

# TÄLLBERG FOUNDATION

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 HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG

## **Africa and Copenhagen – The solutions we need**

**Report from the Tällberg Conversation**

Held at the Mont Fleur Conference Centre,  
Stellenbosch, South Africa, 21-22 February, 2009

March, 2009

## **Introduction**

Outside Cape Town in South Africa, a Tällberg Conversation was held 21-22 February, 2009. The meeting gathered a group of forty leaders from politics, business, civil society, science and culture for two days of conversations around the topic of "Africa and Copenhagen - the solutions we need".

The meeting took place in the beautiful Mont Fleur estate, with the stunning surroundings of vineyards and the unique fynbos habitat - that had experienced some of the most thorough forest fires only a week earlier.

The purpose of this highly interactive conversation was to provide new perspectives to the policy, business and leadership challenges that we are facing as a result of the deepening global planetary crisis, with a specific focus on the climate negotiations leading up to the UN Climate Conference in Copenhagen in December 2009.

The environmental crises and global warming was put into the context of the present destabilization of geopolitical and economic realities – and the livelihood and health challenges of millions of people in the developing world. The strong correlations between economic growth – as we know it – and climate change became explicit and the conversation explored the deep shaking up of trust in the political and financial systems – which is now transported into the real economy and development. The unfolding drama of a global financial meltdown, with the threat this brings to the entire global economy, was an integral part of the conversation. It added to the sense of urgency and called for a systems approach to these problems and for yet unknown shifts in policy – in contrast to the prevailing focus solely on the threat to the market.

The conversation was greatly enriched by perspectives from the South, the North, the East. African contributions came from, among others, Cormac Cullinan, South African Environmental Lawyer and Author, David Lesolle, chief negotiator for Botswana, Langa Zita, member of the South African parliament, and Rosemary Olive Mbone Enie, Cameroonian Geologist and Gender Ambassador. From outside the region were, among others, Anders Wijkman, Swedish member of the European Parliament, Christine Loh, head of the Hong Kong think-tank Civic Exchange, and Bo Ekman, founder and chairman of the Tällberg Foundation.

The conversation combined plenary presentations and panel conversations involving all participants. In smaller group conversations, three key challenges were explored in further detail; How can the local realities reach the global negotiations, How can environment, development and finance be integrated in policies and strategies, and How can values and behaviour be changed.

## **Diverging interests – converging crises**

The conversation started off with outlines of the current status of the climate negotiations on the one hand, and the ecological and human reality on the other hand. The sensitivity of not only ecosystems, but also human health, livelihoods and social resilience was put in stark contrast to the technocratic processes of the negotiations.

Many parts of Africa will be – and are already – among the worst hit by ecosystems changes. Forests are dwindling while deserts are expanding. Extreme weather is becoming more common and safe water supplies are under stress as droughts and floods become more severe. These are but some of the indications of how the human economic systems have reached the limits of the highly complex and integrated planetary systems. This in turn is threatening human health, social security and political stability – while too little attention is made to these connections. Meanwhile, natural resources are being exploited at an ever-increasing speed – providing short term income but risking long term welfare and sustainability.

With these converging crises as the backdrop, the direct feedback from the recent Poznan conference in December 2008 was that the negotiations there had indicated an all time low level of trust between developed and developing countries. Adding to the lack of trust is the growing inequalities between negotiators from the North and South. Most African negotiators are only able to react to other positions, they do not have the resources or the knowledge to be proactive and bring their own top issues to the table. As David Lesolle put it, “Unless we educate the African negotiator, we are only talking to rocks”

The disconnection between negotiators and the reality was also stressed. The vast majority of negotiators do not have access to the most recent scientific knowledge about the ecosystems, nor do they have first-hand knowledge about the reality in villages and communities that are the first to be affected. In addition, the domestic public awareness and debates are in most countries far apart from the international action required. As Christine Loh pointed out, if we are not talking about climate change issues domestically, how can we discuss this internationally?

There is a need for justice and equity on a global scale – in stark contrast to the global apartheid that we are currently experiencing. The solution needs to include understanding of other parts of the world – Africa and China, Europe and Latin America, USA and India. Domestic carbon footprints per capita as well as exports and imports of emissions are essential if we are going to start talking about a global justice. Satisfying presentations of decreasing emissions in the EU which are due to outsourcing of emissions distort the picture and undermine the possibility to have an honest debate. Historical responsibility plays another critical role, but may need to be overshadowed by conflicting issues of poverty and security. How do we get an integrated approach which addresses all these challenges simultaneously?

The increasingly pressing issue for African leaders now is far beyond the Copenhagen agreement – it is about how to strategically plan and simultaneously address all the challenges of ecosystem services, energy security, economic growth – and the recent financial crisis. The conversation explored how a number of institutions or processes – from environmentalists and science to politics – may have failed because it has acted too much in isolation from other spheres. There is now an urgent need for dialogues across borders and sectors (both within and outside of Africa) on how Africa can develop within the current energy, climate and finance context.

While the negotiating rounds will continue till year-end, these discussions seem to be missing some of the greatest challenges that we are facing. Negotiators are still largely focusing on defending separate interests and ignoring the need to act in the interest of

the whole. As the conversation moved into exploring the challenge to act in the interest of the whole, this led towards constructive discussions around the solutions we need.

## **What are the solutions we need?**

### *Possibilities for solutions in global negotiations*

To bring the issues of greatest importance for Africa higher up on the global agendas, the meeting presented several perspectives on the need for a change of the current negotiating processes. Ideas explored included strengthening the capacity of representatives of the South, making negotiators more up to date with the current scientific knowledge and the reality of millions of people, and enable climate change negotiations to be placed within the wider challenge of preserving the capacity of ecosystems.

