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on the 6th Thematic Session "How to engage other main actors - climate change, adaptation in third countries and global security"

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Temporary Committee on Climate Change

Rapporteur: Karl-Heinz Florenz

In its sixth thematic session on Wednesday, 26 March 2008 from 15h30 to 7 p.m. in the premises of the European Parliament in Brussels, room PHS A1002¹ the Temporary Committee on Climate Change (CLIM) heard five experts from a wide spectrum of international backgrounds. As the title of the thematic session indicated, the main emphasis was on the world-wide efforts and possibilities to limit climate change to acceptable levels.

The objective of the thematic session was to gather information, on the one hand, on how to engage other main actors, such as emerging economies, in a global climate agreement, and, on the other hand, on the challenges posed by climate change in terms of adaptation to unavoidable impacts and effects and of global security.

The thematic session started with a presentation from the key-note speaker, Dr Rajendra K. Pachauri, Chairman of IPCC and 2007 Nobel Peace Prize co-laureate, followed by two panels of speakers: the first one with views from India and Brazil on the issue of the participation of emerging economies; the second one with views from the Maldives on adaptation and from academics on the economics of climate change and the threats to global security.

In his speech, *Dr Pachauri* stressed that one of the most serious threats to global stability would be the migratory movements that could result from climate change, as parts of the World become uninhabitable or inhospitable. He then presented the most significant points of the 4th IPCC report, namely the observations on actual changes in the world climate, the projections of the future impacts of this phenomenon, the adaptation strategies that become necessary and the mitigation measures that need to be taken within a narrow window of time.

Prodipto Ghosh, Member of the India's National Council on Climate Change chaired by the Prime Minister and former Secretary in the Indian Ministry of Environment and Forest, gave a comprehensive picture of India's position and efforts in mitigating the effects of green house gas emissions while facing the problem of providing energy to its people. Promoting development is the only means for combating large-scale poverty. The greatest importance is placed on reforming the energy markets by promoting biomass fuels and renewables. However, as with adaptation, also high on the political agenda, there is increasing need for affordable technologies and financial support from the developed countries, He concluded by indicating that India will follow when the developed countries limit their emissions in real terms.

Rubens Born, from Vitae Civilis (NGO, Brazil), analysed the role of NGOs in this field as decisions taken on a political level are not only based on environmental considerations, but equally on economic, social and cultural ones. The participation of other international players in the efforts to combat climate change need to be based not only on political impetus, but also on civil society both in the developed and the developing countries. He went on to give some examples of successful action by civil society in Brazil, principal amongst which was the effort to safeguard the forests.

Amjad Abdulla, from the Environment Ministry of the Maldives, spoke on the Maldives National Adaptation to Climate Change, necessary for the small, low-lying islands that comprise the Maldivian Archipelago. He gave a comprehensive image of the human dimension of the global climate change as it impacts on the Maldives, whose very existence is in

¹ All presentations delivered at the thematic session are available on the CLIM Webpage at

jeopardy if sea level rises. Already, Maldives are facing severe problems due to loss of land and beach areas to the sea, which impacts on important infrastructure such as the international airport and results in severe deterioration of the coral reefs. The impact on human health is already felt and fresh water problems have arisen. Of course, a number of measures are being taken and envisaged, but the cost of adaptation is extremely high both in technical and in financial resources. He concluded by stressing that a serious commitment from all the international community is necessary.

Frank Ackerman, Stockholm Environment Institute and Global Development and Environment Institute of Tufts University (USA), presented another aspect of climate policy : its economics. He specifically asked the question whether this should be the subject of a cost-benefit analysis or be seen as a global insurance policy ?

There is a diverging view between climate science and economics on the subject of climate change : the science has reached a broad consensus as to the need to contain climate change and this in real, measurable terms. Economics is seeking out the most economic way to slow climate change, for which options are very limited. He then proceeded to prove that climate change cannot be subject to cost-benefit analysis, not only because science cannot be measured in economic graphs, but also because the costs of climate change cannot be priced. In this respect, combating climate change shares many common characteristics with buying insurance. The danger is uncertain, but still insurance is necessary. The real economic question is: what is the least costly way to ensure that we prevent a global catastrophe ?

