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Katowice Climate Negotiations

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Definition

Katowice climate negotiations (COP24) were the first negotiations after the Climate Change Conference in Paris (COP21). Given the history of climate negotiations, the scope and roles of the parties have changed. COP24 was the first meeting under the presidency of a small island state. By the time of the Katowice conference, the international climate negotiations had shifted from a top-down approach towards a bottom-up approach. Instead of UNFCCC, countries set up their own targets and goals. The expectations of the meeting were relatively high after the successful meeting in Paris. Developing countries did not receive a clear commitment of extra financial resources in addition to official development assistance. However, the “rulebook” for implementing the 2015 Paris agreement was further developed.

Synonyms

Katowice climate change conference, Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP24), 2018 United Nations Climate Change Conference

Introduction

In the history of climate negotiations, three issues shaped the discussions. First, climate change is a global problem that affects all economies around the world. Second, the parties have different historical responsibilities for greenhouse gas emissions. Third, the lack of hierarchy and sanctions in decentralized world politics makes enforcement of a global climate agreement difficult.

The expectations of the Katowice meeting were relatively high after the successful meeting in Paris. The Katowice negotiations were supposed to encourage commitments to the Paris agreement and stress the urgency of enhanced ambition towards mitigation actions with adequate financing, technology, and capacity-building support.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) highlights the significance of limiting the warming to 1,5 °C and the need to maintain a strong commitment to the Paris Agreement's aims. The Katowice Climate Conference (COP24) was the first negotiations after the Climate Change Conference in Paris (COP21), where the Paris Climate Agreement was accepted. In the conference hosted in Katowice, 12,810 parties were registered, including organisations such as United Nations Secretariat units and bodies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, and specialized agencies and organisations. These participants formed groups according to their interests. All parties were expected to communicate and undertake ambitious efforts within the reports that are called the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) that are part of the global attempt towards climate change mitigation.

The Katowice conference was expected to continue the progress started in Paris, including clarifying the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC). However, the concern of developing countries is that a mitigation-centric (NDC) regime will push adaptation, finance, technology transfer, and capacity building for developing countries further and further into the background.

History

2015: Paris

Since the Kyoto Protocol, the global community has been trying to negotiate a mutual approach to mitigate climate change. The most comprehensive global climate change agreement was negotiated in 2015 at COP21 in Paris. It brought all nations into a shared struggle towards climate change. The Paris Agreement is based on a pledge and review scheme that requires all parties to enforce their most ambitious policies through NDCs and to extend these efforts in the future.

2016: Marrakesh

The COP22 in Marrakesh continued the progress started in Paris by establishing a rulebook for the implementation of the Agreement, based on transparency and accountability. The parties adopted 35 decisions, mostly related to the implementation of the Paris Agreement. The involvement of non-state actors was also discussed. Outside the formal negotiations, groups aiming to switch to 100% renewable energy and decarbonize the economies were formed.

2017: Bonn

The COP23 climate summit was the first to be presided by a small island, although the vulnerability of small islands to climate change has been known for a long time. The main objective of the Bonn COP23 was to outline a rulebook for implementing the practical issues of the Paris Agreement. A preference for the EU was to outline the details in the rulebook and assure that the deadline in 2018 is not missed.

One of the most significant accomplishments of the COP23 was the launch of the Talanoa Dialogue, which stands for open and inclusive exchange. This dialogue had its premiere in January 2018 with the aim of investigating the level of nationally determined contributions (NDCs). The financial commitments and transparency of financial flows under the Paris Agreement were debated again in Bonn (Dröge & Rattani, 2018).

COP23 in Bonn focused more on specific methodological issues as countries proceeded to debate the technical details of the agreement. The major contribution was the display of the “Powering Past Coal Alliance”, led by the UK and Canada. This alliance gathered more than 20 countries in addition to sub-national parties. However, two issues raised uncertainty. Developed countries had not yet received the expected amount of finance (100bn\$ per year by 2020) settled in 2009 in Copenhagen. Further, the Doha Amendment, a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, was left without support and had not become widely ratified among the parties.

The UN met in December 2019 in Chile to assess the technical details of the Paris rulebook and settle future emission reduction obligations. New targets for 2030 and beyond were discussed.

Roles of the Parties in the Negotiations

The UN tradition is to group parties, each represented by national delegations, according to their regions and shared interests. Traditionally, the EU has played a leading role in climate negotiations (Dröge & Rattani, 2018).

Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) members have been demanding a binding target and requesting developing countries to take responsibility. As the most vulnerable countries to climate change, they have raised specific issues of predominant concern to them (Dröge & Rattani, 2019).

