



# **Breaking the Climate Deadlock**

*Copenhagen: 13 December, 2009, 2.00pm*

## **Speech on climate change by Former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair**

My simple message today is this: there can be a deal at Copenhagen. There should be a deal. It will not be all that everyone wants. But it was never going to be.

We should not make the best the enemy of the good. We should take the most ambitious level of commitment to cutting emissions, from both developed and developing nations, that is on the table now, accumulate it, make it the basis of the agreement, add to it in ways that we know can make a difference within the next ten or fifteen years, especially in areas like deforestation, and get moving.

The truth is such an accord would itself set the world on a new path to a low carbon future. As our understanding of the science and technology then increases, precisely under the impetus of such an accord, we can review progress and accelerate. The first review would start at the halfway point to 2020.

Let me re-state the reason for this negotiation since in recent weeks there has been a concerted fight back against the notion that such a negotiation is even necessary. It is said that the science around climate change is not as certain as its proponents allege.

It doesn't need to be. What is beyond debate, however, is that there is a huge amount of scientific support for the view that the climate is changing and as a result of human activity. Therefore, even purely as a matter of precaution, given the seriousness of the consequences if such a view is correct, and the time it will take for action to take effect, we should act.

Not to do so would be grossly irresponsible. Also the same science is telling us that time is running out. So action has to be now.

In addition, just remember \$100 a barrel oil. Look at where we get our energy. Then reflect. There are reasons of energy security alone which make changing the nature of our economies sensible, prudent and wise.

Most nations and people now agree. The question for Copenhagen is: how do we translate this acceptance of the need for action, into practical measures that are fair for developed nations that have industrialised and created the problem; and fair for developing nations that must now industrialise to lift their people out of poverty. China will be a country with a population double that of Europe and America combined. India has over one billion people. As they industrialise, they need in partnership with us to find the ways they can do it sustainably.

How we spread the burden is a matter of equity. Where the emissions originate, is not. So the danger is very obvious: even if Europe and the United States take action to cut emissions, we must work to ensure that the rise in emissions from China, India and other developing nations does not eclipse that effort and leave the net effect on the climate as it is today or worse.

People say it's all a matter of political will. It isn't. By and large the political will exists. And if it's true that where there's a will, there's a way; it is also correct, at least in politics, that where there is a way, it is easier to summon up the will.

Kyoto was a Treaty to make a point. It was less successful at making a policy. Copenhagen is where we need to make a policy. It is time to lift this issue out of the realms of a campaign and put it firmly within the framework of a credible, achievable policy for change.

In the last two years since leaving office, I have been working with The Climate Group – the international business NGO – and other stakeholders to devise a set of principles and proposals that could serve as the basis for a deal that is both radical and realistic. Today we publish a further paper setting out an analysis of the different commitments already made by key economies and how they can be built upon.

This analysis shows two things. First, that many countries – including the whole EU block – have targets for 2020 that vary in ambition depending on whether the rest of the world is also going for more ambitious goals i.e. many nations have a “basic action” programme; and an “ambitious” programme.

Our analysis shows that if each went for their ambitious programme, the cumulative impact on cutting emissions would represent a major shift in policy. For industrialised nations, it would amount to cuts of just under 20 per cent on 1990 levels. For the United States, whose 2020 commitment still means a significant cut at least on 2005 levels, there is an increased ambition after 2020 with a big leap in progress up to 2030, when emissions would be over 40 per cent down.

It will be argued that these commitments fall short of what the science tells us is necessary. That is true, at least on some calculations. But it is also true that the accumulated impact implies a radical change in economic production and growth. In other words, they would mean a big change in policy that would itself have a highly incentivising effect on the future development of technology and the propensity of business to invest in clean energy and use it.

However, secondly, up to 2020 – usually taken as the proper date for an interim target – there are ways that we can further accelerate the cut in emissions. Deforestation is one area. A plan – costed and monitored – could yield major benefits; given deforestation is 20 per cent of the entire problem. The practical challenge of such a plan may be large; but there is no doubt what works.

The forestry sector could have a potential saving of six giga-tonnes in 2020. It would require help with financing, in aggregate, of 15 – 25 billion Euros over an extended period. But Brazil

has shown what can be done. This is an achievable objective and its big and rapid impact makes it one of the key issues for immediate negotiation and action. Included in this should be trans-border efforts to end exploitation of rainforests.

Energy efficiency, especially if applied more rapidly in the developing world, saves massively on emissions. Things like the substitution of inefficient industrial motors, building insulation, reduced leaks from pipelines, may not sound exciting as the things at the frontier of technological discovery, but they bring big rewards and quickly.

We set out in our report how this could make up at least some of the gap in meeting any 2020 target. Of course, the issue of funding for accelerated progress in the developing world arises. We may need, as we outline very large funding streams by 2020 and thereafter. But again, let us begin with a straightforward starting commitment for the early years and get going. Countries will inevitably be reluctant to commit large sums well into the future until they see how the mechanisms for using such initial funds are working. There is also potentially a major role for private capital in this process.

But let us get it underway. And that really is the objective for Copenhagen: to get us moving. To be the signal set that makes us switch track to a low carbon future. And to make sure that everyone is on the train, going in the same direction.

Some will be at the front, some at the back. Some will pay more than others. But together we are on board for a new destination for the global economy.

Naturally, there will be those who say we are not moving fast enough or that the switch now is not sufficiently radical.

But here is what it is vital to understand. The world of 2015, never mind 2020 or still less 2030, is going to look so very different to the world of today. The technologies of the future are, in many instances, in their infancy: electric vehicles; the new generation of nuclear; smart grids; new bio fuels and energy-saving equipment. But they are on the way.

And there will be technologies as yet undiscovered whose identity we cannot predict, but whose advent, in one form or another, we can. The world is changing fast.

The purpose of Copenhagen is to set a framework for that future that makes the changes happen faster. The moment global business knows the direction, it will start to behave accordingly. But it needs that clarity of direction and it needs it now. The pathways can be adjusted – it might be we have 2025 and 2030 targets as well as 2020. There can be a regular review process – in fact, on any sensible basis there has to be. But rather than fixate on this precise per centage reduction or that, get the realistic best we can now, which could still be radical, and spend our time and thought then on practical programmes of change: on technology transfer, effective mechanisms of funding, deforestation, and collaboration. Design the instruments that make it happen effectively.

One final word. Think how far we have come since Kyoto. Think how far since the Gleneagles Summit of 2005 when we struggled to get climate change on the agenda. Now the debate is how and how much and how fast. That in itself shows the world is responding.

Agreement at Copenhagen, in this area of policy which is so complex, politically sensitive and immense in its ramifications, would be an extraordinary achievement for multilateral negotiation.

Yet it is within our grasp. That alone should surely give us hope for the future.

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