

Failure in The Hague – Rethinking the Strategy?

The Hague, 13 – 15 November 2000

A critical discussion of the Sixth Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its consequences for international climate policy by Gerhard Sardemann and Hauke von Seht, ITAS.

Introduction

Probably never before the arguments in favour of tough action on climate change were as strong as at the time of the first part of the Sixth Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), 13 – 25 November 2000 in The Hague (COP 6). In his presentation at COP 6 Robert T. Watson, Chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), informed the participants that it is now indisputable that the Earth's climate is changing and that the weight of scientific evidence suggests that the observed changes are, at least in part, due to human activities. Most importantly, he stated that according to new projections the global mean temperature could increase much more than previously assumed (Watson 2000).

His presentation was based on research of IPCC Working Group I conducted for the Third Assessment Report. According to their new findings

- the concentration of greenhouse gases has continued to increase as a result of human activities;
- there is new and stronger evidence that most of the warming observed over the last 50 years is attributable to human activities and anthropogenic climate change will persist for many centuries;
- the globally averaged surface temperature has increased over the 20th century by about 0.6°C and will increase by about 1.4 – 5.8°C for the period of 1990-2100, as compared to previous IPCC estimates of 1.0-3.5°C (IPCC 2001; core findings accepted at the XVIth IPCC Plenary in

Shanghai, 17 – 20 January 2001; at COP 6 only draft texts were available).

Furthermore, world petrol prices were nearly at record height at the time of COP 6. This supported the findings of numerous recent studies which conclude that a reduced dependence on fossil fuels would have economic benefits, as well as contributing to the stabilisation of the global climate (see, for example, Bernow et al. 1999; Krause et al. 1999).

To add to this, representatives of the insurance industry, not known to easily follow doubtful claims of environmentalists, renewed their warnings of substantial damage due to global warming. Their claims have been supported by recently released figures of Munich Re, the world's leading reinsurer. According to its initial analysis of the loss events caused by natural hazards in 2000, the number of natural catastrophes reached a new absolute high, with more than 850 catastrophes recorded worldwide, one hundred more than in the previous record year of 1999 (Munich Re Group 2001).

Reasons for failure

Nevertheless, COP 6 turned into a clear failure. Originally the meeting was supposed to be the endpoint of the process of implementing the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA) which was adopted at COP 4 in Argentina and sketches out the stages for strengthening UNFCCC implementation and for specifying the Kyoto Protocol (see Seht and Sardemann 2000).

Based on BAPA, the work schedule for COP 6 included to resolve the details of the so called Kyoto Mechanisms: Emissions Trading (ET) among industrialised countries listed in Protocol Annex B; Joint Implementation (JI) of emission reduction projects by industrialised countries listed in Annex I of the Convention and the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) for project-based co-operation between Annex I and non-Annex I parties (developing countries).

Rules also had to be set up for the inclusion of carbon sinks, a very critical issue not only because of the scientific uncertainties regarding the terrestrial carbon cycle. Further issues to be addressed were *inter alia* a compli-

ance system that may lead to enforceable consequences for those parties not fulfilling their commitments, the role of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) and other funding sources, adaptation measures under the UNFCCC and technology transfer.

At COP 6 major controversy surrounded the question of "supplementarity". According to the Protocol, use of the mechanisms should be supplemental to domestic policies, but no measurable limits are given. This is a long-standing point of conflict. The position of the EU is to set quantitative or at least qualitative limits. This is in clear opposition to the position of the Umbrella Group (Japan, USA, Canada, Australia, Norway, New Zealand, Russian Fed. and Ukraine) which favours the rather unlimited use of the mechanisms (ENB 2000a; b).

In The Hague COP 6 President Jan Pronk proposed a compromise, formulating that emission reduction commitments have to be met "primarily through domestic action". However, this was rejected by the EU as too weak and no agreement could be reached on this matter.

Furthermore, there was no consensus on the kinds of projects to be allowed in the CDM. Under dispute were especially the inclusion of carbon sinks projects (e.g. reforestation), nuclear energy projects and large hydro-power plants. The EU proposed to adopt a so called "positive list" of eligible, largely energy related projects. This was opposed especially by members of the Umbrella Group. Nevertheless, after talks at ministerial level at the end of COP 6 there seems to be near consensus that at least nuclear power projects would not be included in the CDM.

Detailed consultations related to the general use of carbon sinks under the Kyoto Protocol had long been postponed until the publication of the IPCC Special Report on Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF). This was due to the existence of much scientific uncertainty regarding sinks, for example on the separation of natural uptake of carbon from direct human-induced effects. The IPCC finally published its special report in mid 2000, thus reducing the scientific uncertainty at least to some extent (see IPCC 2000). Nevertheless, delegates could not reach an agreement on sinks in The Hague. During the high-level

segment of COP 6 it became clear that some countries, most notably the US, Canada, Japan and Australia, were in favour of using domestic carbon sinks as a major option to achieve the overall CO₂-emission reduction targets, instead of cutting down their growing fossil fuel use. These countries argued that they had signed the Kyoto Protocol only at the prospect of the inclusion of sinks as a means to fulfil their reduction commitments. The US also argued that extensive domestic allowance of carbon sinks would increase the chance for the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol in the US Senate. In their initial proposal the US demands for the maximum domestic allowance for carbon sinks (including agricultural soils and grazing land management as additional carbon sinks) amounted to 310 mill. t carbon/a, about half of the US reduction target (Kerr 2000).

