

Interview with Dr. Tariq Banuri, Director for Sustainable Development, DESA, and active participant in the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference.

Tariq Banuri:

- What was achieved in Copenhagen was an honest and faithful representation of where people are
- Climate change issue is one that can be solved through cooperative action; the problem of loss of drinking water and biodiversity are more intractable
- The problem of climate change (falls within the spectrum) of two transcendent challenges: 1) Peace; 2) Development. Climate change represents a problem that binds both of these together. If we don't solve climate change, we can't have development and won't have peace.
- We realized climate change needs to be considered as part of development and part of peace
- In Rio we brought these together
- In Kyoto we said developing countries don't need do anything
- In Bali we realized developing countries do need to do something about climate change, but in a way that doesn't derail their development progress

Copenhagen accord

1. Countries are willing to talk about a target, even if it is a meaningless target
2. People were willing to talk about 450ppm (which represents a loss from the pre-industrial levels of under 300 ppm)
3. The Accord continues the Kyoto process of having developed countries commit to emission reductions; Annex I countries will stay with what they committed to in the Kyoto Protocol.
4. There is space for developing countries to record what their actions will be – mainly at US insistence. This was controversial because large developing countries saw their commitments in two ways either as sovereign commitments to their own constituencies or as conditional commitments, i.e. commitments that could be reviewed because they are based on financial and technological assistance
5. Specific numbers were committed to contribute funds (for vulnerable countries): they are way too low but at least there were numbers, they also came with escape clauses such as “try to” and “up to”
6. Other agreements were negotiated but because of drama of last few days they were not attached to the Accord.
 - a. REDD plus agreement has been finalized
 - b. Agreement to set up technology institution has been finalized

- c. Adaptation fund was set up in Bali but got more money this time
- d. Alternative sources of money have been proposed: e.g. tax on air travel, Brown/Sarkozy initiative.
- e. (IMF is taking into account the value of liquidating debts)

Climate change is a problem that can be solved. There are much worse intractable problems, e.g. loss of biodiversity and fresh water.

Oil, if we were to make it today would cost 1 million dollars a barrel. But we pay only \$100. There is huge disparity of energy consumption, eg. Developed countries use average 250 kilowatt hours per hour per day per person; least developed use 10 kilowatt hours per hour per day per person. China is one of several countries bringing down the cost of energy consumption. We all need to move forward on bringing the cost down.

Right now renewable energy is still a little bit too expensive, but if we invest, price will come down. Our hope was that Copenhagen would encourage cooperation. At least there were some developments of capacity to bring down cost of renewable energy.

Work will continue to make accord into consensus agreement and fill in gaps so that it's a strong agreement. Next steps: 1) do on the ground whatever Copenhagen will allow: 2) continue to work to make it a consensus issue – practical process produces results.

Q: You identified a need for a shift of consciousness from competition to cooperation.
 A: Main opportunities for cooperation are among civil society, people around would coming together on this issue. Governments will be last to accept and understand this. Their purpose is premised on competition. Scientists have also given the model that in order for one country to have enough it must be taken from another. They've presented fixed climate space, but we don't climate space isn't the only issue, we want quality of life and renewable energy can solve these problems. If there is a solution to scarcity of resources e.g. water, we must solve energy problem through renewable energy abundance.

Q. What is the Secretariat's Planning process after Copenhagen?

A: For 40 years, we have known that we live in a finite world, (Brundt Commission), but we have lived in a phase of denial about this reality. Eg., 30% in the US believes either climate change doesn't exist or it is too expensive to correct it. Banuri also stated that this US statistic is in a class by itself with regard to so much skepticism. Today, the process of development as we know it must be slowed, because when things become scarce we replace the deficit with energy eg., converting salt water to fresh water. Solutions to emerging scarcity must be met by energy abundance. For this to take place in tandem with the promotion of peace, we need to develop a politics of solidarity. The moral opinion of society at large is not anchored in the ground. The Secretariat is seeking ways to encourage more transparency among governments and more cooperation. It is encouraging the development and sharing of new technologies. It is promoting commitments on all three levels: sovereign, conditional (developed countries

giving to developing ones) and unconditional (global agreements that are universal). Up ahead:

Funding those mechanisms now in place, creation of a High-Level Panel, discovering new frameworks for action.

Q: Tell us about financing issues?

A: Some countries have made sovereign commitments. But in order to do more, some countries wanted conditional commitments – they will be transparent when receiving funds. Some countries were saying even sovereign commitments should be subject to international scrutiny, but transparency should not only be of developing countries. NB. The Accord after the document is finalized (during which some gaps must be closed since it was impossible because of the “commotion” in the last two days of the Conference) – nearly 45,000 civil society came to the Conference. Annexes are to be implemented.

Tahirih Naylor 1/30/10 8:10 AM

Comment: Not clear on what is being said here

Q: What should the committee do?

A: We need to be persistent and sincere.

Tahirih Naylor compiled this report with additions from Martha Gallahue