



## KyotoPlus-Dinner

**„How should developing countries strategically approach the climate negotiations?“**

**Minutes of the Dinner with Sunita Narain**

**2 June 2005**

The Kyoto Protocol has entered into force in February 2005, but it does not contain reduction obligations for developing countries. Besides deepening the commitments for industrialised countries, the development of obligations for certain developing countries will thus be a major focus of the beginning negotiations on a „post-2012 regime“. How should the countries of the South strategically approach these negotiations? On the one hand, they will be heavily impacted by the consequences of climate change and therefore have a vital interest in climate protection. On the other hand, they will have a new and previously unknown bargaining power, since their cooperation is essential to effective climate protection. At the same time, much solidarity among the G-77 countries will be required, since the majority of the developing countries will not have to take on quantitative obligations because their greenhouse gas emissions are negligible in absolute and relative terms.

In this context, the fourth „KyotoPlus – Dinner“, held on June 2, 2005 at the restaurant „Habel Weinkultur“ in the centre of Berlin discussed the question „How should developing countries stra-



tegitically approach the climate negotiations?“ Special guest for this dinner was Sunita Narain, director of the respected „Centre for Science and Environment“ in New Delhi, India. For 20 years now, Sunita Narain has been a knowledgeable and committed combatant for environmental protection and justice – and she is also a rigorous critic of the traditional Third World environmental diplomacy. The attendees, 23 representatives from business, civil society, science and politics, discussed under the Chatham

house rule that permits to quote everything that has been said, but without disclosing the speaker or

his/her institution.

Sunita Narain opened the evening with an assessment of the current situation as regards the international climate negotiations and of the situation in India in particular. To her, clearly, too little has happened over the past 15 years: The Kyoto Protocol has offered too little, with too many loopholes based on too much compromise and at too late a point in time. India is one of the countries that are, even more so because of their poverty, extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Her question thus was: “Is the global community going to do more of what it has been doing these past years, i.e. meeting at Conferences of the Parties and making things so complicated that no one will be able to understand anymore? Or will it find ways of doing things differently?”

With reference to the Kyoto Protocol, she identified two options for the developing countries: One, the US way, would mean not to worry but “to get rich and clean up later”. The European way, according to her, was to simply say: “We have done our bit, now it is your turn – you must mitigate”. Sunita Narain pointed to the fact that the cost of growth has been much lower when the EU had industrialised and it has gone up with the increasing oil prices. So India clearly needed to leapfrog. It could not afford the cost of growth and instead needed to go faster ahead than the EU, e.g. by investing in public transportation and fuel efficiency. In order for India to be able to do so, however, the international community would have to create a framework of entitlements, a framework of trust between the countries, a system that would enable India to leapfrog. She closed her initial remarks by emphasising that the next round clearly will have to be the “US round” and that morality, political sense and real action have to be brought back into the climate debate, which had become much too technical, diplomatic and pragmatic these past years.

In his “first reaction” to Sunita Narain’s speech, Bill Hare, Greenpeace International’s climate policy director, defended the international climate negotiations. Although they can and have been frustrating, there was no real alternative. He critically asked why India has not been supporting the EU in its progressive positions. He pointed out that China has pursued a very different strategy, that it had been open and admitted its problems with climate change. While the fear that reducing emissions will hinder growth might be justified, there are many potential economic benefits that can arise from it, too. Thus, to him a new strategy for India would be to find ways to minimize emissions and at the same time capture the benefits that can arise from it. He criticised that India has missed so far to ask these strategic questions.



policy director, defended the international climate negotiations. Although they can and have been frustrating, there was no real alternative. He critically asked why India has not been supporting the EU in its progressive positions. He pointed out that China has pursued a very different strategy, that it had been open and admitted its problems with climate change. While the fear that reducing emissions will hinder growth might be justified, there are many potential economic benefits that can arise from it, too. Thus, to

him a new strategy for India would be to find ways to minimize emissions and at the same time capture the benefits that can arise from it. He criticised that India has missed so far to ask these strategic questions.

The discussion turned out to be very lively and controversial. The following issues were explored in various interventions:

- The importance of frameworks, of which the Kyoto Protocol would be the first step;
- The clash between the US position and the positions of the developing countries;
- The special challenges of the Kyoto Protocol for the developing countries and the specific differences amongst them;
- The current association of the Kyoto Protocol with economic “burdens” and the need to give it a positive spin and to regenerate its momentum;
- Equity and innovation as the two parts of a two tracks – solution for involving developing countries in climate protection;
- Leapfrogging and the need to give developing countries the opportunities to do develop along non-traditional paths;
- The need for a framework of entitlements and for more overall policy coherence;
- The question of how to move from grandfathering, the allocation of emission rights according to past emissions, to a per capita approach of equal emission rights for each person on this planet;
- The term „climate actions“ as a better word for „commitment“;
- Higher efficiency targets in India as one possible commitment (sustainable development policies and measures) in the KyotoPlus process;
- The importance of a change in the US government for climate policy and developing countries; and
- The challenge not to make the same mistakes in the KyotoPlus process than in the negotiations for the Kyoto Protocol.

Jörg Haas, Heinrich Böll Foundation, Department Head Ecology and Sustainable Development  
Dr. Hermann E. Ott, Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy, Head Berlin Office