

Chapter 5

Other Initiatives

Alongside the IPCC process, a number of international initiatives attempt to support and promote a new international climate agreement. These initiatives take part in formal frameworks, not sponsored by the UN.

a. Breaking the Climate Deadlock¹

Breaking the Climate Deadlock is an initiative launched in March 2008 by former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, in conjunction with The Climate Group (a non-profit climate advocacy firm). This project seeks to establish a framework to reach a deal between developed (i.e. the USA) and developing (i.e. India and China) countries to fight climate change.

At the end of June 2008, Mr. Blair published the initiative's first report and presented it to Japanese Prime Minister, Yasuo Fukuda, who was president of the G-8 at the time. The report "identifies the actions and questions that need to be resolved by political and business leaders over the next 18 months to achieve a successful outcome at the UN climate change negotiations in Copenhagen in December 2009."

The report identifies ten "core building blocks" that Mr. Blair and The Climate Group find necessary for reaching a global deal. It also outlines further work that must be done between now and the coming negotiations in Copenhagen regarding these issues. They include:

- **The Global Target** – Reaching clear international consensus on a goal for emission reductions.
- **The Interim Target** -- Reaching international consensus on an interim goal for controlling the date at which global emissions peak.
- **Developed World Commitments and Carbon Markets** – Peaking and reducing emissions for developed countries through binding emissions caps and an international carbon market.
- **Developing World Contributions** – Obliging developing countries to abate emissions as far as possible while remaining consistent with economic growth. This will involve creating a strategy that includes mechanisms like the CDM and "no lose" incentives for industry.
- **Sectoral Action** – Creating action at the industrial sector level that will enhance the delivery of national targets.

¹ <http://tonyblairoffice.org/climate-change/>

- **Financing** – Increasing and managing overseas development aid from developed nations to accelerate action by developing nations.
- **Technology** – Rapidly developing technologies for medium term reduction, especially carbon sequestration and renewable energy technologies.
- **Forests** – Tackling deforestation.
- **Adaptation** – Supporting adaptation tactics in the most vulnerable countries.
- **Institutions and Mechanisms of Action** – Creating new and/or utilizing previously existing institutional structures and mechanisms to construct non-traditional ways of acting.

The report indicates that, while the challenge of climate change is immense, it is not insurmountable. Existing or near-commercial technologies, increased energy efficiency, the expansion of low-carbon energy sources, and forest preservation may all contribute to massive reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, major investments in the move to a low-carbon economy could create **numerous jobs and business opportunities**.

What is even more significant is that the **Breaking the Climate Deadlock's report** insists that immediate action is necessary. The longer the international community waits, the more risky and expensive both abatement and adaptation will become.

Furthermore, since countries like India and China will be making their major development investments within the next ten years, it is extremely important to ensure that they are as energy efficient as possible now because it will be much more difficult and expensive to do so in the future. This standpoint supports The Stern Report on the Economics of Climate Change (see Chapter **3B**).

Considering all of these factors, Mr. Blair and his team consider a global deal on climate change to be essential because "without it, individual countries can act, but the cumulative impact will be much less than concerted action within a framework that accelerates the process of change in both developed and developing nations."

b. Additional International Climate-Related Processes

i. Group of 8 (G-8)

The G-8 is a coalition of major industrial countries that includes Italy, Canada, Germany, Japan, the UK, the USA, Russia and France. The Presidency of the G-8 rotates every year, and the Heads of State of these countries meet once a year at a Summit in the country that holds the Presidency. Other ministers, (e.g., finance, environment) meet throughout the year, as well as at the annual Summit. Previously, these Summits focused largely on trade-related issues, however, the Summit topics have expanded in recent years. Climate change has become a prominent issue since the UK Presidency of the G-8 in 2005. At the 2005 annual Summit in Gleneagles, Scotland, Prime Minister Tony Blair led the G-8 countries to agree on a “Climate Change, Clean Energy and Sustainable Development” Action Plan. Talks between the G-8 and major developing countries, such as Brazil and China, were initiated to attain a more sustainable and clean energy policy.²

In 2008, Japan held the G-8 Presidency. At the G-8 Annual Summit in Hokkaido, Japan, the G-8 leaders pledged to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 50 percent by the year 2050, and to use this figure as a basis for a successor agreement to the Kyoto Protocol. This long-term target shows progress in the U.S. agreement towards a long-term goal, which could signal positive changes for future international negotiations. However, the G-8 leaders did not set a short-term goal for decreasing GHG emissions. This agreement was widely criticized as being too weak in terms of not using 1990 as a base year, and also because it did not call for deeper cuts in GHG emissions as the IPCC suggested. The G-8 leaders also emphasized the need to work on carbon capture and sequestration.³

The final day of the Summit consisted of the latest round of “Major Economies” talks, where the G-8 were joined by Australia, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, South Korea, Mexico and South Africa. Leaders of the large developing countries again refused to accept any language in the final statement that hints toward a future acceptance of binding commitments. Instead, the group merely agreed to “commit to combat climate change in accordance with our common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.” (See MEM process description below).⁴

Additionally, the G-8 leaders agreed to establish national plans and cooperate to promote energy efficiency and renewable energy. The EU, for example, plans to

² The Federal Government of Germany “G8-The Basics”

<http://www.g-8.de/Webs/G8/EN/Background/background.html>.

³ Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. “G8 Hokkaido Tokyo Summit Leaders Declaration: World Economy.” 9 July 2008. http://www.g8summit.go.jp/eng/doc/doc080714_en.html.

⁴ Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. “Energy Security and Climate Change” *Declaration of Leaders Meeting of Major Economies* http://www.g8summit.go.jp/eng/doc/doc080709_10_en.html

produce 20% of its energy from renewable sources by 2020 and have a minimum of 10% biofuels blended with diesel and regular fuel by 2020. With regards to energy savings, the EU planned to reduce energy consumption by 20% by 2020 through energy efficiency measures.⁵

ii. Major Economies Meeting (MEM)⁶

U.S. President George W. Bush devised the Major Economies Meeting (MEM) process as an alternative to the international United Nations Process, because the US deems participation by the “major emitting” developing countries as essential to actually addressing the problem of global climate change. Some regard this initiative as a step to divert the UN negotiation, but it may complement and support discussions towards Copenhagen 2009.

The MEM process consists of the 16 countries (the “G-8” countries and Australia, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, South Korea, Mexico and South Africa) that account for 80% of total global carbon dioxide emissions. The goal of the MEM initiative is to provide a means for an agreement on greenhouse gas emissions reductions, without restraining economic growth. Thus, the MEM process emphasizes the need to research and finance clean energy technologies as well as establish collaboration in key sectors.

To date, there have been three separate MEM meetings. A fourth meeting was also held at the G-8 Summit in Hokkaido, Japan in 2008, where Members declared that “deep cuts in global emissions will be necessary to achieve the Convention’s ultimate objective.” That is, make a commitment “to combat climate change in accordance with our common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities,”⁷ but the goal of 50% reduction set forth by the G-8 was not mentioned.⁸

⁵ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament. “20 20 by 2020: Europe’s Climate Change Opportunity.” *The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions*. January 2008. http://ec.europa.eu/environment/climat/climate_action.htm.

⁶ U.S. Department of State. “Major Economies: Process on Energy Security and Climate Change.” <http://www.state.gov/g/oes/climate/mem/>.

⁷ Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. “Energy Security and Climate Change Declaration of Leaders.” *Meeting of Major Economies*. http://www.g8summit.go.jp/eng/doc/doc080709_10_en.html.

⁸ Ibid.