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**The New Phase of the Global Policy on Climate Change**

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**Abstract:** Climate change, a phenomenon that occurs worldwide, is one of the great challenges of our times. The scientific community has repeatedly drawn policy makers attention to the imperative need to adopt of preventive, mitigation and adaptation measures to what constitutes a threat to the normal course of life on Earth. Adoption and entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol, with its ratification by Russia, in February 2005 represented a major step forward in the global struggle against climate change. In this moment, however, the conclusion in 2012 of the commitment period for reducing emissions of greenhouse gases provided by the Protocol, and the brokenness of this period, put in front of the international community the need for further policy measures to prevent and combating climate change and its effects.

**Keywords:** climate changes; greenhouse gases; emissions; policies

## **1. Introduction**

Since the early 70's of last century the phenomenon of climate change and its main effect, the global warming became more present at the planetary level.

Climate change is expected to result in decreasing precipitation in arid and semi-arid areas, thus aggravating land degradation, in turn reducing livelihoods and increasing the threats of hunger and famine. Other projected impacts of climate change include shifts in climatic zones, sea level rise that could lead of millions of people displacement from low-lying delta areas and small island states. It Climate change could also increase risks of some extreme weather events such as cyclones, drought and floods.

The continuous growth of the environmental impact of human activities caused more and more severe reactions both from the environmental organizations and the population, and generally directed to the adoption of restriction measures.

In this respect, a series of preparatory events took place, namely: in 1979 the First and in 1990 the Second World Conference on Climate held in Geneva, Switzerland. Meanwhile, a series of actions were initiated such as World Climate Programme (1980), the Global Conservation Strategy (1980), the Inter-governmental Panel for Climate Change - IPCC (1988), the Global Climate Observation System - GCOS (1989), and the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) (1991).

## **2. Milestones in Climate Change Combat**

### **2.1. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) elaborated in 1992, has set an overall framework for global efforts to tackle the challenge posed by climate change. The Convention, which entered into force in 1994, recognises that the climate system is a shared resource whose stability can be affected by industrial and other emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

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The main objective of the Convention is: “stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. Such a level should be achieved within a time-frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner..”

There are now 195 Parties to the Convention. According to the provisions of the Convention, Parties are required to:

- gather and share information on greenhouse gas emissions, national policies and best practices;
- launch national strategies for addressing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to expected impacts, including the provision of financial and technological support to developing countries;
- cooperate in preparing for adaptation to the impacts of climate change.

## **2.2 Kyoto Protocol**

Research on climate change indicate the need for more stringent measures to reduce GHG emissions, stronger than stabilizing GHG emissions under the UNFCCC.

At the Third Conference of the Parties (COP 3) held in December 1997 in Kyoto, Japan, was decided to sign a protocol to establish measures, targets and clear periods to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

The Kyoto Protocol (KP) entered into force internationally on February 16th 2005, once ratified by Russia, and sets binding objectives for the countries listed in Annex B, for reducing GHG emissions with an average of approx 5%, generally compared to the 1990 level, during the 5 years commitment period (2008 – 2012).

The major difference between the two acts is that, unlike the Convention, which encourages the Parties to maintain emissions level, KP imposes their commitment to reduce GHG emissions.

The Kyoto Protocol established three flexible mechanisms to be used by the Parties to the Protocol, namely: Joint Implementation (JI, Article 6), Clean Development Mechanism (CDM, Article 12), and International Emissions Trading (IET, Article 17). These financial mechanisms come to support the parties included in Annex B of the Protocol in reducing the costs of achieving emission reduction target values, based on GHG emissions reductions in other countries or increasing GHG removals (natural reservoirs), with lower costs than in its territory.

## **2.3 The Bali Action Plan**

Due to the fact that KP established a first commitment period, which ends in 2012, the international community called for an effective and sustained implementation of the UNFCCC through long-term cooperative action up to and beyond 2012 by addressing:

- A shared vision for long-term cooperative action, including a long-term global goal for emission reductions.
- Enhanced national/international action on mitigation of climate change.
- Enhanced action on adaptation.
- Enhanced action on technology development and transfer to support action on mitigation and adaptation.
- Enhanced action on the provision of financial resources and investment to support action on mitigation and adaptation and technology cooperation.

The Bali Action Plan was agreed upon at COP 13 of the Convention, held in Bali in December 2007. The Conference adopted the Bali Road Map, which consists of a number of forward-looking decisions that represent the various tracks that are essential to reaching a secure climate future.

