The Management and Debate of Climate Change Negotiations
Reconfigured: Toward a Successful Transition to a Global Low-
Carbon, Green-Growth Economy

Georgia Andreadi

Introduction

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) talks of the past few
years were more eventful in terms of process than productive in terms of substance.
As a result, both process and substance suffered considerably. In particular, the
UNFCCC 2009 Copenhagen Conference attracted a flood of negative attention and
criticism from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), activists, the media, and
even the decision makers who themselves participated in the conference. The
United Nations and the UNFCCC processes were portrayed as ineffective,
cumbersome, irrelevant, and unable either to correctly interpret the dynamic, fast-
paced nature of the climate change debate or to capture its economic and political
essence in a universally binding agreement.

In the words of Ed Miliband, the then UK energy secretary who participated in the
Copenhagen Conference: "The procedural wrangling was, in fact, a cover for points
of serious, substantive disagreement... There is a wider question ... about the
structures and nature of the negotiations. The last two weeks at times have
presented a farcical picture to the public. We cannot again allow negotiations on real
points of substance to be hijacked in this way. We will need to have major reform of
the UN body overseeing the negotiations and of the way the negotiations are
conducted." 3

It is, of course, no surprise that this happened. Climate change is not a simple matter
to be resolved in a few years with just a framework agreement and a protocol. It is a
marvel that both the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol were ratified and implemented
by so many polluting countries in the first place. Greenhouse gases (GHGs) are
invisible, odorless, intangible chemical substances, and the threat they pose remains
distant, vague, and largely ignored by politicians and their constituents worldwide.
The effectiveness of the fight to address climate change depends largely on how
aware the general public is of the problem and what pressure the public can exert to
effect relevant political decisions—even more so since the economic, political, social,
developmental, and environmental parameters that excuse governments' inaction in
addressing climate change are interpreted and presented, by political elites, as key
national interests.

3 Miliband, Ed. "The road from Copenhagen: The talks were chaotic, at times farcical. But in the accord there
were real gains we can build upon." The Guardian. December 20, 2009. guardian.co.uk.
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It is natural, therefore, that countries participating in complex negotiations come with a set of clear and well-defined “red lines” they cannot go beyond (non-negotiable positions), as well as with certain fundamental interests and concerns that they try to defend and include in the negotiating text (the “basics” of negotiations, which are usually shared by many countries). Agreement is difficult to reach, and the process becomes lengthy and unproductive when the “basics” are continually ignored, especially when binding obligations are being discussed. As a rule, however, the lengthier the negotiations, the heavier the failure of both process and substance: it gets harder and harder to pull negotiations out of gridlock.

It is clear that agreement on a universal, legally binding instrument for climate change was therefore a challenging, possibly even unreachable goal for the 2009 UNFCCC Copenhagen Summit, which ambitiously set out to decide in two weeks the future economic and growth model for the planet for the next hundred years. Copenhagen also took place in the midst of the most severe global financial crisis of the past 50 years. The participation of 100-plus world leaders, mounting conservative pressure from home affecting the two biggest polluters (United States and China), and the Danish presidency’s own agenda (to make the conference a resounding success at any cost) posed further challenges to the success of the summit.

The Copenhagen Conference and the Copenhagen Accord were important in the sense that they brought together the biggest emitters and made them agree on certain principles and guidelines for proceeding to address climate change (a first in climate change negotiations). But the way business was conducted in Copenhagen discredited the UN process and brought disarray to the ranks of delegations and their negotiators. To discard the UN process and try to substitute it with discussions in other forums, however, is not a good idea. The UNFCCC is the forum “par excellence” to discuss the reasons, implications, and need for a comprehensive, legally binding, climate change deal.

The UNFCCC remains the most appropriate, representative, and democratic forum in which to discuss climate change for the reasons presented below. The rest of this paper will be devoted to:

a) the results of the 2010 Cancun Conference and where the world currently stands on the issue of climate change;

b) financing;

c) proposals on how to improve and move the UN process forward in a coherent and results-oriented manner (Multi-Year Program of Work for 2012-2024, e-matrix, removing current procedural obstacles to negotiating practices);

d) national and intergovernmental actions (outside the UN framework) that could complement the UNFCCC process, e.g., carbon markets, research and development (R&D), transfer of technologies, awareness raising campaigns; and

e) an alternative solution to the mitigation issue, if all else fails: separation of the GHGs currently bundled in the Kyoto Protocol and gradual elimination of them through separate universal binding agreements.

