

CONCLUSIONS of the Climate Change Conference
COP-17, Durban, December 2011

The package of decisions known as the Durban Platform which has been agreed on in COP-17 can be seen from two angles, depending if you look at it in a positive or negative way.

If you are looking at ambitious targets, then you might be disappointed. But if you consider the whole history of the fight against climate change at global level, you can be more content. In fact, the Durban Platform has reinvigorated the idea of a "sustainable green economy" and it paves the way toward a new "eco-energy" model, which has to be thought and put in place in the coming years; and this shift needs time to be completed as it has a horizontal impact on society and affects many sectors, namely industry, agriculture, transports, buildings, consumers just to list the main ones. The need of a new, different and better use of energy has gathered the general consensus, together with the fact that emissions need to be reduced so that global temperature increases are limited to below 2 °C (and even the 1.5°C increase limit is considered).

In order to realise all this objectives, the decisions taken at COP17 in Durban expresses the willingness of the Governments of 194 parties, including 38 industrialised countries, to have a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol from January 2013, to adopt a universal legal agreement on climate change no later than 2015 which has to be implemented from 2020. The new accord will put all countries under the same legal regime enforcing commitments to control greenhouse gases: until now, under the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, only industrial countries had legally binding emissions targets.

The detractors of this agreement can state that this is a weak agreement and that the legal instrument which has to be implemented from 2020 is a vague concept. But it has to be kept in mind that in Durban, for the first time, also the countries which are "big emitters" are also on board (US, China, India) and have agreed to commit. This means that all countries have started to look at the "larger picture" and that the process towards a new model has started, going further than "just" climate change.

In fact, considering the different approaches on the fight against climate change among major actors a lot has been achieved and Cancun's and Copenhagen's decisions have been confirmed (namely the Green Climate Fund). The new deal also sets up the bodies that will collect, govern and distribute finance amounting to \$100bn per year to help poor countries to develop cleanly and to adapt to climate impacts and moving towards a low-carbon economic growth.

Next year, by 1 May 2012, the Parties of the Kyoto Protocol listed in Annex 1 will have to submit information on their QELROs¹ for the second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol, in time for the next COP 18 which will take place from 26 November to 7 November 2012 in Qatar: then it will be possible to see who will be really ready to make the necessary effort to reduce its emissions at domestic level.

If in Copenhagen the 194 parties had agreed to disagree, in Durban they have agreed to agree. It might sound nothing, but it is a lot, if you consider how many different interests had to be taken into account and how many compromises had to be accepted in order to reach an agreement acceptable for everybody, especially in a difficult economic scenario as the present one. And this result has been possible also thanks to the leading role of the EU, which has been the only one to put a proposal on the table of the negotiation -the Roadmap- allowing the EU to achieve its key goal: an agreement towards a new legal framework by 2015 involving all countries in combating climate change.

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¹ **Quantified Emissions Limitation and Reduction Commitments (QELROs):** Legally binding targets and timetables under the KP for the limitation or reduction of greenhouse-gas emissions by developed countries.