

by CEEweb for Biodiversity

Central and East European NGO reflections on Cancun and beyond

Budapest, Hungary – Global Climate Summit UNFCCC COP 16 negotiations took place between 29 November and 10 December 2010 in Cancun, Mexico. CEEweb, an umbrella of Central and East European green NGOs reflects to Cancun decisions and advocates for a complex approach with higher profile of biodiversity and sustainability in future climate talks.

Future of Kyoto

Decision: Countries agreed to continue talks on a new carbon reduction commitment period under the Kyoto protocol, and stated that when it comes to the post-Kyoto agreement, countries Annex I to Kyoto are needed to keep global temperature rise below two degrees. However the issue is far from being resolved, because legally binding decisions on Kyoto are postponed until COP17 in 2011 the earliest.

CEEweb welcomes the intention of Parties to maximize global warming at 2 degrees Celsius and to adopt reduction targets recommended by IPCC. However, current pledges are still far from to fulfill this need. Even if fully realized, they will not stop the global average temperatures from rising at least between 3 and 4 degrees. The consequences of such warming would be catastrophic for millions of people as well as for a huge range of natural ecosystems.

Therefore, bearing in mind that the world is rapidly facing a resource constrained and volatile future, we believe that industrialized countries - including the US - should adopt a target of **40% reductions below 1990 levels by 2020**, achieved by entirely domestic efforts (excl. CDM). For long-term, we think that **80% emissions cut should be targeted by 2050**, which practically means that **our fossil fuel use should fall near zero**. The Fast-growing economies - most importantly China - also need to commit themselves to deep cuts in their emissions. Therefore, in our view a new global agreement on emission reduction, or alternatively, an extended list of Annex I Parties to the next Kyoto period is vital to be adopted during the COP17.

Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)

Decision: Carbon capture and storage (CCS) will be included in the CDM, provided certain conditions are met.

CDM can be a useful tool to support sustainable development in poor countries; however sustainability should be a keyword in project approval, and it should not result in decreasing domestic measures in industrialized countries. However we are very concerned about including carbon capture and storage (CCS) technologies in CDM. **CCS is an end-of-pipe solution requiring a lot of investment in terms of fossil energy, and there are serious concerns about their feasibility, costs, safety, and liability.** They conserve the current structure of energy sector being based mostly on fossil fuels. Instead of such end-of-pipe solutions, real solutions should target the drivers of climate change, namely the excessive use of energy, natural resources and space.

The role of forestry and land use in mitigation

Decision: Cancun decisions encourage developing country Parties to contribute to mitigation actions in the forestry sector by participating in the REDD+ scheme, namely, reducing

emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, sustainable management of forests and by conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks. They have to develop a national strategy and a monitoring and reporting scheme. Being one of the most crucial elements, financing options for REDD are still unclear and need to be further explored. There was little progress made in including emissions from the land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) sectors into carbon accounting of Annex I countries.

As included in the CBD Nagoya Strategic Plan, global deforestation needs to be stopped by 2020. Designed for climate change mitigation, REDD+ is a tool soon available for protecting organic carbon in tropical forests. As a synergy between these two provisions, CEEweb welcomes activities of conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks among REDD priorities, enabling REDD+ to effectively contribute to stop global deforestation and avoid emission of enormous amounts of stored carbon. However, it is important to emphasize that recipient countries must plan their strategy and actions at national level, as well as submit national level monitoring and reporting in order to avoid leakages. We urge the REDD+ budget to be scaled up and start to operate at large scale as soon as possible.

However, the scope of REDD+ is restricted to tropical forests. It doesn't include belowground carbon stocks in other natural ecosystems, for example grasslands on peatlands and permafrost, which together store 50% of soil carbon globally in spite of their relatively small cover of 16% of terrestrial land, and thus if converted, they are the most significant terrestrial GHG emitters beside tropical deforestation. **CEEweb calls for exploring the possibility of including these as well as other natural ecosystems in the scheme**, so that we would have a much more comprehensive instrument covering huge amounts of terrestrial carbon stored by ecosystems above and below ground.

