The UN Climate Change Conference in Lima

The primary aim of the UN Climate Change Conference held in Lima, Peru, in December 2014 was to prepare the ground rules for contributions to the new agreement scheduled to be agreed in Paris at the end of 2015. Following the major disappointments of the 2009 conference in Copenhagen, the international community launched a renewed attempt to reach an international climate agreement. Particularly the conflict between industrialised and developing countries regarding the responsibility for climate change prevented a follow-up agreement to the Kyoto Protocol from being reached in Copenhagen.

What has changed since this time though that there could be new hope of an agreement being reached at the end of 2015? One fundamental change relates to the enhanced flexibility in the commitment in terms of the reduction aims for each country. Unlike the binding reduction goals set in the Kyoto Protocol, this time round, each country is to set its own goals in the new agreement – in line with their national capabilities. All countries must submit their voluntary self-commitment to the UN Climate Secretariat by the end of March 2015, justifying why they believe these goals to be “fair” and “ambitious”. The mechanisms controlling how and whether these goals, which are now more declarations of intent, are achieved are also to be applied with great flexibility. The time frame for the entire process has moreover been postponed to a generous deadline that lies far in the future. If an agreement really is indeed reached in 2015, then the ratification process will only be complete in 2020. Many years will therefore pass during which high emissions will still be possible. In light of the increasingly urgent warnings from scientists on the effects of the climate changes observed and their impact (e.g. in the IPCC’s Fifth Assessment Report), this delay is incomprehensible. However, the “spirit” of the negotiation process is also important for the assessment of whether the international process really will lead to effective reductions and further development of renewable energies. The political will to compromise, which should in turn lead to political action, is meant with this. At present, this will is not tangible internationally – not least because of cheap fossil fuels. However, common ground has been found regarding the need for all countries to participate in climate protection. Formulation of the “principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in light of different national circumstances” included in the agreement following pressure from China is considered an important breakthrough in overcoming the opposing positions between industrialised and developing countries and has paved the way for the agreement document.
Concrete outcomes of Lima

The compromise in Lima made possible by a two-day extension of the negotiation period is detailed in a four-page document outlining the basis for a future agreement (the Lima Call for Climate Action). A preliminary document elaborating the elements for a draft negotiating text to be agreed in Paris has been included in the annex. This contains different formulation options, which should form the basis for negotiations in 2015.

Whether these will actually be included in the final agreement will depend on how the negotiations proceed. Many text passages recognising the role of municipalities in climate protection were deleted in the final negotiation days.

The planning for participation in the climate change conference in Paris is already under way. It will above all involve informing a broad audience as well as European and international institutions of ongoing activities and the outcomes of climate protection measures on the local level in addition to key European climate protection initiatives such as the Covenant of Mayors.

Climate Alliance activities in Lima

Our indigenous partners

The conference in Lima was a particularly important event for our indigenous partners from Amazonia. Due to the large number of indigenous representatives in attendance from all four corners of the globe and especially the Andes and Amazon region, the conference was also referred to as the “COP of indigenous peoples”. At times, over 1,000 indigenous representatives were present in Lima. Different events were held to discuss the problems faced by indigenous peoples worldwide as well as to present possible solutions. Climate Alliance hosted a side event on the subject of deforestation and the REDD tool in cooperation with governmental and non-governmental institutions and indigenous representatives. The link between local climate protection in Europe and support for indigenous organisations as an important contribution to the protection of tropical forests was presented to an international audience and received widespread attention. Climate Alliance’s partner organisation, the Coordinating Body
for the Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon River Basin (COICA), decried the threats to indigenous peoples through the destruction of their living space during their events and also presented the indigenous REDD tool whose central aim is to protect indigenous territories through legal recognition.

Parts of the "We are all witnesses" and "The land we grab" exhibitions created within the scope of EU projects were presented in the Indigenous Pavilion during the UN conference.

Climate Alliance was also able to mediate important contacts that COICA will in turn be able to use to prepare for the climate change conference in Paris.

**Green Footprints**

This year, the traditional ceremony to hand over the Green Footprints collected by children throughout Europe (in 2014, 2.2 million footprints collected by 180,000 children from 11 countries) was held at the office of Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC, Christiana Figueres. This not only gave us the opportunity to present the results of the 2014 Green Footprints campaign, but also to discuss Climate Alliance’s work in greater detail. Helmut Hojesky from the Austrian delegation and Anna Lindstedt from the Swedish delegation also attended the handover ceremony, and youth representatives from Europe and Ecuador were present, too.

**Side-Event with the Committee of the Regions: The importance of local action and multi-level governance in reducing greenhouse gas emissions**

The Committee of the Regions and Climate Alliance have joined forces to call on formally recognize the role of local governments in their global strategy on climate change. Climate Alliance presented the methodology and the achievement of the Covenant of Mayors (CoM) as a multi government experience joining municipalities, counties, provinces, regions and national governments in the common effort of reducing CO2 emissions through intergovernmental work. The idea of a Covenant of Mayors Global bringing these CO2 reduction goals to all municipalities in the different world regions was launched by DG Energy.
The interventions of the Environmental Ministry of Luxemburg, the Province of Barcelona and the Region of Abruzzo showed how a successful climate protection work among national ministries, regions, provinces and municipalities can be organised and implemented.

The Covenant of Mayors has become the biggest European initiative for multi-level governance and its principles bases on a long term commitment for CO2 reductions as well as the cooperation with and the involvement of citizens and stakeholders. Ambitious climate action plans could serve as a model for other regions in the world, forming a global local movement for CO2 reduction.

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