Results of the 2010 UNFCCC Cancun Conference

After Copenhagen, it became apparent that if the UNFCCC process were to survive, things needed to be done differently. In Cancun, they were: away from the spotlight, in a low-key meeting, the Mexican presidency created a different tone and managed to make participants work together in a spirit of compromise rather than confrontation. As Christiana Figueres, the UNFCCC’s executive secretary pointed out: “Consensus in a transparent and inclusive process can create opportunity for all.”

The “two-track” process in Cancun produced a number of decisions—many of which duplicate basic elements of the Copenhagen Accord—and made the Green Climate Fund operational. (The Green Climate Fund will administer the process of providing adaptation assistance to poor nations.) Cancun also gained headway in providing ways to fight deforestation (and thus climate change) and monitor parties’ mitigation commitments and financial pledges to fight climate change. However, it did not specify what will happen to the Kyoto Protocol. It just stated that more work needs to be done to ensure that there is no gap between the first and second commitment periods. Deliberations on what nations will participate in the second commitment period (if there is one) and how much each will need to cut emissions in the years to come have been postponed for at least another year.

In Cancun, India suggested for the first time that it could consider binding action in the future, while China continued to refuse to be subjected to a binding treaty. The US envoy said that the Cancun accord could help change opinions in Washington, but he doubted Congress would approve climate legislation soon. Environmental

4 Cancun Agreements: CMP Agreements: Outcome of the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol at its Sixth Session. unfccc.int/2860.php.

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organizations were not discouraged by the results of the conference, but acknowledged its limits, arguing that more intense efforts from all stakeholders would be needed in the immediate future if climate change and its negative impact on the planet were to be addressed in a consistent and effective manner. As an NGO representative concluded: "This year’s Christmas present to the millions of people threatened by climate change has nice packaging, but inadequate content. Yet, this is a small, but very important step forward."⁹

The "change of tone" and the constructive decisions taken in Cancun need to be sustained and enhanced. The best way to do so is by putting more money on the table and making small procedural changes at each UNFCCC session. The process needs to become more relevant and responsive to the substantive discussions on climate change, which have become extremely sophisticated and are set to shape the prevailing global economic and growth model of the future. With certain careful steps (detailed below), we could avoid the tensions, disruption, and confrontations of past years and set the stage for a single, meaningful, universal, transparent, and binding agreement on climate change in 2015. This should be simple and straightforward enough to be understood by the public at large, not just the technocrats and legal experts of governments or of the UN system.

Predictable, New, and Additional Financing to Address Climate Change

Poor nations have people to feed and shelter, infrastructure and institutions to build, markets to regulate and grow. Developing countries typically feel they cannot—and need not—be seriously concerned about the long-term impacts of environmental problems. With limited funds, they cannot commit to spending money on the environment that is needed elsewhere—for the immediate day-to-day survival of poor populations plagued by malnutrition, poverty, and disease. In addition, these countries lack the technical know-how and the technological means to successfully confront big environmental challenges on their own. Moreover, they maintain that since rich nations (often their former “colonial masters”) created the climate change problem through their energy-intensive production and consumption patterns, they should be the ones to carry the financial burden of protecting the planet now, as well as of providing financial and technological assistance to help them confront environmental problems.

Fundamentally, developing countries want to ensure that the official development assistance (ODA) that donor countries provide to help them implement the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will not be diverted from poverty, hunger, and HIV/AIDS projects to climate change projects. Developing countries (including China, Brazil, and India) are not willing to agree to any global, legally binding treaty that could impede their economic progress until they are assured that predictable, new, and additional funding (not ODA from MDG projects) will be disbursed for climate change adaptation and mitigation purposes. As a prerequisite to agreeing to a legally binding treaty for 2015, therefore, developing countries suggest that, in addition to robust fast-start (2012–2015) financing, donor countries announce multi-year (predictable, new, and additional to ODA) pledges for the UNFCCC Green Climate Fund, covering the years 2012–2015, 2016–2020, and 2021–2024 respectively (the latter two conditional upon reaching a binding agreement in 2015).