COP24 was the first meeting under the presidency of a small island state. A Least Developed Countries work programme was established to focus on the distinct demands and requirements of the least developed countries, noting the particular support needs and promoting awareness. The programme highlighted the implementation of the elements instead of merely supporting the planning process in least developed countries.

Least developed countries require support for implementing decisions. The Katowice decisions encourage parties of developed countries to continue finance adaptation activities along with transparent and reliable data on the provided climate finance. COP24 calls for balanced financing between mitigation and adaptation as well as developments in relevant organisations and institutions for mobilising the finance. India and African countries, for example, have expressed concerns about the sufficiency of the funding promised to the least developed countries for mitigation and adaptation. A platform for a dialogue between parties and non-party stakeholders was founded, called the Talanoa Dialogue.

After Paris Agreement

The Paris Agreement resulted in three different structural transformations in global climate politics. First, this global effort led to reduced disparity between developed and developing countries, exempting the poorest countries from requirements to mitigate climate change. Second, the Paris Agreement has shifted from the Kyoto Protocol's top-down 'targets and timetables' to a bottom-up 'pledge and review' process. This has shifted the focus towards national climate policy. Third, the Paris Agreement represents 'hybrid multilateralism', which focuses not only on governmental actions but also on climate action by non-governmental actors and businesses (Andonova 2018, Bäckstrand 2017). The most significant actions for climate change mitigation are expected from national and local governments around the world with help from the private sector, scientists and engineers.

After Paris, the interest has moved towards reporting emissions and the quality of the plans. The Paris Agreement was a positive surprise with high ambition. It aims to prevent warming over 1.5°C. Parties released their NDCs. These contributions are expected to guide the national climate policy and also form a base for the new climate regime (UNFCCC 2016a). However, national pledges fall well below the actions needed to meet those ambitious targets. Many large emitters are not likely to fulfil their self-set obligations, according to Climate Action Tracker (Climate Action Tracker, 2020).

However, one of the biggest emitters, China, pledged in Paris to peak greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. The country is likely to achieve the target due to policies already in place without placing any new measures. This has raised questions as to whether the country should set a more meaningful climate target. European leaders have been fervently debating the level of fair emission reductions of the EU since the Paris Agreement. Some nations demanded more ambitious targets. "It is plain we are way off course," said António Guterres, the secretary general of the United Nations, in Katowice. "We are still not doing enough, nor moving fast enough, to prevent irreversible and catastrophic climate disruption."

In June 2018, European officials set more ambitious targets for renewable power and energy efficiency (European Union, 2019). Still, there are plenty of obstacles. For example, Poland is currently constructing more coal plants (WNN, 2020). Many of the pledges lack information on the specific policies to meet the ambitious targets. Further, official mechanisms for quantifying progress do not exist. Making the pledges more transparent could lead to more pressure on the countries, but it is up to national and local governments to agree on firmer actions. Many countries have strengthened their pledges by 2020,

including the EU. Critics of Paris are stating that the agreement reflects little more than what individual countries were likely to do anyway (Somerville, 2020).

The Katowice climate negotiations were expected to blaze the trail towards 2020 and come up with clear guidelines for national pledges and policies for increased transparency. This would assist in the evaluation of the countries' improvement. Some developing countries stated the limited access to technology for measuring emissions and the need for wider flexibility in reporting and verifying their improvements (COP24, 2020).

Mission of the COP24

COP24 was organized in Katowice 2018 with the ambitious intention of adopting the practical details of the guidelines of the Paris Climate Change Agreement. The focus areas included adaptation to climate change impacts, ambitious emission reductions, and support for developing countries. This support is to be provided in the form of technology, capacity building, and funding. One of the objectives was to create a platform for a Talanoa dialogue (COP24, 2020).

Contributions in terms of emission reductions

Katowice negotiations adopted a vigorous set of guidelines for carrying out the 2015 Paris Climate Change Agreement. The Katowice Rulebook was not able to address how global climate policy should be conducted and the actual climate measures implemented. The agreed Katowice Climate Package promotes international cooperation and encourages greater ambition towards climate change mitigation. The deadline for the countries' self-set targets was 2020. Thereafter, countries were expected to affirm new and much tougher targets.

During the Katowice negotiations, countries resolved most of the problematic aspects of the Paris Agreement "rulebook". This included measuring, reporting on, and verifying their emissions-cutting efforts. This makes all countries responsible for holding on to their commitments (CarbonBrief, 2019).

Most importantly, COP24 raised the question of the information required by article 9.5 of the Paris Agreement, which concerns mobilization of climate finance to developing countries. The recognition of such required information was found at COP22, and the process was completed by COP24 (CarbonBrief, 2019).