The EU, in line with most environmental non-governmental organisations, still has considerable doubts about the extent and effectiveness of sinks and their capability to bind carbon permanently. As a consequence, they argued against the inclusion of further sink activities (Article 3.4 of the Kyoto Protocol) in the first commitment period (2008-2012). Together with members of G77 and AOSIS (groups of developing countries) the EU strongly called for meeting emission reduction commitments primarily by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Attempts were made by Conference President Jan Pronk to achieve convergence on the issue. At the end of the consultations in The Hague the gap between both sides was relatively small, because the US side apparently was prepared to let sinks account for just 50 million tons of its mandated reduction (Kerr 2000). However, no final deal was struck.

Further unresolved differences remained between industrialised and non-industrialised countries (G77/China) regarding the more financial issues of the UNFCCC and the Protocol: capacity building, adverse effects of climate protection measures, technology transfer and adaptation. Under discussion were especially the additional sources of funding proposed by President Pronk, including the establishment of an Adaptation Fund, a Convention Fund and a Climate Resources Committee. In addition to controversy about the amount of

money, it was *inter alia* under discussion how new sources of funding would relate to the GEF and to what extent funding under the UNFCCC would be linked to actions under the Protocol (ENB 2000b).

Finally, compliance was a central issue in The Hague. Most parties supported a strong compliance system and a promising, balanced proposal on the matter was tabled by President Pronk. However, the negotiations revealed still divergent views on matters such as enforcement consequences, the method of adopting a compliance regime and the composition of compliance bodies (ENB 2000b).

In the end, COP 6 was suspended. The second part of the conference will take place in Bonn, 16 – 27 July 2001. This is later than originally intended in order to give governments more time to prepare themselves adequately. In particular the newly elected administration of US President George W. Bush requested more time.

This is not to say that climate negotiations will be on the hold till COP 6 part II. In fact, major industrial countries met already in December 2000 in Ottawa for informal consultations. These talks had been initiated by then US President Clinton in order to force an agreement before a change in US presidency. This task looked feasible because the gap between the EU and US positions on mechanisms and sinks narrowed at the end of the consultations in The Hague.

Unfortunately also the consultations in Ottawa did not lead to an agreement, revealing that significant differences are still unresolved. However, even if an agreement could have been reached it would have been rather uncertain whether parties which were not invited to the Ottawa meeting would have accepted it.

After the change in the US presidency the prospects for a success of the Kyoto Protocol even have deteriorated: As many other Republicans, President Bush has frequently positioned himself against the Kyoto Protocol. This is highly problematic, because already in 1990 the US accounted for 36.1 % of the CO₂ emissions of industrialised countries listed in Annex I. Since that time they have further increased their annual emissions (on the role of the US see also Seht and Sardemann 2000).

To sum up, there are only bleak prospects for a diplomatic success of the second part of COP 6, or at least for a success that can be regarded as environmentally acceptable. As a consequence, more emphasis should be put on the examination of other options or complementary climate strategies, because in case of a failure of the mainstream approaches under the Kyoto Protocol critical years for a stabilisation of the global climate might have been lost.

Alternative/complementary strategies

A survey of the corresponding scientific discussion indicates that there are quite a few options which do not gain enough attention in mainstream climate strategies under the Kyoto Protocol. Though no full account of these approaches can be given here, some will be briefly introduced subsequently.

One of these options are enhanced research efforts. Richard E. Benedick, former chief negotiator for the United States in the negotiations on stratospheric ozone depletion, argued already in 1998 that it is miraculous how OECD-countries could negotiate difficult short-term emission reduction goals, while they reduced their expenses for research into energy technologies by about a quarter in the previous ten years (Benedick 1998a; b). Internationally agreed eco- or carbon-taxes (or agreed minimum tax levels) would also have the potential to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and, according to many studies and first practical experiences, could also have positive national or regional economic impacts. Due to the fact that the prospects for such an agreement at the global scale are less than moderate, emphasis might be put on new regional solutions. Another option that is quite often neglected is "geo-engineering", i.e. technologies to neutralise greenhouse gases or to extract them from the atmosphere (see, for example, Rayner and Malone 1998, p. 111). Scientific evidence suggests that even if we would stop burning fossil fuels immediately, the gases already emitted would lead to further climate change. Thus, it seems sensible at least to take a closer look at the option of geo-engineering (even though the risks and disadvantages of such a strategy should not be neglected; e.g. the risk that efforts to reduce emissions loose sup-

port and momentum or the risk of unforeseen side-effects).

