



All together now

National governments can learn from the examples set at local and regional level when it comes to tackling climate change, say **Steve Howard** and **Luc Bas**



For the Climate Group's global coalition of businesses and sub-national governments, 2009 was a year of great expectations. However, while UN talks at Copenhagen made progress, they fell a long way short of the certainty and clarity many of our members meeting on the sidelines had been hoping for. While world leaders must now look to Cancún (and beyond this to South Africa) before any real hope for breaking the political deadlock around a global climate deal materialises, many sub-national governments are continuing to drive forward policies to encourage low carbon technologies and cut emissions for their citizens.

State and regional governments are playing a key role as laboratories for low carbon innovation and for the public-private partnerships needed to ensure that smart technologies capable of decarbonising industry make it to market. Our climate leaders' summit in Copenhagen in December 2009 managed to achieve something unprecedented and united against a broader backdrop of political chaos and confrontation. As California's governor Arnold Schwarzenegger commented at the time, "It is the sub-national governments that have to show leadership."

The Climate Group event brought together more than 60 leaders from states and regions across the globe –

from São Paulo state in South America, to Nigeria's Delta state, by way of Quebec, Scotland, Brittany and Bavaria. These sub-national leaders highlighted work being undertaken in their regions to make deep cuts in greenhouse gas emissions and called for a fair and ambitious global deal to cut emissions and unlock low carbon jobs and growth.

São Paulo state announced it had passed a climate change law to reduce emissions by 20 per cent in 2020. North Rhine-Westphalia aims to have 250,000 electric vehicles that are commercially viable circulating by 2020. The state of South Australia pledged to match

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California's ambitious target of generating 33 per cent of its power from renewable sources by 2020. Scotland legislated to reduce emissions by 42 per cent by 2020 and by 80 per cent by 2050. Our states and regions alliance committed to plant one billion trees by 2015, and issued a call to national governments to join them.

There is no time to rest on such laurels. In the teeth of the global financial crisis, the remaining months between COP15 and 16 are critical to get political momentum at every level of government back on track. National governments must take a lead from their sub-national counterparts, many of which are globally significant econo-

mies in their own right. They must also accelerate their own efforts within the Copenhagen accord to ensure COP15 sparks a “race to the top” of ambitious climate action.

In 2010, regional governments have already met to make the case for more ambitious international action. In March, European regional government leaders invited by the region of Île-de-France and the Climate Group came together in Paris to warn that more ambitious EU climate and energy policies are essential to powering Europe’s future competitiveness, growth and jobs. This joint call – the Paris statement of European regions – asked Europe’s national leaders to put climate and energy truly at the heart of the EU 2020 strategy. The statement also called for: support for an increased EU GHG reduction target; binding EU

Energy a ‘top priority’ for EU regions

A survey of Europe’s regions shows that 92 per cent consider the issue of energy one their top priorities for coming years. The poll of 67 regions, by the Association of European Regions (AER), also found that 77 per cent of them had already implemented a sustainable energy strategy. It says that giving regional authorities “better competences” along with “financial incentives” would allow regions to “better respond” to global energy challenges. The AER says the outcome of the survey also shows that “existing funding opportunities are still not fully exploited” by Europe’s regions. The results of the survey were presented in Brussels in April at the first European regions day, an event jointly organised by the Strasbourg-based AER. The event brought together some 300 regional policymakers and energy experts to discuss the role of regions in the implementation of environmental policy. AER president Michèle Sabban said the two-day gathering was “important” for regions, adding, “Energy is an issue that affects the daily life of citizens and their future.”

energy saving targets to create new jobs and increase energy security to be set; measures to incentivise private sector investment in European low carbon products, services and infrastructure; moves to recognise and support regional

policies to deliver ambitious EU emissions reduction targets; and elements of a binding international climate regime by the end of 2010 to be agreed.

More recently, in April, the Assembly of European Regions convened energy day in collaboration with GE-energy, which gathered regional decision makers and European energy experts to discuss the role of the regions in the implementation of energy and climate policies and to present regional best-practices. Ahead of our next climate leaders’ summit in Cancún, the next milestone was a high level international conference in Bonn on 2 June, to coincide with the UNFCCC mid-term international negotiations. Here sub-national governments were once again sending powerful reminders to world leaders that timely international collaboration is possible and, more importantly, effective. ★



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CAP in hand

The future of the common agricultural policy and the EU’s strategy for green growth were among the issues under discussion at a recent external meeting of the PES group in the CoR. **Louise Tait** reports

Economic events of late have undoubtedly tarnished Greece’s reputation on both the European and international stage. Today, Greece’s image is of a country with a broken economy and a public deficit so far out of control it threatens to suck the entire eurozone down the plug-hole. It is “symbolic” then, in the words of Evangelia Schoinaraki-Iliaki, prefect of Heraklion, that the PES group in the Committee of the Regions opted to hold its annual extraordinary meeting on the Greek island of Crete. PES group president in the CoR, Karl-Heinz Klär, said the decision to travel to Heraklion,

“fully aware of the situation Greece is facing”, demonstrated that “the EU sticks together”. “We were eager to come here to demonstrate that the EU will not fall victim to whoever is speculating against our currency,” said Klär. “The crisis will not be the end of our union, it will be the starting point.” And one of the first places to start will be the upcoming review of the bloc’s much vaunted and often criticised common agricultural policy (CAP).

The topic of the meeting, which took place last month at the invitation of Schoinaraki-Iliaki, was “energising rural Europe” – an issue closely related to the post-2013 CAP. Klär opened the session

by pointing out that it is important to ensure that rural areas don’t “fall victim” to purely economic concerns at the hands of conservative governments which “tend to forget” the social consequences of the economic crisis when faced with the competing demands of fiscal consolidation. “Cohesion policy, together with rural development and agricultural policies, lie at the heart of the European construction,” said Klär. “It is our duty to salvage them.” Katerina Batzeli, Greece’s rural development and food minister, said the EU is facing two options. “Either we move forward together, united, or we move toward a multi-speed Europe,” she said. Under the second option, Batzeli says, Europe’s regions will lose out. Batzeli, a former MEP who acted as the Socialist group’s coordinator on agriculture until 2007, said she expects issues such as trade, environment and energy to play a key role in the revamped CAP. “I expect reform of the common agricultural policy to go hand in hand with the EU’s other macroeconomic policies,” she told participants at the morning session. →