Small Steps to Reinvigorate Climate Change Negotiations

A New Multi-Year Program of Work (MYPOW) for UNFCCC/COPs

The idea of a UNFCCC Multi-Year Program of Work (MYPOW) is not new. Proposals on enhancing synergies and creating a joint MYPOW for the three Rio conventions (UNCCD, UNCBD, UNFCCC) date back to 2006, but never materialized. Developing countries and the executive secretariats of the conventions adamantly refused to cooperate more closely (merging was out of the question), because they were concerned about losing their independent decision-making power, having to fire personnel, and getting less donor funding (than they were getting as separate entities) since expenditures would be more streamlined, more transparent, and better monitored by donors.⁹

However, a UNFCCC MYPOW could be successfully introduced in the UNFCCC process now because most countries today wish to strengthen both funding and monitoring of actions and commitments for climate change. A UNFCCC MYPOW could therefore apply for COPs18 to 32 (years 2012 to 2024) and could be divided into three four-year negotiating/decision-making cycles (years 2012–2015, 2016–2020, and 2021–2024) wherein discussions would be held on pre-selected thematic clusters of issues (meaning that in each year of the four-year cycles, a predetermined cluster of two or three issues would be discussed and negotiated). The UNFCCC/COP MYPOW could be based on the very similar model of the MYPOW of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CBD), which has been working quite well for the past six years (CSD MYPOW 2004–2017) and uses a two-year/four-thematic-clusters-per-cycle work model.¹⁰ The UNFCCC MYPOW decisions would be binding on all state parties to the convention.

Negotiations on the thematic clusters could start with a first four-year negotiating cycle (2012–2015) that would set a new deadline for reaching a universal, legally


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binding agreement on climate change for 2015. After 2015, and assuming a new binding agreement was reached that year, discussions could continue on the details of implementation of the new agreement. The main aim of the MYPOW after 2015 would be to further the goals of both the Convention and the new legally binding agreement (including monitoring, reporting, and verification—or MRV, financing, technology transfer, and assessment of the relevance and efficiency of quantitative emission reduction targets) by again engaging parties in negotiations on clusters of two or three specific, predetermined climate-related issues each year.

The first three years of each cycle would be “review years,” in which decisions could be made on individual issues or could be informally agreed upon pending their official endorsement in the fourth and last year, the “policy year.” Agreements made earlier than the beginning of the MYPOW (i.e. for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation or REDD+) could also be introduced in the agenda and formally endorsed at the policy year. The policy year would be a high-level meeting (for environment, foreign, or finance ministers) in which individual decisions on all issues from the three previous (review) years would be officially endorsed, and package deals for the entirety of the thematic clusters would be forged.

A five-member (instead of the usual one-member) chairmanship of the MYPOW meetings (for each four-year cycle) could be tried out for the first time: it would represent all five regional groups of the United Nations (West European and Others Group, Latin American Group, Eastern European Group, African Group, Asian Group) to reassure state parties that their voices are heard and their interests equally represented, as well as to ensure that the process is transparent and to fend off the usual complaints that the chair acts with too much unchecked liberty. The chairmanship could be supported by the usual five-, or maybe even 10-member bureau, which would manage logistics for each four-year thematic cycle and again show that the parties intend to work closely together in a transparent, cooperative, and resolute manner to advance the goals of the Convention and the new agreement.

The proposal on the introduction of a MYPOW could come from the UNFCCC chairmanship or any state party to the Convention. The chairmanship, with support from the UNFCCC Secretariat, would be responsible for formulating and proposing the issues to be discussed at each thematic cycle of the MYPOW from 2012 onward, after wide, inclusive, and transparent consultation with the UNFCCC state-parties. A formal decision on the introduction of a MYPOW could be made in the 2011 UNFCCC session in South Africa. To avoid a gap in emissions reduction commitments from 2012 to 2015, UNFCCC Annex B countries could voluntarily continue to implement their Kyoto Protocol commitments (and could even commit to further reductions, as the European Union has done unilaterally), while countries not bound by Kyoto could also voluntarily reduce emissions.

