

2007 International Climate Change Agenda

Dr. Paul Heinbecker

A number of international organizations and processes are addressing various climate change issues now and will do so in the coming months and, no doubt, years.

1. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

You will recall the report of Working Group 1 on science, which was released here in Paris on February 1st, 2007.

- WG 1 concluded that climate change is happening, that it is almost certainly caused by human activity and that it is happening at a faster pace than foreseen.

The report of Working Group 2 on the impacts of climate change will be released in Brussels on April 6th, 2007. The report of Working Group 3 on socio-economic issues will be released in Bangkok on May 3rd, 2007. The complete Fourth Assessment Report

- Under the Protocol, there is an Ad Hoc Working Group looking at further commitments by industrialized countries with existing targets.

There has not been a lot of progress under these UNFCCC and Protocol processes, and there is as yet no basis for an international consensus on a negotiating mandate. Concerns in some countries about political legacies notwithstanding; it is unlikely that there will be a launch before 2009.

For one thing, the current US administration seems unlikely to reverse itself completely on climate change and the next US administration, assuming that it is one that is more positive towards Kyoto and follow-up, will not be securely in the saddle before the summer of 2009 at the earliest.

For another thing, the industrial countries are united in the view that as regards whatever agreement is reached for post-2012, all the major emitters, including those among G77 will have to assume commitments. The energy demand and emission curves are such that, to paraphrase Benjamin Franklin, all must ultimately hang together or most assuredly all will hang separately.

The EU has, itself, announced a 20% energy use reduction target and signaled where the Union would go on a second Kyoto commitment period, details to follow. Other major non-EU countries, the Umbrella Group, are held together more by negotiating necessity than by identity of outlook. The G77 and China have not signaled a willingness to entertain commitments for the coming period, are waiting and while doing so, are privileging solidarity among themselves.

Some observers are concerned that there will be a gap between the 2007-2012 commitment period and the next period. Some worry that a Doha Round-like failure may be necessary before the political will to cooperate and make painful decisions emerges.

Some remember the Uruguay Round scenario when discussions migrated from UN context to the OECD and then, when the major players had reached a consensus, to Geneva, and wonder whether a similar scenario might materialize on climate change.

3. *The United Nations "Proper"*

The wild card in 2007 is a possible Leaders meeting on climate change, which the new Secretary General might call on the margins of UNGA in September. More predictably, climate change will be discussed at the General Assembly and at other Committees. In May, the UN Committee on Sustainable Development will deal with climate change and energy.

4. Beyond the UN processes

APEC

Some are promoting a focus on climate change at the September APEC Summit. The OECD is doing work on post-2012 options. There are other processes, such as the Japan-Brazil Dialogue that brings together a mix of developing and developed countries senior officials.

There are other initiatives like that of the US think tank, the Centre for Clean Air Policy, which brings together developing and developed countries' working level officials.

5. G8, G8+5 and Gleneagles Dialogue

Under the German G8 Presidency, climate change, with the related issues of energy efficiency, is going to be a major focus of the G8 Summit process.

Since the 2005 Summit in Gleneagles, the G8 Leaders meet in two basic configurations—

- With each other as the G8
- With the “Outreach 5” (Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa) as a G13.

Particularly among G8 Leaders, climate change has proven very contentious, with difficult negotiations required to bridge differences. And, despite widespread misgivings, there is pressure for a launch of negotiations in 2007 at the next Conference of the Parties in December, 2007.

PM Blair, for whom this is a legacy issue, has publicly announced, at a press conference with G8 President Chancellor Merkel that the G8 Summit should call for such a launch of negotiations.

Pursuant to the Blair-Merkel discussions, there is likely to be considerable pressure for the G8 Leaders to address difficult long term issues. The *Gleneagles Dialogue* will have its third Ministerial meeting this fall. It will bring together environment and energy ministers from the G8+5 countries, with other countries with significant interests.

It has a potential, but so far not more than that, to be a useful forum for discussions by major emitting countries on a post-2012 climate agreement.

On March 15-17, later this week, G8 and O5 (the Outreach five) Environment Ministers will meet, with climate change on the agenda. None of these ministerial groupings dispose of enough clout to be able to reach agreement. Only heads of

government can make the compromises and trade-offs and absorb the political heat for doing so.

Given the enormity of the problem, the scale of the stakes for just about everyone concerned and the paucity of consensus, there appears to be both an opportunity and a necessity for a leaders level L14 to begin to bridge the differences.

And bear in mind that the UN process meets formally at 192 but it reaches basic decisions in much smaller groups. At Kyoto, small groups put the formal deals together...and offered them to the plenary. A G14 or L14 would do the same, but in a more organized fashion.