



ATLANTIC MEMO #13

A New Climate Regime: Top-Down Change

Atlantic community members agree that the current consensus to only tackle climate change if we can afford it – a consensus strongly influenced by the economic crisis – is simply not enough. Cost-cutting in harsh economic times must not get in the way of environmental consciousness. Therefore, members suggest the establishment of a global regulating mechanism for climate change and stress the need to ensure that everyone can live up to the technological demands of a new, climate-friendly economy.

1. Create a global governing body to address climate change.

The current system of environmental governance is a haphazard patchwork of multilateral institutions that clash with regional and national efforts. Atlantic Community members believe that the creation of a global umbrella institution could help detangle and organize these existing efforts.

- **A new UN Environmental Organization:** Scott Moore argues for a multidimensional approach to global environmental governance, based on the creation of a new UN Environmental Organization (UNEO) and bilateral partnerships. Developing nations currently call for continued growth, while the developed world seeks to emphasize environmental protection. This conflict needs a forum for resolution which would aid in climate change adaptation and technology transfer. At the same time, bilateral partnerships, such as the US-China EcoPartnerships initiative, should be financed by the United States and the European Union.
- **Existing financial institutions:** Some commentators believe it more realistic to turn to existing financial regimes such as the WTO for solutions. Jordan Levine sets out to account for costs that have previously been kept invisible. A first step achievable within the WTO would be the imposition of mandatory product impact assessments. By enforcing a cost estimation of the entire life cycle of every traded product, including production, transport, sale, consumption, and disposal, consumers could be informed about the environmental costs of each product, and domestic taxes could be applied. An international standard for life cycle assessment (ISO 14000) already exists, so application would be quick. However, such information can only guide consumers if they are willing to be guided. Without targeted taxation, cheaper and more damaging options would still maintain their appeal (Hirschboeck).

Whether nation states would be willing to accept a global regime on climate change remains an open question as climate change is seldom seen as a security risk at the national level (Flourentzou).

2. Transfer climate-friendly technology world-wide.

Atlantic community members consent that it is in the interest of corporations to keep production and knowledge in their hands. Stopping climate change, however, will require globally distributed information. And as Sam Vanderslott explains, in earlier cases such as the WTO-negotiated exceptions to medicine patents, ownership questions have already been waived or at least flexed for the common good. Similar measures for climate technologies have been requested by developing countries as well as the European Parliament. In order to reach sufficient agreement at the Copenhagen summit in December 2009, business interests will have to be laid aside for the relevant technology to spread quickly enough (Vanderslott).

While some community members were concerned about the economic effects in the developed world of such technology and knowledge sharing (Hathor), others argued in favor, pointing to the general growth of the sector and suggesting that technologies should be approached as services rather than products. Furthermore, development aid could be used to compensate companies for giving up their intellectual rights (Drake).

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