

Should we reject or accept Copenhagen Accord?

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The Copenhagen Accord (CA) came after 20 years of UN negotiations on tackling climate change. The CA is only the proposal of a small group of countries from among the 192 countries that are parties to UNFCCC and now the rest of the countries have to take a decision whether to sign the accord or not.

The Copenhagen Accord is not adequate to face the climate challenge due to two reasons. Firstly, it is not a legally binding treaty. Secondly, the expressed emission reduction targets of the North and the Carbon intensity reduction targets of the South will result in a 4 degree Celsius rise in temperature. What can we achieve by accepting the CA? There is nothing in it that will yield a sustainable solution to the climate catastrophe. Even if some do accept it, it is necessary to initiate the North- South tug of war once again to fix targets. The other option we have is the rejection of CA. If we reject the CA it is still necessary to engage in a North- South tug of war to fix emission reduction targets. Regardless of whether or not we accept the CA, we are back at square one.

It is obvious that the Copenhagen Summit failed to meet the aspirations of current and future generations. Accepting or rejecting the Copenhagen Accord to my mind is merely an academic exercise and a gross waste of time. It is better to ignore this question and discuss core issues of the climate crisis and attempt to find a way out.

The North, with only 20% of the global population is responsible for over 80% of annual emissions. They need to reduce their per capita emission level without further delay. Additionally, they have a historical responsibility as they emitted an enormous amount of Carbon into the atmosphere since the commencement of the industrial revolution. The South has requested climate compensation of \$ 100 billion a year for repaying ecological debt of the North to clear this historical responsibility. The North however, is not meeting the requested targets on the one hand and trying to repackage aid money as climate compensation on the other. For twenty long years the South was insisting that the North meet the targets without success. It is unlikely that negotiations will achieve expected results even at this stage and such action will only result in a waste of time. We have to keep in mind that we have only seven years left before we trigger potentially irreversible climate change. It is clear that with a deadline to mitigate, our options are limited. We have already spent 20 precious years on this matter. The South should be more aggressive in its efforts - at least now.

How can the South be more aggressive? Instead of begging for climate compensation the South should take measures to claim it from the North. At present most of the Southern countries are caught in a financial debt trap. It is a vicious cycle of loans and repayments and the net annual cash flow in most instances is not towards the South but towards North. It is essential to break this cycle by trade-off financial debt against ecological debt. If the North is not willing to accept the trade-off then the South has to take one sided decisions on this matter and implement it by not repaying financial debt. To bridge any financial gap, South-South solidarity is essential. The Southern Civil Society Organizations should closely work with their Northern counterparts to conduct a proper audit on the ecological debt as a step towards moving in the right direction.

Does the South have the courage to take such a strong decision? We cannot expect the Southern Governments to take such a bold step as they do not have a clear vision regarding the climate challenge and are heavily dependent on the North for achieving their development goals. The South is at present unfortunately negotiating for their right to emit/pollute. To whom do the products and goods that they manufacture by emitting carbon? Their export oriented development is mainly to

satisfy the wants of the North. Export oriented development in the South means emissions go to the account of the South whereas products go to the North. This is an insane approach for the South to follow. For what purpose is this development? Isn't it to emit more and more Carbon to the atmosphere for the betterment of the people living in the North?

The South has to find a new strategy for development. Economic development of the South does not essentially mean better livelihood for the majority of the population living in the South. If we are really concerned about ecological justice then what we should do first is to get rid of inequality *within* the South. The North within the South (i.e. the affluent 20% of the Southern population) is responsible for 80% of the emissions in the South. Are we ready to address this issue of intra-country ecological justice as much as we are keen to address inter-country ecological justice? If not, then we have no right to engage in the North- South tug-of-war.

We have only 7 years left to find a solution for the climate catastrophe. South can further increase emitting Carbon during these 7 years, however while doing so we need to establish post fossil fuel era infrastructure. The governments in the South unfortunately are doing the exact opposite. They build more and more fossil fuel infrastructure in the South which is of no use after the emissions peak which we should reach in 7 years time. To name a few: coal and oil power plants, super highways, flyovers, energy intensive buildings, ports, airports etc. On the contrary if we are to emit more carbon then we should do so in order to establish post fossil fuel era infrastructure in the South for the benefit of the 80% of the unprivileged population living in these regions. To name a few: renewable energy technologies, infrastructure for reducing mobility for satisfying basic needs, less energy intensive buildings, etc.

In short we, as civil society in the South, should be ready to lobby with governments in our part of the world and force them to address the ecological injustice prevailing within the South, drop development of fossil fuel base infrastructure, concentrate on developing renewable energy infrastructure and take measures for trade-off financial debt against ecological debt. Are we ready to take this challenge?