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POZNAŃ CLIMATE CONFERENCE 2008

by Kyle Ingram* & Matt Irwin**

The United Nations Climate Change Conference in Poznań, Poland (“Poznań Conference”) lasted from December 1–12, 2008. The Poznań Conference included the fourteenth Conference of the Parties (“COP 14”) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (“UNFCCC”) and fourth Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (“COP/MOP 4”).¹ The Conference was intended to be a significant milestone in global cooperation on climate change, marking the progress between the start of negotiations in Bali in 2007 and the conclusion of negotiations in Copenhagen in December 2009.² These negotiations are meant to develop a framework for the international community to combat climate change in the post-Kyoto Protocol world, as Kyoto expires in 2012.³ Commentators have given varying accounts of the degree to which the Poznań Conference solidified the chance for a successful climate agreement in Copenhagen. Some argue that the Poznań Conference was a productive point in the negotiation process, while others contend that it signified a failure of the developed world to take a serious step towards lowering greenhouse gas (“GHG”) emissions and cooperate with the developing world.⁴

ADAPTATION FUND

The Adaptation Fund negotiations are considered the only concrete achievement to come out of the Poznań Conference.⁵ The Adaptation Fund distributes money to poorer, developing countries for use to guard against the adverse effects of climate change.⁶ The Adaptation Fund has been considered a success because developing countries will have access to funds by the next year.⁷ However, at \$80 million the fund is currently too small to fully accomplish the imposing task of protecting poorer countries from the harmful environmental and economic impacts of climate change.⁸

To increase the size of the Fund, developing countries proposed that money should be added to the fund not only from the current two percent levy on carbon trading under the UN Clean Development Mechanism, but also other forms of carbon trading not currently covered by the Clean Development Mechanism.⁹ Developed and developing countries could not reach a compromise to increase funding sources for the Adaptation Fund at the Poznań Conference, so the issue remains for resolution in Copenhagen.¹⁰

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AND FINANCE

Delegates adopted the Global Environment Facility’s Poznań Strategic Programme on Technology Transfer for developing countries, which will be funded by €50 million from the UN Global Environmental Facility.¹¹ This program will increase the level of investment by leveraging private investments necessary for developing countries to implement both mitigation and adaptation technologies.¹² Without technology transfer programs such as this, the developing world would not be able to afford meaningful advances in meeting the climate change challenge.¹³

EMISSIONS REDUCTION AND DEFORESTATION

Parties came to Poznań with hopes of advancing the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation Plan, or REDD.¹⁴ Unfortunately, no official agreement on the subject was reached.¹⁵ There were, however, several promising statements made by individual countries regarding both emissions reduction and reducing deforestation. For example, Mexico agreed to cut emissions fifty percent below 2002 levels by 2050; Brazil promised a seventy percent cut in its annual deforestation rate by 2017; South Africa initiated a program to cap its carbon emissions by 2025, and the European Union said it will increase its commitment to cut GHG emissions from a twenty percent reduction to a thirty percent reduction by 2020 if a global agreement is reached.¹⁶

FOUNDATION FOR COPENHAGEN

Many important issues that could have been resolved in Poznań, including the division of responsibilities to cut GHG emissions between rich and poor nations, tropical deforestation, and sharing clean technology with developing countries, were left to be decided at the Copenhagen Conference of the Parties.¹⁷ Thus, the negotiations in Copenhagen will have no firm basis from Poznań to build upon. Despite the lack of concrete agreements or achievements resulting from the Poznań Conference, it remains vitally important to create a global commitment to combat climate change in Copenhagen later this year. The urgency of such an agreement can be best summarized by Amjad Abdulla, a delegate from the Maldives in Poznań, “We are really disappointed with the progress we are seeing in Poznań . . . We are drowning, and there is this huge gap in commitment.”¹⁸



Endnotes: Poznań Climate Conference 2008 *continued on page 67*

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ENDNOTES: POZNAŃ CLIMATE CONFERENCE 2008 *continued from page 15*

¹ EARTH NEGOTIATIONS BULLETIN, SUMMARY OF THE FOURTEENTH CONFERENCE OF PARTIES TO THE UN FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE 1 (2008), available at <http://www.iisd.ca/download/pdf/enb12395e.pdf> (last visited Feb. 12, 2009).

² See Richard Black, *Mood Mixed as Climate Summit Ends*, BBC, Dec. 13, 2008, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/7781022.stm> (last visited Feb. 11, 2009).

³ See EARTH NEGOTIATIONS BULLETIN, *supra* note 1, at 1.

⁴ Compare ENERGY RESEARCH CENTRE OF THE NETHERLANDS, POZNAŃ: DISAPPOINTMENT OR SUCCESS? (2008), available at <http://www.ecn.nl/en/news/item/article/284/1/> (last visited Feb. 13, 2008) (stating that Poznań provided a healthy exchange of information between parties that lays a foundation for progress in future negotiations), with Oxfam International, Oxfam Analysis of the Poznań Conference Outcomes, <http://www.oxfam.org/pressroom/pressrelease/2008-12-13/oxfam-analysis-Poznan-conference-outcomes> (last visited Feb. 13, 2008) (stating that developed countries failed to submit proposals on emissions reductions, finance and technology at Poznań).

⁵ See Black, *supra* note 2.

⁶ See Black, *supra* note 2; see also UNFCCC, Adaption Fund, http://unfccc.int/cooperation_and_support/financial_mechanism/adaptation_fund/items/3659.php (last visited Feb. 13, 2008).

⁷ See Black, *supra* note 2.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ European Union @ United Nations, UN Climate Change Conference: EU Commission Welcomes Poznań Outcome, http://www.europa-eu-un.org/articles/en/article_8368_en.htm (last visited Feb. 12, 2009).

¹² Press Release, United Nations, United Nations Climate Change Conference – Poznań, Poland Lays Foundation for Copenhagen Deal (Dec. 12, 2008), available at http://unfccc.int/files/press/news_room/press_releases_and_advisories/application/pdf/081213_pressrel_cop14.pdf (last visited Feb 13, 2009).

¹³ See generally EURACTIV, *Poor Countries Need Billions to Cut Emissions* (Dec. 6, 2007), available at <http://www.euractiv.com/en/climate-change/poor-countries-need-billions-cut-emissions/article-168903> (last visited Feb. 22, 2009).

¹⁴ See ENVTL. NEWS SERVICE, *Climate Hopes and Fears at Poznań*, Dec. 5, 2008, available at <http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/dec2008/2008-12-05-01.asp> (last visited Feb. 22, 2008).

¹⁵ CARBON POSITIVE, *Poznań Climate Talks Drift to a Close* (Dec. 15, 2008), available at <http://www.carbonpositive.net/viewarticle.aspx?articleID=1341> (last visited Feb. 22, 2009).

¹⁶ Bryan Walsh, *All Talk, Little Action, at UN Climate-Change Summit*, TIME, Dec. 13, 2008, available at <http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1866291,00.html> (last visited Feb. 11, 2009).

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ Elisabeth Rosenthal, *U.S. Shift on Climate Lifts Mood at Conference in Poznań*, INT'L HERALD TRIBUNE, Dec. 11, 2008, available at <http://www.ihf.com/articles/2008/12/11/healthscience/climate.php> (last visited Feb. 15, 2009).
