

The Copenhagen Launch Fund: Decision at the Commonwealth Summit

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The heads of state/government of 53-member states of the Commonwealth met in Port of Spain, capital city of Trinidad & Tobago (Caribbean Islands) for three days from 27 to 29 November.

Bangladesh joined the Commonwealth in 1973 and since then has always participated actively in all the Summits. Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina attended the Trinidad Summit and is the only female head of the government at the summit. Incidentally the Summit is also the 60th anniversary of the Commonwealth.

The Copenhagen Launch Fund:

Climate change was the hot topic on the agenda at the summit. Non-Commonwealth leaders, including UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Danish Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen and French President Nicolas Sarkozy, also attended the summit as special guests to lobby for international consensus on a climate pact ahead of Copenhagen.

On 28th November, Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina emphasised the need for climate funds to be separate from Official Development Assistance (ODA), while addressing the executive and retreat sessions after the opening ceremony of the Commonwealth meeting.

"Our contribution to greenhouse gas emissions is negligible, but the fact is that we are the worst sufferers of the global warming," Hasina said.

The Prime Minister said assistance must come from rich nations for overcoming the challenges of the global warming and it would be very difficult to attain global food security unless populations and economies are protected from the adverse impacts of the climate change.

"Climate change is affecting agriculture, food production and thus affecting the initiatives for attaining food security," she said. She also laid emphasis on mitigation

for safeguarding the existence of the world as we know it. She called for transfer of environment-friendly technologies from developed nations to developing countries in a bid to protect the environment of these countries from pollution and consequences of global warming.

Bangladesh Prime Minister stressed that assistance for vulnerable countries to face global warming must be distinct from development aid.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown proposed setting up a \$US10 billion Copenhagen Launch Fund to help developing countries tackle global warming.

The Copenhagen Launch Fund is designed to deal with the urgent problems faced by some nations, like Kiribati, Maldives, Bangladesh and Tuvalu.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown said before flying to Trinidad for the Commonwealth Summit, that he would raise the possibility of a global levy on banking and financial transactions, which some negotiators have argued could be used to help fund the response to climate change.

Danish Prime Minister Rasmussen and Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary General welcomed the proposal by Gordon Brown for the creation of a \$10 billion-a-year fund to help developing countries battle the effects of global warming. Brown said such financing should be made available as early as next year, well before any new climate deal takes effect.

December Copenhagen Climate Change Summit:

The 53 Commonwealth nations will go to a summit in Copenhagen united in their determination to forge a meaningful agreement to combat climate change.

The leaders are expected to discuss how much financial assistance would be provided to poorer countries at the December Copenhagen UN Conference for adaptation and mitigation of adverse effects of change of climate

They have backed plans for a \$US10 billion Copenhagen Launch Fund, which will be used to immediately assist the most vulnerable countries against the effects of global warming.

The consensus agreement was also welcomed by the United Nations's Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon and Mr Rasmussen, who will host the final UN talks on a new climate change policy in just seven days time. Mr Rasmussen said he was delighted that 90 world leaders had now agreed to attend in Copenhagen.

The document commits all Commonwealth countries to the goal of an operationally binding agreement at Copenhagen and a full legally binding outcome no later than 2010.

"In Copenhagen we commit to focus our efforts on achieving the strongest possible outcome," the communique says

The words are significant because both India's Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh and Canada's Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, were part of the consensus decision.

India has now made it clear it will not stand in the way of the agreement. Mr Harper, who has yet to announce his country's proposed cuts to greenhouse gas emissions, has been a critic at times of the Copenhagen process.

While the communique does not advance talks on specific targets or binding reductions that Commonwealth countries will agree to, it does commit to the need for "an early peaking year".

The UN negotiators, recognising that countries will present all different paths to curb their greenhouse gases before 2020, are seeking to get developed and developing countries to agree to a year when the world's emissions will peak.

That would involve the developed nations implementing cuts straight away, but also involve developing nations committing to cuts to business as usual and ultimately agreeing to a year when they would begin to reduce their emissions as well.

The full financing model is still to be hammered out, but on the sidelines there have been detailed discussions on some of the options developed nations to contribute the billions needed to fund adaptation around the world in coming decades.

Summing Up:

The transfer of substantial amount of funds, distinct from development aid, to poorer countries to tackle climate change is seen as a make-or-break element of any deal at the Copenhagen summit, which is intended to lead to a legally binding treaty being signed by the middle of next year.

Another sticky point appears to be that poorer countries say that climate change negotiators are shying away from inserting penalties in a Copenhagen agreement for wealthy countries that breach their expected promises of hundreds of billions of dollars in new aid for poorer countries.

All eyes are focused on the Copenhagen Conference and developing countries including Bangladesh hope that some kind of political commitment on reduction of emission targets and adequate funds for vulnerable nations is arrived at the conference to meet the challenge of change of global climate.