



Kyoto is dead, long live Kyoto!

■ **Bappaditya Chatterjee**

“Count me in.” Thus, reads a giant billboard at the site of COP 18. It’s ironic that the most important conference to limit global carbon footprint is taking place in Doha, Qatar, which is one of the worst per capita emitters of greenhouse gases in the world. Talk about sending mixed signals! This seems to be in sync with the tone of the meet that is marked more by contention than cooperation. The question whether we can develop at the expense of the environment has become a circular argument complicating rather than answering to the growing threat of climate change. So, will countries face the problem head on, take a tough call and respond positively to the SOS of Kyoto Protocol? With Hurricane Sandy and other disastrous knocks of Nature, it is clear that time is running out. Can the world leaders be counted upon to heed the warning signs.

It’s time for Kyoto Protocol II. As obits are being readied, some others are frantically writing to keep it going, at least on ‘life support’. But is fighting for KP-2 a wise decision? Chandra Bhusan, Deputy Director

General, Centre for Science and Environment, Delhi, told BE, “ Developing countries are desperate to make KP live because this is the only legal instrument that differentiates developed and developing countries. But it has become a dead cow.”

Climate negotiations at crossroads again! Copenhagen to Durban, a breakthrough in climate negotiations seems to be far from one’s grasp. Doha will probably be no exception as the conference has two major tough tasks in hand-extension of Kyoto Protocol (a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol or KP-2) and mobilising the so-called green climate fund.

Without doubt, the second commitment period of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol (KP), which lapses on December 31, 2012 will be the talk of the conference. In Durban, the European Union (EU) agreed to roll out a KP-2 on condition that all countries, including major developing countries like India and China, agree to the deadline of 2015 for devising a new global deal to take effect post-2020. Immediately, Canada, Japan and Russia walked out of KP-2 while Australia and New Zealand are yet to commit to it. The largest CO2 emitter, the US, never ratified it.

On the contrary, R. R. Rashmi, Joint Secretary (climate change) in the environment ministry and a senior negotiator, said that this was one side of the argument but not the dominant one. “To put it bluntly, the gains to the EU by not ratifying the Kyoto Protocol is to keep the protocol obligations open and secondly, is to link it to the process of negotiations under the Durban Platform (which is to decide a new post- 2020 global regime),” he said. Whether KP-2 survives or not, the big question is what will be the emission target and whether it will be on the principle of ‘common but differentiated responsibility’.

Target politics

EU committed to KP-2 in Durban but failed to increase its earlier target of 20% over 1990 levels by 2020. EU’s emissions are already 16% below 1990 levels, because of England and Germany. So, the absence of additional mitigation effort makes the KP targets really weak.

Instead, developed countries always put

conditions on developing countries when pledging their emission reduction targets. The big brother US wanted to reduce nothing over 1990 levels; actually there was 0% reduction over 1990 levels by the US. Australia pledged to reduce emission anywhere between 5%-25%, while EU committed 20%-30% only when developing countries would legally bind themselves to emission targets. Developed countries deliberately made developing countries the villains of the piece for not making a conclusive deal. The facts present a different picture.

The developing countries are committed to huge reduction targets. Brazil pledged 40% and South Africa promised 34% reduction in emission intensity over business as usual while China agreed to 40%-45% reduction below business as usual. India also committed 20-25% reduction of emission intensity over 2005 level by 2020. Clearly, a conditional approach has been an escape route of any deal for developed countries.

If one adds all the pledges to the amount of reduction of all the developed and developing countries, one meets half of the required emission target. That means rise of mean temperature of 3-4 degree Celsius is inevitable. “Developed countries should increase their targets to reflect IPCC standards which say at least 25% -40% reductions from 1990 emissions should be achieved by 2020,” said Bhusan.

Climate change is not the about environment and science alone but about development. But the important factor is sharing of carbon space. Annex-1 countries have a larger share than developing and poor countries. This needs to be increased for developing and poor countries to feed their hungry population and continuing on development activities. Developed countries also played the card of climate finance in Copenhagen. But the promise was not kept.

Finance politics

Big money is no money. All the developmental aids that developing and poor countries like India, Maldives, Sri Lanka, etc. were getting was ODA (overseas developmental assistance) which was termed

as fast track finance. Apart from KP2, decisions are to be made to mobilise climate finance, which is still literally an ‘empty shell’.

Tasneem Essop, spokesperson for WWF International, said, “As of the end of 2012, USD 30 billion was committed by developed countries. We are not sure how much was actually mobilised. Developed countries have pledged to eventually pay USD 100 billion per year, but we want clarity on that in Doha.” ■

Details of existing funds

Fund	Pledged amount (USD)	Approved amount (USD)
Fast Start Fund	30 billion	20 billion
Green Climate Fund	0	0
Adaptation Fund	166 million	41 million

Credit: CSE

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