Carbon capture was also on the table and received long-term political support. The predictable and confident support for carbon capture storage as a mitigation option in addition to other low carbon emission technologies was welcomed. This support is provided through international funding mechanisms and private-public partnerships. Further, a declaration on "forest for climate" was founded. This declaration highlighted the important role of forests in reaching the Paris Agreement goals. However, the declaration was criticized for encouraging delaying actions to reduce emissions. Others were concerned about the lack of any concrete short-term targets (CarbonBrief, 2019).

The COP24 in Katowice, Poland, introduced a comprehensive "rulebook" revealing the details of the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Nations agreed on uniform rules for measuring and reporting their own performance in cutting emissions. The negotiations on these details turned out to be more challenging than those leading to the Paris Agreement. Excluding the rulebook marks, the results from COP24 were less ambitious (CarbonBrief, 2019).

Other contributions

One of the main tasks for climate negotiations is to provide dialogue between different actors to raise the ambition towards more effective implementation of climate change mitigation goals and strategies. One of the most crucial questions is how the Paris Agreement can encourage countries to take more ambitious actions in the future.

A deciding phase in the rulebook negotiations was to clarify the differentiated responsibilities of the countries. This encompasses the differentiation of obligations along the common but differentiated principle, including the hazardous impacts derived from rising greenhouse gas levels. In particular, developing countries have called for differentiated rules for developed countries in terms of financial commitments. Notably, China also turned to support differentiation (CarbonBrief, 2019).

COP24 revealed a Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform that invites parties to empower the local communities. This platform aims to improve equality and not endanger the livelihood of unprivileged people. The impact of energy transition on workers and their communities was also debated. Climate decisions require enough support in technology transfer and capacity building. This was recognized in a decision by COP24 on enhancing climate technology development and transfer through a technology mechanism (CarbonBrief, 2019).

One of the focus areas debated was finance. Even though commitments on funding for developing countries are sufficient, the impacts of this funding on the sustainable development objectives of the country are not well understood. COP24 proposed a commitment of USD 100 billion per year by 2020 for developing countries.

Financing issues

Developing countries did not receive a clear commitment to new financial resources in addition to official development assistance. The finances provided should be allocated to loss and damage. However, the definition of climate finance was narrowed to exclude commercial loans and non-financial efforts, such as capacity building or technology transfer. Reporting on the grant equivalent value of all finances provided has also become mandatory (CarbonBrief, 2019).

Two challenges regarding finance were the coverage of sectors and double counting. Primary finance focusing only on a new climate activity is one option to avoid double counting. One of the issues discussed was accounting and reporting climate finance. Developed countries should report rigorously on climate finance provided to developing countries. United Nations agencies and financial institutions should describe how their development assistance and climate finance programme are consistent with newly available scientific information.

COP24 resolved that “parties shall apply the accounting guidance to their second and subsequent NDCs and account for their NDCs in their biennial transparency reports under Article 13” and discussed the following issues related to climate finance:

- Long-term climate finance
- Issues with the Strategic Climate Fund (SCF)
- The Green Climate Fund (GCF)
- The Global Environment Facility (GEF)

- The commitment of the parties to Article 9, paragraph 5 of the Paris Agreement

In terms of long-term finance, the COP24 decided to mobilize USD 100 billion annually by 2020. However, a binding long-term financial goal was not agreed upon. COP24 did not address the issue of determining the key components of climate finance (Alexandraki, 2019). Future climate negotiations will likely include a discussion on the effectiveness of climate finance, such as the outcome of the funding mobilized to developing countries.

Transparency and markets could not fully agreed during COP24. The parties did not reach consensus on rules for Article 6 on market-based approaches and therefore decided to postpone this decision to COP25 (CarbonBrief, 2019).

Summary

The Katowice conference was expected to continue the progress started in Paris. This 2018 COP24 was the first meeting presided by a small island state and was organised with the main purpose of adopting the implementation guidelines of the Paris Climate Change Agreement. The expectations after the historical meeting in Paris were relatively high. Katowice negotiations highlighted emission reductions, mobilising finance, and sustainability. The main results of the meeting included the decisions on measuring, reporting, and verifying emissions-cutting efforts implemented by the parties. However, developing countries did not receive a binding long-term financial commitment. This raises concerns about whether those countries are willing to strengthen their INDCs in the future. Finance, the rate of deployment, and political uncertainty were among the topics of discussion. By 2020, the parties were expected to meet their emissions commitments and state new objectives for 2030 that would actualise the scientific advice provided after the final elements of the Paris rulebook were agreed upon in 2019.

Cross-references

Cap and Trade/Emissions

Carbon Offsets

Carbon Trading Schemes

Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)

Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) II

Climate finance

Emissions Trading

Kyoto Protocol

Trading Scheme

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