#### **2.4. Cancun Agreements**

The 16th of the Convention was held in Cancún, Mexico in 2010 and adopted important agreements consisting in some significant decisions

- The international community agreed to address the long-term challenge of climate change collectively and comprehensively over time and to take concrete action now to speed up the global response.
- The agreements represent key steps forward in capturing plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to help developing nations protect themselves from climate impacts and build their own sustainable futures.

Parties agreed:

- to commit to a maximum temperature rise of 2 degrees Celsius above pre-Industrial levels, and to consider lowering that maximum to 1.5 degrees in the near future.
- to make fully operational by 2012 a technology mechanism to boost the innovation, development and spread of new climate-friendly technologies;
- to establish a Green Climate Fund to provide financing to projects, programmes, policies and other activities in developing countries via thematic funding windows;

on the Cancun Adaptation Framework, which included setting up an Adaptation Committee to promote the implementation of stronger, cohesive action on adaptation.

#### **2.5. The 2011 United Nations Climate Change Conference**

The Conference representing the COP 17 of the Convention, held in December 2011 in Durban, South Africa., was accompanied by big expectation of the international community:

- agreement of a roadmap for a future global deal on reducing carbon emissions;
- further pledge on emission cuts under the Kyoto Protocol for the rich countries;
- speeding up the roll-out of clean technology to developing nations...;
- a system for managing the Green Climate Fund, scheduled to gather and distribute billions of dollars per year to developing countries;
- Progress on funding forest protection.

But despite agreement on a deal to cut emissions previously being expected by 2013, rich countries are now understood to be pushing for a deal to be agreed no earlier than 2015 or 2016, to come into force by 2020. At the end of 2012, the first phase of the Kyoto protocol will expire, leaving the world with no legally binding international deal to cut emissions.

In this moment, however, the conclusion in 2012 of the commitment period for reducing emissions of greenhouse gases provided by the Protocol, and the brokenness of this period put in front of the international community the need for further policy measures to prevent and combating climate change and its effects.

#### **2.6. EU mainstreaming in climate change**

General policy on climate change is a high priority in the EU and includes a number of measures aimed at reducing GHG emissions.

European Climate Change Programme (ECCP) is the EU policies and regulations that contribute directly or indirectly, to achieving the EU's commitment to reduce GHG emissions by 8% compared with base year 1990. This program led to the establishment of a permit trading scheme of GHG emissions within the European Community.

The next phase will be a period of eight years, from 1 January 2013 till 31 December 2020. This long period of marketing will contribute to a greater predictability, necessary for encouraging long-term investments in reducing emissions. The EU ETS will be expanded and strengthened substantially starting in 2013, which will allow it to play a central role in achieving the EU objectives on climate and energy for 2020.

For the following period the European Council has set two key objectives:

- Reduction of at least 20% of the GHG emissions by 2020 compared to 1990, and with 30% if an international agreement is reached;
- A 20% share of renewable energy sources in final energy consumption in the EU by 2020, including in it the 10% target bio fuels in total consumption used in transport.

To achieve the objectives in terms of climate change, it is necessary to reduce carbon dioxide emissions much faster in the next decade than in the previous decade and maximise the exploitation of the potential of new technologies, as well as possibilities of capture and storage of carbon dioxide. A more efficient use of resources would contribute significantly to reducing emissions, to the achievement of economies and would stimulate economic growth.

### **3. Conclusions**

The closing in 2012 of the commitment period for reducing emissions of greenhouse gases provided by the Kyoto Protocol, and the brokenness of this period, put in front of the international community the need for further policy measures to prevent and combating climate change and its effects. It is important to resolve the future of the Kyoto Protocol, which is fundamental and critical for at least two reasons:

- it contains the key rules to quantify and monitor the mitigation efforts of countries;
- it also contains important market based mechanisms that allows those countries to reach their mitigation levels in a cost effective manner.

The international community has to go towards a new post Kyoto agreement in 2012 and to pay special attention to economic arguments in order to reach sustainable solutions.

For emerging economies, a way forward would be to invest in lower emitting technologies, such as those associated with the use of renewable energies, in order to deal with the growing costs of fossil fuel use. Also, focus on specific objectives of environmental protection, such as improved performance on emissions from vehicles or industrial equipment, would constitute measures aimed both at energy efficiency and atmosphere protection.

Appropriate climate action will stimulate meanwhile the international competitiveness building, will transform the economy and society by creating new economic infrastructure, sectors and activities. This will contribute to the increase of prosperity due to the creation of new jobs and not last, by the improvement of health and quality of life for all.

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