Tapani Vaahtoranta, from the Finnish Institute for International Affairs, focused on the security challenges posed by climate change in the sense of the impact that climate change can have on society both internally and at global level. Shortage of drinking water in countries where good governance does not exist would result in mass migratory movements. Evidently, poverty becomes thus a challenge to security, as for example in cases of mass unemployment of young males. As climate change will make poverty eradication more difficult, development policy options must be examined. However, there is no one simple solution to the problems that could arise from climate change, as different countries present different predicaments. The economic growth of India and China results in changes to the balance of powers in which the sheer size of the population gives rise to different considerations. Russia, for its part, is reluctant to follow the efforts for limiting the GHG, as energy is making Russia rich. The conclusion is that the security challenges are greater than initially thought and if USA wants to play a guiding role in World affairs, it should combat climate change.

Summary of the presentations and remarks made by speakers, panellists and Members of the European Parliament at the sixth thematic session

The answer to the question whether we have reached the tipping point of climate change is a value judgement, science does not provide precise answers and the IPCC 4th report should be updated with the latest scientific findings. Greater importance should be conferred to forestry and the question of water availability is a very serious one. On January this year, the average temperature has fallen as indicated in a recent report from Denmark. However, we cannot talk about global cooling, as climate is subject to other factors apart from human action influences.

From another point of view, global economic considerations are a serious impediment to limiting CO2 emissions. It should however be pointed out that the 1974 petrol crisis resulted in better economy and greater overall benefits due to energy efficiency and new technologies.

The threat to small low-lying islands is very real, as the sea level has already risen by 70 cm in the last century. The threat to the Siberian permafrost is also very real. Nevertheless the IPCC does not recommend any action, this matter should be taken up by the individual countries. A change on behaviour would be a major step towards limiting GHG emissions, and in this respect it should be noted that the average per capita consumption of energy in the USA is forty times that of the equivalent in Bangladesh.

Obviously, poverty is a major issue for many countries that are the main victims of climate change. Aid for adaptation should be part of the development policy as well as affordable clean technology transfer to developing countries. As 80% of the global production is consumed in the developed countries, new weather conditions will exacerbate the problem of nutrition in the poorer countries. Agricultural losses in the South will not be compensated by equivalent gains in the North and the latest estimates show that the expense needed to face the climate change problems is higher than the 1% of global GDP as was initially calculated in the Stern report.

Conclusions of the Theme Leader Justas Paleckis

The European Union was, is and will remain the leader in the fight against climate change. The citizens of the EU have, therefore, the immense responsibility to show the rest of the world how to achieve an environmentally friendly lifestyle.

Climate change becomes the biggest security threat of today's world. For this reason it should be central to Europe's preventive security policy, as stated at the EU March 2008 Summit. The most serious threat to global stability would be increased migration, as parts of the World could become uninhabitable or inhospitable. Floods, heat waves, shortage of drinking water and food in world's unstable countries could result in mass migratory movements.

Technology can certainly provide solutions to reduce emissions, but it comes into play only if the states provide the right policies. Pricing is an extremely important instrument in this respect. If governments could act jointly to impose taxes on industries, this would provide the incentive to develop and use advanced technologies in order to produce more efficiently and economically.

It is absolutely critical to develop a bottom-up approach - the efforts to combat climate change need to be based not only on political impetus, but also on civil society in all countries. Public information campaigns, education programmes in schools and universities are essential in order to provide citizens with reliable information on this issue and on the measures needed to reduce emissions, especially since these measures would result in important changes in the way of life.

The poor and developing countries in the world have contributed the least to climate change but are suffering from its consequences the most. For this reason, developing countries should be provided with affordable technologies and financial support.

None of the world's countries is able to reverse climate change and to prevent threats to global security on its own. All main actors should be part of the 2009 agreement to combat climate change. This applies not only to the EU, the USA, Japan and Russia, but also to the other emerging economies.

If we want to prevent some of the worst catastrophic scenarios, we have to make every effort together and world-wide. In other words: one Earth - one Family. We sink or swim together.