Fate of the Kyoto Protocol

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The predominant issue affecting the first four-year cycle of the MYPOW is the fate of the Kyoto Protocol. There are two alternatives on the future of KP:

1) The Kyoto Protocol Is Abandoned

In this case the mandate of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Kyoto Protocol (AWG KP) will end in 2012, while the mandate of the Ad Hoc Working Group for Long-Term Cooperative Action (AWG LCA) will be maintained but will change: all issues previously discussed at the AWG KP will be incorporated into the AWG LCA (one-track negotiation). Annex B countries may agree voluntarily to extend their Kyoto Protocol commitments until 2015 (awaiting a legally binding agreement at that time). Discussions and decisions for the 2012–2015 MYPOW cycle could focus on the following issues:

- In 2012: Conclusion of discussions for financing (fast-track and medium-term financing, global taxes, innovative sources of financing) and adaptation—vulnerability assessment issues. In-depth consultations on the future of carbon markets (including integration of trading schemes). E-matrix set up (see below).
- In 2013: Mitigation targets (2015–2025), including continuation of Clean Development Mechanism—Joint Implementation, REDD+, and MRV.
- In 2014: Innovation, R&D, technology; “leftovers” from previous years.
- In 2015: A new, universal, comprehensive, legally binding agreement on climate change.

Decisions on uncontroversial issues could be agreed upon in the review years (2012, 2013, 2014) and then formally endorsed in the policy year, while the most difficult issues to resolve could be left for the high-level segment of the policy year.

2) The Kyoto Protocol Survives after 2012

In this case, Kyoto’s second commitment period should be made transitory and should only last until 2015. Its implementation should be made conditional upon: a) fulfillment of the voluntary commitments of the Copenhagen Accord by the big polluting countries, especially the United States and China, and b) agreement on the need to strike a binding deal on climate change in 2015. The AWG Kyoto Protocol’s mandate should in any case be terminated by the end of 2012 (as per above). The MYPOW described above should use the one-track approach only, meaning that all issues (including the ones relevant to mitigation) would be included in the agenda of the AWG LCA.

The E-Matrix

An e-matrix (a web-based tool for pooling information) could complement the UNFCCC negotiating process, not necessarily as an "institutional" instrument for official review of progress made on climate change commitments (e.g. existing official inventories and national communications, the review papers on emissions
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reductions submitted at the UNFCCC by government agencies, etc.) but rather as a voluntary tool providing user-friendly information on mitigation and adaptation projects (bilateral, national, local, regional, interagency, intergovernmental etc.). An e-matrix could provide helpful case studies on innovation, R&D, capacity-building and technology transfer and on lessons learned about the constraints to implementation of COP decisions and mitigation/adaptation projects in various countries. Input to the matrix could be submitted on a regular basis by governments (including but not limited to national reports), UN agencies, international and regional organizations, and civic stakeholders and could gradually become a pool of knowledge on technological advances and best practices relevant to climate change projects. The UNFCCC Secretariat could register the relevant information and be responsible for updating it regularly.

Further Improvement of Current Climate Change Negotiating Practices

Concurrently or as part of the MYPOW, many actions could be taken to improve negotiating practices, achieve optimal results from negotiations, and minimize disruptions and tensions at the UNFCCC COP sessions (like the ones observed in Copenhagen in 2009). In addition, the UN system as a whole could further integrate climate change into the agendas of its institutions and specialized agencies. The United Nations should treat climate change as a most pressing, cross-cutting global issue—and one that could threaten future global peace and security.

The first four-year MYPOW (2012-2015) could focus on the following issues (the list is not exhaustive and changes could take longer to implement):

- **Adoption of the COP provisional rules of procedure.** The COP rules of procedure have never been formally adopted, and until now COP decisions have been passed by consensus only. The thorny issue is Article 42 of the rules of procedure (voting), which stipulates that upon failure to reach agreement by consensus, UNFCCC state parties may adopt decisions on issues of substance with a two-thirds majority of the countries present and voting. Voting majority has been a fairly controversial issue (state parties, especially the biggest emitters of GHGs, have great difficulty agreeing to a voting procedure that can strip them of their right to reject a COP decision), and negotiations to find a solution to the voting issue have been on hold for many years. However, although it seems hard to achieve, it would be possible to agree on the voting process by further qualifying the majority rule (e.g. adopting decisions by a three-quarters majority, including all big emitters etc.).

12 For comparison, see Commission on Sustainable Development, the Matrix. unfccc.int/files/meetings/cop_16/application/pdf/cmp16_3ca.pdf
convince Congress and the Senate to pass a carbon tax—the revenues from which could be used either to reduce other taxes domestically or to provide financial support for the UNFCCC Climate Change Fund and/or the Green Climate Fund.

China, on the other hand, should continue its efforts to cut emissions and transition to a low-carbon economic path, but should also set aside its concerns over national security (most probably it will do so, since it wishes to project itself as the "benevolent power" in all global issues) and agree to a uniform/universal MRV system, starting in 2015, preferably operated by the UNFCCC.