A better understanding and heightened discussion on risks associated with the targets set would allow us to bring wider approaches to the climate debate. The question of risks is however missing in the current debate, and missing in the IPCC. This leads towards the high-risk approach of focusing solely on climate change issues – and if we do solve one problem, we may just shift the problem to face critical crises on other fronts.

The need to bring a rights-based approach to the solutions we need is outlined in the “Greenhouse Development Rights”, a framework for a climate stabilization program which preserves the right of all people to reach a dignified level of sustainable human development. This set of principles provides a new approach to think about national obligations to pay for both mitigation and adaptation, as it argues for "the widest possible cooperation by all countries and their participation in an effective and appropriate international response, in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities"

### *Possible changes on the ground*

The possibilities for change on the ground, through tangible ideas and initiatives that could indicate opportunities for growth and welfare decoupled from emissions and environmental impact, were also extensively discussed and some proposals were highlighted.

The need for new types of power generation - both centralized and decentralized – may bring enormous opportunities for Africa, if done right. Solar power – small scale solar panels for rural use as well as large scale “solar energy farms” in deserts – may also provide new income opportunities for millions. Biofuel – being a highly debated issue – does also provide possibilities for both energy security and jobs locally while being part of the solution to the need for non-fossil energy.

In the field of agriculture and ecosystems services, the global trading of carbon credits may open new income generating possibilities for African farmers who provide natural

carbon sinks, eg through the use of biochar in the soil or through the development of innovative, sustainable forestry practices.

While new, sustainable practices and income opportunities are open to millions, the choices are only available to those who are educated enough to understand the opportunities or consequences at hand. While most funding for education is through universities, reaching women large scale in the villages would be driving real change. A crucial part of such education is the involvement of villagers in the processes of change.

With the question of involvement comes the question of communication. We need to think through who we are actually communicating with – those who already know or those who need the information the most? While there is a wealth of information about climate change in the scientific community, this does not reach the public. In addressing the many people, there is a need to be relevant, as well as to move beyond fear. Words as mitigation and adaptation need to be translated into words about disappearing water wells or forests cut down.

There emerged a clear sense that a lot of solutions suggested for Africa are more about common sense rather than high level technological innovations. The challenge facing communities and countries are however to take on the practical solutions, and not the inappropriate ideas proposed by foreign actors.

Identifying the sustainable practices and inspiring ideas that are successful in villages and city centers is a new way going forward. This is the focus of a large new initiative that the Tällberg Foundation has recently launched together with the global YES-network. The challenge ahead is not only to identify the most promising initiatives but also to boost the most viable ventures, those that drive sustainability, create green jobs and point to a new way forward.

### *The leadership challenge*

While the technical and locally appropriate solutions to many challenges are available, there is not enough political commitment or pressure from civil society to implement the solutions that we need. This highlights the missing link between committing to international treaties and implementing solutions on the ground. But equally striking is the value base and perception of wealth. As one participant put it; the very manner in which we deal with increasing temperatures - by increasing air condition - has impacts on the climate.

The Western Cape served as a microcosm illustration of the global north and south, with extreme wealth and poverty. While some are taking continuous water supply for granted others have never had access to clean water. Now, the region is facing a situation of not enough water, neither for the wealthy nor for the poor. How will the local leadership be able to handle this challenge?

It is clear that unless we address climate change through addressing development and poverty, we will not succeed. The North has a historic responsibility and they have to help developing countries invest in adaptation and mitigation. The encouraging signs from the US of significant investments into clean energy, may act as an important stimulus.

Anders Wijkman stressed that we should not sit and wait for an agreement, leaders need to act already now – on the numerous opportunities for Africa to address climate change, not least the important regional opportunities given the interconnectedness of water, energy, agriculture, livelihoods and development.

Koosum Kalyan, being a business person extensively travelling in Africa, expressed her frustration with that there is no conversation on these issues taking place across sectors or across perspectives. The right people are not getting in the room together, and they are not doing so by choice. We now need to enter into the difficult questions with the unfamiliar counterparts, and to take on the challenges we do not want to take. And do so building on the thin layer of trust that the system relies on.

### **Summing up and going forward**

In the two days of conversations at MontFleur, the group shared scientific evidence, empirical findings and many personal anecdotes and observations from villages and cities from various places in Africa and the world. As Colin Jones of the Tällberg Foundation concluded; this meeting was not necessarily the one we *thought* we would have, but an opportunity to have the conversation we *ought* to have. The workshop made all participants get a better understanding of the complexity of our global interconnectedness. We shared and developed our networks. We strengthened our resolve and commitment.

As part of the meeting, and the follow up of the meeting, several ideas for how to take forward the conversations and outcomes of the meeting emerged. Among the very concrete ideas (that are already being explored further) were to specifically convene scientists and artists and facilitate conversations between the different groups, focusing on how to communicate climate change messages through the arts and based upon solid science. Another specific suggestion was to target a broader group of key African negotiators for participation in Tällberg Forum 2009 to create an opportunity for exchanges of knowledge and briefings with world leading scientists on the most recent science on ecosystems.

Other ideas are to identify distinctly African local challenges and realities as an effect of climate change and conveying these to global negotiators; to raise awareness of climate change impact on the major health crises in Africa and subsequent impact upon the continent's political, economic and social resilience; to identify positive traditional African value systems (such as Ubuntu) which could be employed in enabling behaviour change globally.

The Tällberg Forum in June 2009 will further develop understanding and solutions for the interconnected challenges of economy, security, governance, technology, learning - and the ecosystems of our planet - in a systems approach. Based on a set of global scenarios - diverging interests, converging interests - the conversations at Tällberg Forum and going forward will not least focus on the new generation of governance that the crises of globalisation, most hopefully, will produce.