

Global Recession is not an excuse to undermine Climate Change Negotiations

Investing now will avert higher costs later, says CARE

Poznan, Poland (November 28, 2008) — The impacts of climate change, such as altered rainfall patterns, melting glaciers, sea-level rise and an increase in the frequency and intensity of floods, droughts and cyclones, will extract a high price from the international community. It is estimated that rising temperatures have already led to a major reduction in food crops resulting in losses of 40 million tons of grain per year. Shortage of food crops raises the price of basic commodities and erodes political stability.

As the 14th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) gets under way in Poland next week, CARE International urges governments to take a hard look at the scientific evidence already available on climate change and engage responsibly in the negotiation process to design an ambitious Post-Kyoto framework.

“Over the past month, we have witnessed world leaders act swiftly in response to the threat of a dramatic global recession, leveraging billions of US dollars to rescue needy banks and key industries,” said Dr. Charles Ehrhart, CARE International’s Climate Change Coordinator.

“Climate change poses a profound threat to the long-term health of global financial systems and everyone who relies upon them. There should be a commensurate response by world leaders, including a commitment to respond to the needs of the world’s poorest and most vulnerable communities,” he said.

CARE commends U.S. President-elect Barack Obama and the European Union for vowing to stick with commitments to cap carbon dioxide emissions, despite the global financial meltdown – and for framing the post-Kyoto Agreement as an opportunity for, rather than a risk to, national economies.

Leaders in Poland next week, however, must take it further and address the consequences of climate change for the world’s poorest people.

Poor people have contributed least to climate change and yet they are the most affected by it. “Significant resources must be allocated to support adaptation to climate change in the developing world,” said Robert Glasser, Secretary General of CARE International.

“Estimates that include the cost of community-based adaptation are in excess of \$50 billion per year, and far more if global emissions are not cut rapidly. The lowest estimate of need is several hundred times more than what is currently being offered by the international community. This imbalance must be redressed,” Glasser said.

CARE experts say that financial support for adaptation cannot be based on ad-hoc donations but rather on a mechanism that generates large-scale funding to be sustainable over the long-term. “Funding allocations must be transparent and target action at the community-level,” said Glasser.

Ehrhart and Glasser said attention must also be paid to how funding is used in developing countries. The post-Kyoto Agreement must guarantee that adaptation funding reaches the most vulnerable people.

The upcoming Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC represents the half-way mark of a two-year negotiating process towards a new post-2012 Kyoto Agreement. Yet current trends for reducing greenhouse gas emissions are way below targets. New data indicate that emissions in industrialized countries and economies in transition are, in fact, on the rise.

Today, scientists say that if the present high greenhouse gas emissions path continues, global warming this century is likely to be between 3.4°C and 7.2°C. This is significantly higher, and even more worrisome, than estimates by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released just last year. These acknowledged that extreme climate events are projected to occur more frequently when the increase in average global temperature from pre-industrial levels exceeds 2°C.

CARE calls on developed countries, including the U.S under the new leadership of President-elect Barack Obama, to make deep, binding emissions cuts in line with scientifically sound targets to avoid an increase in average global temperature from pre-industrial levels as far below 2°C as possible

On the topic of Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD), CARE strongly urges all Parties to ensure that any proposed mechanism integrates robust social standards and safeguards so that the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities are protected, that no significant harm is done, and that benefits are equitably shared.

The international community must commit sufficient resources to finance *both* adaptation in developing countries and REDD. Many of the resources currently being proposed to fund REDD are also being proposed for adaptation.

“It would be unacceptable for a climate change agreement to force a choice between funding adaptation *or* REDD,” says Ehrhart. “This would be equivalent to saying that you either bail out the banks or the auto industry. Complex issues are not about either/or but about finding win/win solutions that are inclusive rather than exclusive.”

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