**International Actions**

The Report of the 2010 UN High-Level Advisory Group on Climate Change Financing presented the following proposals for securing, until 2020, the necessary funds for climate change projects: 1) carbon pricing at USD $20–$25 a ton, 2) a tax on trading system for fuel emissions from international airlines and merchant ships, or a fee on plane tickets, 3) a levy on foreign-exchange transactions, 4) removal of government subsidies for fossil fuels, with the money redirected to a climate fund, 5) stepped-up grants and loans from the World Bank and similar institutions, and 6) private investment in developing countries’ climate projects, partnered with international aid.16

Within the next decade, most countries will have to seriously consider—and eventually adopt—one or more of the above proposals (imposing gas taxes, rolling back fossil fuel subsidies, defending and expanding climate programs or smart-growth plans, and helping the private sector start or fund clean-tech businesses). It is therefore wise to jump-start discussions on these issues domestically sooner rather than later and determine what course of action to take to generate funds for climate change.

**Investment in Innovation, R&D in Clean Technologies, Technology Transfer**

According to the Stern Review, emissions follow closely both the evolution of gross domestic product globally and the patterns and trends in natural disasters.17 Therefore, independently but concurrently with UNFCCC negotiations, governments need to:

- a) provide clear signals to markets and investors alike of their commitment to tackle climate change (through national legislation), facilitate the shift to a new, green-growth model of economic development, and support the mobilization of investment capital and private equity funds for green-growth and low-carbon projects both at home and abroad;
- b) promote investments in innovative technologies to transform traditional energy-intensive sectors to low-intensity ones and spread low-carbon solutions worldwide;
- c) strengthen regulation and provide incentives to facilitate the reorientation of investments and action toward a low-carbon economy;
- d) increase adaptation projects at home and abroad to protect and shelter vulnerable groups and populations from the adverse effects of natural disasters precipitated by climate change; and
- e) work closely with the business community to advance innovation, R&D, and technology transfer. (Companies have a key role to play in the transformation of the global economic paradigm, especially when working via their global alliances in key sectors to help create higher demand for climate-friendly products and services and a fair transition of the workforce to different job specifications. Governments therefore need to support them in their endeavors, by cultivating business and investment-friendly institutional frameworks.)

**Climate Change Awareness Raising Campaign**

Increasing the level of ambition of a climate agreement would not be possible without strong public opinion support and NGO participation, especially through the latter’s global networks and involvement with local and regional communities.

Recruiting national and international celebrities and public personalities in all countries as ambassadors for the fight against climate change (similar to the RED campaign, which helped raise millions for the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS) could help environmental NGOs, lobbyists, activists, and pressure groups to further promote worldwide awareness of the negative impacts of climate change (targeting elites in developing countries and the general population in developed countries) and push governments to "do the right thing" for the planet, by securing funds for climate change. The Nobel Peace Prize to Al Gore and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change provides a case in point and one that should be imitated around the world.18

**An Alternative Approach to Mitigation**

15 The Supreme Court’s case “Massachusetts vs. EPA” concluded that CO2 is a pollutant and stated that the EPA has the right to regulate carbon dioxide emissions; as the question of whether the agency has the legal authority to do so is not an issue.

16 Massachusetts et al. v. EPA et al. Supreme Court Decision in Massachusetts et al. vs. Environmental Protection Agency. www.pewclimate.org/epavmca.cfm.


The Kyoto Protocol currently treats its six greenhouse gases as a bundle, without due attention to the fact that some can be eliminated faster and more easily than others and that each makes a different contribution to global warming (some could be eliminated fairly swiftly with immediate global action, and some need more concerted and long-term efforts18). In case the above-mentioned roadmap (MYPOW etc.) fails to produce a legally binding agreement by 2015, it could actually be worth looking into how feasible it would be to curb emissions by splitting up Kyoto’s six GHGs and dealing with them in different binding agreements (or even through the Montreal Protocol), with different phasing-out rules and timetables (possibly integrating them into a legally binding agreement at a later stage, once negotiations move to that direction). Separation of GHGs, along with REDD+, immediate black carbon reduction, and major shifts in agricultural and energy use patterns could have a major positive impact on climate change mitigation efforts.

