

Dealing with THE GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE CHALLENGE



How can we attain the level of international cooperation, particularly between the developed and developing world, which will enable us to meet the challenge of climate change?

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The processes developed by the Copenhagen climate change conference must include managing the unavoidable – enabling climate refugees to survive. Most of the developing world's mega cities are located at sea level. Many of their inhabitants will need to be accommodated by the countries which have caused this mess. Europe needs millions of workers to balance our continent's demographic change.

We need to think about our responsibility for future generations. People hope that the UN climate change conference in Copenhagen in December will bring a breakthrough. But even in the most positive scenario it won't be a big bang. It won't stop climate change. It will just be the start of a new process.

We must think beyond Copenhagen. It took us time to come to where we are now, and it will take time to deal with it insofar as we can. We need to shift our thoughts from mitigation, which has so far been central to the discussion – what I would define as avoiding the unmanageable. We need to shift to adaptation – to manage the unavoidable. That is, to help the vulnerable people to survive. The climate refugees, or in UN speak, displaced environmental migrants.

We know that 80% of future population growth will take place in urban areas in the developing world. These people have come from rural areas to the urban areas, and are often living under poor conditions. They are no longer farmers. So who will feed the urban dwellers at a time when longer drought periods and inundations will curb agricultural productivity?

Most mega cities are located at sea shores. What if sea level rises by only one metre? Many people will need to be relocated. Where will they go? This is a problem not only for the smaller island developing states who will become like Atlantis and sink into the ocean. It will also affect the urban dwellers of many countries of the developing world. They need to be accommodated by those

countries which have caused this mess.

If we take into account that according to European Union estimates, millions of workers will be needed in Europe to balance the demographic change, the decrease in the number of young people joining the workforce in the coming years. We need a system that enables climate migrants to come to the richer countries to get skilled, to get the education they need to adapt to climate change. We must avoid creating a brain drain. But we need inclusive societies. Maybe we should come up with a convention on solidarity on receiving climate migrants in the future. I think the UN would be the place to negotiate something like that.

What do you hope will come out of Copenhagen?

We all hope for a cap and trade scheme, for voluntary percentage reductions in CO2 emissions. But most important is the process. It is in dialogue between countries that awareness will be sharpened. We hope for voluntary participation in curbing emissions. And a solidarity pact to help those countries which cannot afford adaptation. The technology exists, but often it is not transferred because a country cannot pay for it. We need to ensure that this transfer can take place, and also meet the needs of countries which are not able to produce insulation, solar panels and other means of curbing emissions.

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