

## COP 15, the future decided now

This December, thousands of people from around the world will descend upon Copenhagen, but not just to enjoy its famous Christmas atmosphere. It is on this congress centre, just a few minutes by metro from the city, that the tension will be focused. Here, the fifteenth in a series of United Nations Climate Change Conferences will take place. Called COP 15 for short, it will be the most important global climate change meeting ever. The stakes are high.

**Svend Olling (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark):** *'We're expecting participation to reach between 12 to 15000 accredited people here at the palace. Half of those will actually be observers from NGO's participating here, observing what's going on. The other half is divided between the representatives of member states and journalists.'*

COP 15 should deliver the successor to the Kyoto-protocol, which was the first international effort to cut greenhouse gas-emissions. The current Kyoto-targets have to be reached by 2012. It is up to COP 15 to come up with more ambitious and longer term emission reductions.

**Karl-Heinz Florenz (European Parliament(1989-2009)):** *'We all need to protect this planet. And to do so we, of course, need a set of regulations, a so called treaty. Currently, we have the Kyoto protocol and it is this sort of a new treaty that is needed in the future, which we are going to develop in Copenhagen, especially for the young generation.'*

**Guido Sacconi (European Parliament (1999-2009)):** *'It was around climate that we had the first breakdown in multilateralism. I hope it will be around climate that a first milestone can be appropriated to a new system of global governance.'*

Climate change, in the words of UN Secretary-general Ban Ki-moon, is the greatest collective challenge we all face. The European union believes that every nation needs to limit their greenhouse gas-emissions and that COP 15 should set binding targets. Around the table in Copenhagen, developed and developing countries will work towards an agreement. However, many developing countries believe they have the right to increase their emissions without being regulated by international binding targets. This is a very delicate issue.

**Anders Turesson (Ministry of the Environment of Sweden):** *'The most important role of the EU is to show that it is possible to reduce emissions substantially. That is our utmost role and the most important thing we can do. And we need to do this in a way that ensures at the same time social and economic development. Because this problem can not be solved by making people more poor.'*

A thirty-percent reduction of greenhouse gases by 2020 would be the EU's commitment as part of a comprehensive international agreement, if other developed countries undertake similar commitments. The changes to our climate will affect everyone around the world in their everyday lives. The solution does not lie in the hands of a few policy makers alone. Ordinary citizens have an important role as well. We can all influence and put pressure on the decision makers. But it is also about our individual choices, about changing the way we live, what we consume, how we move and in general, how sustainable our lifestyle is.

**Margot Wallström (Vice President of the EU Commission):** *'Climate change is the type of issue that brings the future into the picture. And this is why it is so important for all of us to engage, because it is really about the lives of children and grandchildren. What do we want them to experience? What kind of world do we want them to find? This is very much decided now.'*

Because of the financial crisis, some people are saying that the ambitions for the climate agreement in Copenhagen should be scaled down. However, the opposite is true. The costs

of inaction on climate change are immense, both financially and morally. All of us will feel the effects, but poorer people will suffer first.

**Jacqueline Mc Glade (European Environment Agency) :** *'This is a global negotiation. One in which the security of all of us will be affected, if we do not get the right answers. And so in working together, with people from the environment field, with people from all areas of construction, of industry of infact government itself, we have to formulate a way in which we not only treat the environment and the challenges of climate change regarding the environment, but also were we take very seriously the acuity of the world population.*

Tackling climate change now will not only avoid huge costs in the future, it will also create new opportunities for innovation and employment. All eyes are now turned to COP 15.