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A “long-term global goal for emission reductions” based on Technology Diffusion and Transfer

Submission by Third World Network

A “long-term global goal for emission reductions” can be measured not in terms of temperature levels (e.g. 2 degrees), emissions concentrations (e.g. 450ppm) or emissions reductions (e.g. from 1990 levels), but rather in terms of technology R&D and diffusion to developing countries, as suggested by the IPCC’s Fourth Assessment Report.

The mandate

The Bali Action Plan calls for a shared vision for long-term cooperative action “including a long-term global goal for emission reductions”. In the Bali Action Plan the Conference of Parties:

1. *Decides* to launch a comprehensive process to enable the full, effective and sustained implementation of the Convention through long-term cooperative action, now, up to and beyond 2012, in order to reach an agreed outcome and adopt a decision at its fifteenth session, by addressing, inter alia:
 - (a) A shared vision for long-term cooperative action, including a long-term global goal for emission reductions, to achieve the ultimate objective of the Convention, in accordance with the provisions and principles of the Convention, in particular the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, and taking into account social and economic conditions and other relevant factors (emphasis added)

What type of long-term global goal for emission reductions?

The Bali Action Plan provides no guidance as to the nature of the long-term global goal for emission reductions. Indeed, there is nothing in the Convention, the Bali Action Plan or the IPCC’s Fourth Assessment report that requires a global goal to be measured in terms of greenhouse gas/CO₂ concentrations (e.g. 450ppm), temperature limits (e.g. 2 degrees), or levels of emissions reductions (e.g. cuts from 1990), as has been proposed by some Parties.

According to the IPCC:

Options for the design of international regimes can incorporate goals for the short, medium and long term. One option is to set a goal for long-term GHG concentrations or a temperature stabilization goal. Such a goal might be based on physical impacts to be avoided or conceptually on the basis of the monetary and non-monetary damages to be avoided. An alternative to agreeing on specific CO₂ concentration or temperature levels is an agreement on specific long-term actions such as a technology R&D and diffusion

target – for example, ‘eliminating carbon emissions from the energy sector by 2060’. (emphasis added) (Contribution of Working Group III to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Technical Summary, pages 90)

A “technology transfer-based” long-term global goal for emission reductions

Based on the IPCC’s Fourth Assessment Report – as explicitly referenced in footnote 1 of the Bali Action Plan – a “long-term global goal for emission reductions” can be established in terms of technology R&D and diffusion. A “technology transfer-based” long-term global goal for emission reductions could be defined in terms of the mitigation (and adaptation) potential of technologies to be developed and deployed in all countries, with specific goals established for the transfer and deployment of technologies in developing countries.

A technology transfer-based long-term global goal for emission reductions could quantify the levels of technologies to be transferred and deployed in all relevant sectors, with a focus on technologies of interest to developing countries. It could, for example, be quantified in terms of the global mitigation potential of technologies to be deployed broken down by technologies, sectors or regions (e.g. in terms of the mitigation potential of types/volumes of technologies deployed, or by mitigation levels required to achieve the Convention’s ultimate objective).

Such an approach is consistent with the provisions of the Bali Action Plan, which calls for a shared vision including a global goal to meet the following requirements:

- **“Achieve the ultimate objective of the Convention”.** A technology transfer-based global goal would – more than an hortatory goal based on temperature levels, emissions concentrations or emissions levels – help to secure the actual emissions reductions required to prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system 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” (Article 2);
- **“...in accordance with the provisions and principles of the Convention”.** A technology transfer-based global goal would build explicitly on provisions and principles of the Convention, including *inter alia* the requirements that developed countries “meet the agreed full incremental costs” of promoting technology transfer in “all relevant sectors” to developing countries (Articles 4.3 and 4.1(c)) and “take all practicable steps to promote, facilitate and finance, as appropriate, the transfer of, or access to, environmentally sound technologies and know-how to other Parties, particularly developing country Parties” (Article 4.5);
- **“...in particular the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities”.** A technology transfer-based global goal would ensure fulfillment of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, including the requirement that developed countries take the “lead in combating climate change and the adverse effects thereof” (Article 3.1) and that “extent to which developing country Parties will effectively implement their commitments under the Convention will depend on the effective implementation by developed country Parties of their commitments under the Convention related to financial resources and transfer of technology” (Article 4.7);
- **“...taking into account social and economic conditions and other relevant factors”.** A technology-transfer based global goal would also help to ensure that mitigation efforts are matched with the means to implement them – in other words, that developing countries have access to the technologies and associated financing required to “enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner” (Article 2) and can address “economic and social development and poverty eradication [which] are the first and overriding priorities of the developing country Parties” (Article 4.7).

A technology transfer-based long-term global goal for emission reductions avoids concerns that a global goal could be used to establish an implicit emissions reduction target (i.e. a “residual cut”) for developing countries. It would ensure that a clear link is made between the level of ambition for emissions reductions and the means for achieving it. It would thus help to close a gap that has so far undermined the Convention’s effective implementation. It would provide a clear signal and incentive to companies and institutions working to apply current technologies, and develop new and innovative technologies.

A technology transfer-based long-term global goal for emissions reductions is referred to by the IPCC.¹ It is referenced in the Bali Action Plan through footnote 1. And it is consistent with the terms of the Bali Action Plan and the Convention. More than a global goal based on temperature levels, emissions concentrations or emissions levels, a technology transfer-based long-term global goal for emission reductions, if adopted by Parties to the Climate Convention, could help to catalyze the actual emissions reductions in all countries world-wide that are required to avoid dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system, ensure implementation of the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities, promote sustainable development and achieve the ultimate objective of the Convention.

¹ Contribution of Working Group III to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Technical Summary, page 90, and Chapter 13, page 773.