Furthermore, the fact that scientific evidence indicates that global warming has already begun, suggests to put more emphasis on adaptation measures. The issue has at last gained more attention in UNFCCC negotiations. Nevertheless, the accusations of critics such as Gregg Easterbrook are still partially valid:

“... Yet the subject of adapting to a warmer world is taboo in the greenhouse debate. Not only is nobody funding adaptation studies, few people in either government or the environmental movement want to discuss them” (Easterbrook 1998, p. 20).

Another problem is that emission reductions under the Protocol are mainly to be realised within industrialised countries listed in Annex I to the UNFCCC. Given that the emissions of developing countries are projected to reach the total of the group of industrialised countries within two decades (Coenen and Sardemann 1998; IEA 1998), this concentration on a limited number of countries has to be regarded as inadequate. Nevertheless, it is not sensible simply to pose emission reduction demands towards developing countries (as sometimes heard from US sources). Besides moral arguments that refer to the low historic emissions of developing countries, most of these parties to the Protocol lack the necessary financial and technical resources. As a consequence, affluent industrialised countries should put more emphasis on supporting climate protection efforts in developing countries, while at the same time taking tough domestic actions (not only replacing domestic action, as under the CDM). Current talks about technology transfer should only be a starting point.

Finally, it should be reassessed whether limits for emissions are the only possible core element of an international climate protection strategy. Alternatively, one might also search for ways to limit the production of fossil fuels in predictable small steps. Last year, the OPEC has shown what substantial impacts can be achieved by a reduced production (even though they aimed at higher revenues for their petrol, not at climate protection). Admittedly, achieving a corresponding agreement with the participation of the main producers of fossil fuels

would not be easy – if possible at all – and could have negative social implications for consumers of fossil fuels. Nevertheless, it should at least be examined whether an acceptable deal could be put together.

To sum up, given the uncertain prospects of mainstream climate strategies and given the new scientific evidence of human induced climate change, also those strategies should be addressed in full which currently gain rather little attention in international climate policy under the Kyoto Protocol. Such efforts should be facilitated in addition to – not at the expense of – established other efforts.

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Mobilitätsforschung für das 21. Jahrhundert: Verkehrsprobleme und Lösungsansätze

Eine Tagung des Bundesministeriums für Bildung und Forschung sowie des Bundesministeriums für Verkehr, Bau- und Wohnungswesen

Göttingen, 4. – 5. Mai 2000

Tagungsbericht von Sigrid Klein-Vielhauer, ITAS

Überblick

Die zweitägige Veranstaltung in der ehemaligen Lokhalle von Göttingen wurde gemeinsam vom Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF) und dem Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Bau- und Wohnungswesen (BMVBW) durchgeführt und sollte generell die Bedeutung dokumentieren, die die Bundesre-

gierung diesem Sektor zumisst. Die Tagung wurde vom Projektträger Mobilität und Verkehr, Bauen und Wohnen (PT MVBW) des BMBF, der beim TÜV Energie und Umwelt GmbH, Köln, angesiedelt ist, in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Forum für Wissenschaft und Technik, Göttingen, organisiert. Die Ende des Jahres 2000 nunmehr veröffentlichte Dokumentation der Veranstaltung ist jetzt der Anlass, über die Tagung zu berichten.

Die Veranstaltung zog rund 800 Teilnehmer an und verfolgte drei Hauptziele. Zunächst wollten beide Bundesministerien gemeinsam mit Forschungs- und Entwicklungspartnern in Industrie und Wissenschaft über laufende und neu konzipierte Förderschwerpunkte und Projektnetzwerke berichten. Dabei sollte insbesondere der problem- und systemorientierte Charakter der modernen und zukunftsweisenden Mobilitäts- und Verkehrsforschung deutlich werden, die im engen Zusammenspiel von Wissenschaft, Wirtschaft und Politik zu Ergebnissen mit breiter Akzeptanz führen soll. Weiterhin sollten (Zwischen-)Ergebnisse von abgeschlossenen und laufenden Forschungs- und Entwicklungsaktivitäten vorgelegt werden. Schließlich sollten auf dieser Veranstaltung Visionen für die Lösung der zahlreichen Zielkonflikte im Bereich „Mobilität und Verkehr“ aufgezeigt und deren Realisierungschancen diskutiert werden. Diesem Hauptziel sollte im wesentlichen die abschließende Podiumsdiskussion dienen.

Im Vordergrund der folgenden Berichterstattung steht die in dem Eröffnungsreferat von Forschungsministerin Edelgard Bulmahn und dem sich anschließenden ersten Tagungsschwerpunkt dargestellte zukünftige Schwerpunktsetzung der Bundesregierung im Bereich Mobilität und Verkehr. Über die weiteren Tagungsthemen und die jeweiligen Referenten wird nur ein Überblick gegeben; die Beiträge sind vollständig in der Tagungsdokumentation enthalten, wie auch die abschließende Podiumsdiskussion und das Teilnehmerverzeichnis.*

Zukünftige Forschungsschwerpunkte der Bundesregierung im Bereich Mobilität und Verkehr

In ihrem Eröffnungsreferat sprach *Edelgard Bulmahn*, Bundesministerin für Bildung und