Many stakeholders in the past, not without reason, feared that disconnecting the Kyoto bundle of GHGs could seriously undermine all efforts to resolve the issue of climate change in one go. But as The Economist quite rightly points out, “better to get some significant cuts made than none,” especially if no legally binding agreement is in place by 2015.20

Questions and Answers

Why Continue to Use the UN Framework?

The UNFCCC remains the most appropriate forum in which to discuss climate change for two reasons: first, we do not have equivalent alternatives in the short term (i.e. next decade) that pack as much world power and, second, the most vulnerable countries (those most affected by climate change) cannot make their voices heard in the G20 or the Major Economies Forum meetings. Only the UN climate talk mechanism gives every country and every stakeholder a say and the chance to participate on equal terms in an undeniably democratic process. In addition, we have not seen any substantial or binding decisions to address climate change being taken in these high-level forums so far. It is therefore obvious that the problem lies less in the format of negotiations, the composition of delegations, the acceptance of scientific findings, the use of professional mediators, or the lack of

18 For instance, methane and nitrous oxides produced by agriculture (cows and cattle and sheep) account for about 10 percent of man-made warming and could be cut through breeding programs and less gassy diets. Black carbon, produced by diesel engines and primitive stoves burning wood and cow dung, melts snow and ice in the Arctic as well as the Himalayas, the glaciers and increases the tendency to absorb heat from the sun, contributing at night and a quarter of global warming. But unlike CO2, which stays in the atmosphere for centuries, it disappears within weeks. Providing villagers with cheap, cleaner stoves would be more effective. Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), industrial gases with 1,440 times the global-warming potential of carbon dioxide, like chlorofluorocarbons, are produced by a small number of industrial processes, and cutting emissions of them is cheap already in America, Mexico, Canada, and other countries have indicated that they support the idea of dealing with HFCs under the Montreal Protocol. And let us not forget that Montreal worked better than Kyoto largely because the problem was a manageable size and the gases similar in nature and origin.


21 The idea that if there are no enforcement rules in treaties the treaties are weak and cannot produce noteworthy results is rather exaggerated: states become parties in treaties by their own will and only if they know they will be able to abide by their rules (it would not make sense otherwise). In addition, countries do not like to lose face and be discredited because they did not manage to implement treaties they themselves entered into. When countries voluntarily join treaties, they do so because they are confident they can implement them (or else they simply do not participate, as the United States chose to do in Kyoto).
4) They give a second (and third... and fourth...) chance to governments to demonstrate their commitment to combat climate change through a very concrete and detailed MYPOW, which includes targets and goals mostly on process, an e-matrix with best practices, a clear set of new negotiating tactics, and an alternative proposal for achieving short-term but substantive mitigation and emissions cuts, if all else fails.

5) They can signal to businesses, markets, and investors that the political debate on climate is not dead, and they need to continue to invest in innovative energy-efficiency projects, clean-energy technologies, clean-tech businesses, smart grids, electric vehicles, and new building efficiency standards.

6) They can create the impetus and potential for a virtuous circle of countries to reinforce their commitments over time in response to similar moves by others.

7) They can reassure developing countries that developing aid funds will not be redirected (by donor countries) to climate change mitigation and adaptation projects and that these projects will be backed by new and additional sources of funding.

8) They can keep things moving forward, with bilateral, network, and regional cooperation for fast diffusion of clean-energy technologies, with buildup of national and regional smart energy grids, with common adaptation projects (e.g., building coastal protection against rising seas, modifying or shifting crops threatened by drought, building water supply and irrigation systems, preserving forests, and improving health care to deal with diseases spread by warming) and with helping developing countries move to low-carbon energy grids and systems, such as solar and wind power ones.

Conclusion

The multilateral framework for conducting climate change negotiations has not changed, and it will not change soon: it is and will remain the UNFCCC at least for the foreseeable future. With this in mind, this paper argues that, even taking into account the limitations of this framework, small changes in procedural and negotiating practices can substantially reinvigorate the process and can guide it within a five-year timeframe to produce a legally binding agreement to address climate change. If such a possibility does not materialize, then this paper argues that the world could look into other ways of dealing with the problem, i.e., reorienting the debate on substance into examining the possibility of separating GIGs and phasing them out individually, with different timetables for each.

The global environmental debate has gone far beyond the environmental protection of our planet's resources: it is a clash of world theories, economic and political positioning, civilizations; ultimately, it is about how the global politico-economic system is run. One might argue that it is governments rather than societies that see