We urge the inclusion of Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) sectors in carbon accounting compulsory for Annex I Parties. Protecting the biodiversity, the structure and organic carbon content of soils is crucial for combating climate change, implementing biodiversity policies in EU and globally, and for feeding the growing world population as well. Therefore, we need to find convergence of interests between soil conservation, climate change mitigation and adaptation, water management, food production, disaster mitigation and biodiversity conservation. Natural solutions supporting ecosystem services have been proven to bring multiple benefits and be extremely cost-effective at the same time. **Future agreement on the role of LULUCF in mitigation should adopt ecosystem-approach**, seek synergies between the above fields and bring stronger global focus on protection of soil organic carbon.

In line with the above, we would like to see **stronger coherence between the 3 Rio Conventions**, with biodiversity targets high on the UNFCCC agenda.

Adaptation to climate change

Decision: Cancun has raised the profile of adaptation both in developed and developing countries by establishing the Cancun Adaptation Framework. It highlights the necessity of adapting both society and ecosystems to climate change and provisions an Adaptation Work Programme to be compiled soon.

CEEweb welcomes the fact that the profile of adaptation has been raised. Since the adaptation agenda is very wide, it is important to put it in the framework of a horizontal and holistic environmental policy to avoid conflicts between sectors as well as indirect harmful effects on biodiversity. Many of the concerned sectors heavily rely on ecosystem services, such as agricultural and water issues (including flood protection as well as drought resilience), and **win-win solutions which are beneficial for climate adaptation, society and ecosystems are necessary to be favoured** in these sectors. Technologies requiring intensive use of energy, water and chemicals cannot be the right solutions. Instead, **our land use needs to be more 'biodiversity intensive', and has to undergo an ecology-based transformation, to make it more resilient to climate change and at the same time,**

more diverse in terms of its provisioning services. A 'biodiversity check' is necessary before initiating any new adaptation project.

CEEweb's overall views on climate change: system-thinking and input-side regulation

Greenhouse gases are widely known as the main causes of climate change. However, in our understanding they are just one of the reasons. GHG emissions, excessive use of natural resources and degradation of natural ecosystems are equivalently important causes of climate change. Therefore, to avoid climate change turning to uncontrollable and catastrophic, we should target all three. This means that (1) decreasing our use of natural resources as well as (2) giving more space for nature and its processes (by protecting remaining natural surface cover and restoring a significant part of degraded ecosystems) should get the same priority in climate change mitigation as (3) cutting our emissions of greenhouse gases. If we focus only on emission cuts, the savings due to enhanced efficiency and renewable share can easily be overgrown by the fast increase of needs, and on the other hand, some of the solutions (such as agrofuels) seriously endanger biodiversity and eventually result in even higher emissions.

Only in this way of system-thinking can we assure the proper operation of the Earth's complex and interrelated ecological and climate systems, and avoid the trap of end-of-pipe solutions: doing no more than shifting the pressures from one element of the environment to the other. The real solution therefore is a shift of current socio-economic systems to new states with significantly lower energy demand, because current energy needs are impossible to satisfy from renewable sources without seriously threatening the basic life conditions for humans on the planet, most of which are provided by ecosystems. Therefore, industrialized countries need to limit and gradually decrease their total demand for energy, natural resources and space, until we reach the carrying capacity of the Earth. Ecological Footprint should be used here as an indicator.

Useful links:

Please find this press release online at

http://ceeweb.org/viewpoint/documents/cancun_press_release_ceeweb.pdf

Download detailed Cancun decisions from <http://unfccc.int>

About CEEweb for Biodiversity

CEEweb for Biodiversity is an umbrella organization of NGOs in the Central and Eastern European region. Our mission is the conservation of biodiversity through the promotion of sustainable development. See more at <http://ceeweb.org/>

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