price of the certificates (and the price of ton of CO₂) has also reduced the income that should have been made available to develop climate related financing programmes at national and EU level.
We are now slowly awakening from the dream that the market can make a fundamental contribution to resolving the challenges that lie ahead. Unfortunately, another decade has almost passed without reaching a global agreement. And we must also recognise that the scientific scenarios on the speed of climate change and their effects are in reality surpassed. Thus a new item was added to the agenda in Doha that could not make the complete failure in climate protection any clearer. It is called “Loss and Damage” and covers the analysis and compensation for damage arising from extreme weather occurrences and the rise in the sea level.

**Climate Alliance in Doha**

How can municipalities be supported in the realisation of climate protection activities and what political framework conditions are required for this? This was the topic of a joint event entitled “Teaming up to meet the targets: models for supporting local authorities in climate action” co-hosted by the German Federal Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, the European Commission-Covenant of Mayors, with Adelphi and Climate Alliance.

Good examples from Climate Alliance member municipalities were showcased, and there was an exchange on experiences within the Covenant of Mayors and the energy transition (*Energiewende*) in Germany. Pirta Lindholm from the Brussels office and Andreas Kress from the European Secretariat represented Climate Alliance on the podium. Ronan Dantec, Senator and councillor from Nantes, outlined their climate work as well as expressed further support needs for the future.

This event was an occasion to showcase the important role of local governments in achieving national, European and global GHG emission reduction targets. This role needs to be better recognised, and local efforts supported - in partnership and in coordination with all levels of government. For example, from over 2,000 Sustainable Energy Action Plans submitted in Europe within the context of the Covenant of Mayors, we can see that the expected CO₂ emission reduction target is almost 30% by 2020. Such engagement can give a positive signal when discussing the setting of a more ambitious EU reduction target and provide leverage in international negotiations.

Climate Alliance organised the traditional handover of **Green Footprints** collected by European children to Mrs Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC, at the event. Helmut Hojewsky from the Austrian delegation as well as Ralien Dekkers and Liset Medden from the International Youth Delegation were also present at the handover. This allowed us to demonstrate just how committed children are to climate protection and how they are doing their part, and to call upon the politicians to reach future-oriented decisions. In 2012, the children collected more than 2.44 million Green Footprints.

Our indigenous partner from Amazonia (COICA) also attended the conference with a delegation to present its issues and solutions to the government representatives. One of the main focus was the presentation and further developments of the **indigenous REDD+ proposal** as a tool for the protection of indigenous land. COICA used the conference as a platform to outline the situation in its regions and the threats its members face on a daily basis to an international public.
Should the climate process be abolished?

Following the conference, voices raised once again the - not entirely unfounded - question of whether the climate conferences are really necessary. Can’t the money used for these meetings and the participants’ emissions be put to better use elsewhere? Despite the paltry successes, climate change must be part of the international agenda. And the global challenges must be tackled together. The UN system is the only binding international instrument currently available. With its problems and inefficient processes, it most certainly requires improvement. However, no other international forum exists to enable this type of encounter between the political sphere and civil society on a global level, which also includes countries in which democracy is not always practised. Particularly for smaller countries, this is the only opportunity to be heard and to influence binding international decisions.

The role of the local level in climate protection

Precisely because there is so little success on the international level and the perspectives are a distant dream, municipalities, cities and regions will become an increasingly important driver for the necessary changes.

Change is already taking place at the local level. In a similar way the development of renewable energies primarily takes place de-centrally in smaller units. The many activities of Climate Alliance’s members constitute good examples of this. The actions are taking place without international agreements. And this action must be continued and reinforced. It must drive the necessary major transformations. This was also acknowledged in Doha.

Thus Climate Alliance’s central message and strategy continues to gain weight: the local level is a driving force in climate protection. Cities, municipalities and regions must continue to push ahead with the necessary transformations. Networks, cooperation and new alliances are decisive tools in this. Climate Alliance and its members – also together with other local government organisations – should strengthen this message in preparation to the next COP in Warsaw, 11-22 November.

Furthermore, local authorities are ready to support the EU in the negotiations and prepared to set more ambitious targets in the light of 2030. Lead by the success of the Covenant of Mayors initiative the support and enthusiasm of local level could help raising ambitions also at the international level.

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