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'Copenhagen treaty' drafted by NGOs matches Indian actions

By Joydeep Gupta

Bangkok, Oct 8 (IANS) Tired of bickering between governments over a global climate agreement to be signed during this December's Copenhagen summit, a group of NGOs has drafted the 'Copenhagen treaty'. It has many similarities with actions being taken by India to combat global warming.

Though the Indian government maintains that there is no new treaty to be negotiated in Copenhagen - just an agreement on what industrialised countries will do in the next phase of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol - the NGOs have drafted the treaty that they say can run parallel to the protocol.

Srinivas Krishnaswamy of Greenpeace India told IANS here Thursday: "Developing countries' actions will be based on the allocated carbon space, and carbon allocation will also determine the financial allocation for mitigation for developing countries."

Allocated carbon space stems from the concept of equal per capita greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions across the world, first mooted by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

The NGO 'treaty', which has been prepared by Greenpeace, WWF, German Watch, David Suzuki Foundation and others, says developing countries' actions to reduce their GHG emissions or to adapt to climate change involving net positive incremental costs will be borne by industrialised countries for the immediate period, while zero or no incremental cost of mitigating actions will be unilateral domestic actions.

"This is what our government says too," Krishnaswamy pointed out.

The 'treaty' also agrees with the Indian position that there must be deep GHG emission cuts from industrialised countries. But, it says the cut should be 95 percent from 1990 levels by 2050, and that these countries should give bonds that will be forfeited if they fail to make the cuts.

The Indian government has been asking for 40 percent emission cut by 2020 and 80 percent by 2050. The government has not said anything about bonds, perhaps fearing it may impinge on sovereignty, Krishnaswamy said.

The NGOs also say the support that industrialised countries give to developing countries to deal with climate change - a problem almost entirely the making of rich countries but which is hitting the poor countries the hardest - must be measured, reported to an international body and verified.

On transfer of green technologies to developing countries, the 'treaty' urges the setting up of a joint collaboration and technology fund to facilitate sharing of patents.

On institutional structures, too, what the NGOs advocate is similar to what India has been saying - whatever structure is set up after Copenhagen must be within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

To help developing countries adapt to climate change, the 'treaty' calls for "new and additional finance of the magnitude of at least \$160 billion per year". India has not put a figure to it, but has asked for 0.5-1 percent of the GDP of industrialised countries.

The NGOs advocate that newly industrialised countries like Saudi Arabia, South Korea and Singapore be also asked to reduce their GHG emissions, a point at variance with the Indian government position, which does not want any schism within the Group of 77 countries and China, who negotiate as a bloc in the climate talks.

Another point of contention may be the suggestion by the NGOs that domestic action to tackle global warming be subject to international scrutiny in any way.

The Indian government has said it is willing to open only assisted projects to international inspection, though Minister of State for Environment and Forests Jairam Ramesh said recently that his ministry was willing to report domestic actions far more regularly than the once-in-six-years stipulated under the Kyoto Protocol.

Two major points of difference remain. The NGOs want to limit the scope of the UN's clean development mechanism (CDM), which pays developing countries for green projects. They want to focus it on least developed countries and small islands. India, which gets the world's second largest tranche of CDM funds after China, would be loath to see any of it slip away.

The other point is that the NGO document talks of paying countries that reduce deforestation and forest degradation, but is silent on paying countries that increase their forest cover - a point that India and China have been trying to push.