



Institute for Public Policy Research

Maintaining the momentum of progressive thought

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“We hoped for the best, but it
turned out like usual”

ZERO10! Conference

Session on “From Cop 15 to Cancun: Time for plan B?”

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“We hoped for the best...”

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- Post-2012 treaty aimed at $<2^{\circ}\text{C}$ - benchmarked on IPCC path to 450ppm (although many hoped for 400 or 350 ppm)
- Binding 2020 and 2050 emissions reduction targets for developed countries
- Route to global carbon markets
- Developing countries to lower BAU emissions trajectories, with technology assistance and finance from developed countries
- Financial transfers also for adaptation, particularly in the poorest countries
- International MRV regime
- Biggest ever gathering of world leaders at an environmental summit
- Huge campaigning effort from street protests to high-level lobbying



...but it turned out like usual”

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- UNFCCC process was never going to produce a binding agreement that could deliver 2°C
- International collective action problem with incentives to free-ride and asymmetry between costs and benefits
- Difficult politics – benefits uncertain, mostly in future, especially for major emitters, while costs incurred now, for no new products or services
 - Leaders of developed countries nervous of moving too far ahead of publics and industry lobbies by imposing too much cost
 - Leaders of developing countries nervous of sacrificing too much growth, and standing by principle of historical responsibility
- Difficult process – consensus amongst 192 countries



From COP15 to Cancun?

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- Both the politics and the basic UNFCCC process remain unchanged (or are worse), so don't expect much from Cancun
- After Copenhagen, need to rebuild trust and confidence
- Needs to happen between the major emitters "too big to free-ride" (US, China, EU, Japan, India) first, and only then the rest
- What could Plan B look like?



Plan B

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- Political situation in the US presents an opportunity for Europe to show leadership
- Don't start with the science (i.e. targets), start with the politics
- Europe should:
 - 1) demonstrate that low carbon transition can be achieved at reasonable cost
 - 2) put a lot more support into technology policy, as this will bring down the costs of decarbonisation globally
 - 3) encourage communication about actions between major emitters
- These do not need formal UNFCCC processes



Plan C

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- Despite absence of Post-2012 agreement, all countries are doing something, even USA...
- ...and these actions underpin the Copenhagen Accord
- Why?
 - energy security (all 5 major emitters are now net energy importers)
 - expectations of capturing future low-carbon technology markets
- Encourage greater cooperation on energy security as a route to emissions reduction (IEF?)
- Maintain commitment to low carbon transition with or without formal agreement, and encourage (not require) further actions by others



Two related criticisms (and responses)

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- 1) No guarantee of 2°C!!
 - Plan A did not work. The science does not guarantee the politics

- 3) Letting politicians off the hook, they should show leadership, it's a matter of political will!!
 - Plan A did not work. Climate campaigners do not reflect majority views



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“Pessimism of the intellect,
optimism of the will”