

The Durban conference paved the way to a new climate treaty from 2020, with the design of a new climate treaty by 2015 being the main challenge for negotiations in the next few years. In the meantime, most countries will continue to pursue voluntarily proposed targets that will be reviewed under a UN system, while a few countries will agree to binding emission reduction targets. The EU, together with many developing countries, still advocates a Kyoto-style agreement. However, other major emitters, such as the US, are continuing to advocate a voluntary pledge and review system with a high rate of country participation.

Implications for policy makers:

Changing paradigms for climate cooperation: From top-down and bottom-up to hybrid architectures

Both bottom-up (‘coalition-building’) and top-down (‘global deal’) approaches to international climate policy have important strengths and weaknesses. While a purely voluntary bottom-up approach may lead to fragmentation of accounting rules and only limited control regarding the implementation of commitments and actions, the Kyoto approach and associated UN negotiation forums are constrained by limited flexibility and a cumbersome decision-making process.

The diversification of approaches is likely to continue, which better accommodates national circumstances and interests. The UN however needs to maintain a major role to prevent complete fragmentation of the climate regime. Finding a common ground would also enable linking of domestic emissions trading schemes and thus a bottom-up convergence of climate policies that will be critical for a new climate architecture. Dealing with this complexity will be a major challenge for the future international climate policy.

The post-2012 period: a fragmented regime

Recent years have seen the emergence of ‘climate clubs’ outside the UN. Given the difficulties to find consensus regarding a new international climate agreement under the UN it can be expected that climate clubs will gain additional importance in the future. These approaches and the UNFCCC’s role are not mutually exclusive. Rather, each engagement strategy may complement a more centralised UNFCCC approach by focusing on different drivers of action to achieve adequacy through positive incentives or sanctions.

From a post-2012 to a post-2020 regime

The UN will remain the main forum for decision-making through to at least 2020, during which time few countries will be subject to binding international targets. Building on the strengths of the current and the discussed post-2012 regime, such as high participation, inclusiveness and political feasibility, a more comprehensive and ambitious international climate regime could be designed by 2015 for the period after 2020. Such a new agreement is not likely to resemble the Kyoto Protocol, but is likely to accommodate more decentralised elements, which appears to be the direction the current negotiations are taking. The main challenge for decision-makers will be to raise ambition and share efforts in a way that is regarded as fair by a large number of countries.

Lessons from the EU effort sharing process for international negotiations

Three key lessons arise from the EU effort sharing process:

1. Much of the EU’s success has been grounded on developing consensus on basic principles of effort sharing. In international negotiations, a leading role will need to be taken by the UN; however, it will be difficult to find consensus amongst countries with different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.
2. Comprehensive, simple and transparent criteria that balance the interests of different parties will be crucial for the success of international effort sharing. At present, widely accepted criteria to compare national pledges do not exist.
3. Cooperation on implementation and the nurturing of domestic interests in climate policy may be just as important as negotiating agreed international targets for the long-term stability of the policy coalition.

Further Information

The full synthesis report and underlying working papers are available for free from www.climatestrategies.org and from the project website at <http://icpia-project.wifo.ac.at/>. This research was made possible by sponsorship from the Austrian Klima- und Energiefonds, in partnership with WIFO Austrian Institute of Economic Research.



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