Bonn Brief #1

BONN - THE BIG ISSUES

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Climate negotiations on track to see 5C of warming

- A recent UNEP report shows that countries' promises for emission reductions are way below levels necessary to avert dangerous climate change, and could lead to a 5C degree rise in temperature.
- To keep global temperature rise below 2C degrees, 14 gigatonnes of carbon pollution must be cut. To keep global temperatures below a safer level of 1.5C degrees even more pollution must be curbed – but currently pledged cuts only add up to 5.5 gigatonnes (less than half what is required). Scientists predict that this could lead to 5C of temperature rise.
- 5C of warming is unprecedented in human history, would lead to catastrophic impacts, and is far above any of the stated objectives in international climate negotiations.

Rich countries are breaking their promises on pollution targets and controls

- Developed countries, who have greater capacity and resources, committed in 1997 to establish legally binding pollution controls in line with what science demands and to take the lead on stopping climate pollution due to their historical responsibility for climate change.
- Currently, of the insufficient proposed global reductions in climate pollution, 65% of those reductions could happen in countries in the global South and just 35% in rich countries. This is despite the fact that 75% of all historical emissions have come from rich countries.
- A recent report by the Stockholm Environment Institute reveals that current rules of accounting, which decide what is an emission and what is not, could result in climate pollution from industrialized countries actually *increasing* by 2020 - this is very creative accounting and will lead to a huge breach of trust

The international system of climate pollution controls is being deregulated

- Most countries are calling for a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, as the first ends in 2012. This should ensure a top-down science-based approach to emissions targets while respecting the established principle of common but differentiated responsibilities among countries.
- In contrast some countries, led by the United States under Barack Obama, are trying to deregulate the climate regime by introducing 'pledge and review' instead of a system of binding targets. Pledge and review means that there is no check to see that pollution controls are in line with science and no way to make sure they are actually followed.
- Pledge and review represents dangerous backtracking on promises made by the Clinton and two Bush presidencies and will ensure "atmospheric anarchy" at the moment when the world needs fair global governance of carbon pollution.

Pledge and Review?

"Pledge and review" is the name given to the proposal of the United States to replace legally binding emissions cuts.

Under "Pledge and Review" countries' climate pollution reduction targets are set individually with no reference to what the science requires or what other countries are doing.

There is no enforcement, no way of ensuring that countries do what they say under "pledge and review." This is a drastic departure from the current system.

Common but differentiated responsibilities?

Common but differentiated responsibilities (or 'CBDR') is a principle in the original climate change Convention that all countries agreed in 1992. The principle means that given different historical responsibility for climate change, and different resources and capacity to respond, countries will take on different responsibilities at the international level.

The principle of CBDR is reflected in the previously agreed plan (at Bali in 2007) to continue, not kill, the Kyoto Protocol for industrialised countries and to have countries from the South commit to actions to reduce climate pollution under an internationally recognised outcome.

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