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International climate talks

Danish Climate Minister gives upbeat assessment of UNFCCC talks to EP climate committee

The EP climate change meeting held an exchange of views with Denmark's minister for climate, Ms Connie Hedegaard, on 9 October. Ms Hedegaard, who is acting as a 'climate diplomat' for Denmark in its preparations for next year's crucial round of climate negotiations in Copenhagen (COP15), gave an upbeat assessment of the current state of the negotiations. While progress is slow and major differences remain between the negotiating parties, Ms Hedegaard pointed to the fact that there has been progress, most recently at the UNFCCC meeting in Accra in August.

Ms Hedegaard asserted that the Danish position is to steer an agreement based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibility. This would include industrialised countries committing to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions within the range set out by the IPCC to give a 50% chance of limiting warming to 2°C: 25-40% domestic reductions compared to 1990 levels.

However, it is also clear that industrialised countries have a clear role to play in helping developing countries with their climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. This also means finding guaranteed and predictable means of funding outside of traditional mechanisms for overseas development aid. One interesting proposal made by Ms Hedegaard was for a levy on bunker fuels (such as for aviation and shipping), with the revenue from this levy to be used for mitigation and adaptation in developing countries.

Ms Hedegaard acknowledged that negotiations on the EU's climate package of legislation are difficult but stressed the importance of the EU agreeing meaningful and ambitious legislation to implement its emissions reductions targets in time for the negotiations in Copenhagen. The current financial crisis should not be used as an excuse to water down climate prevention measures. On the contrary, these measures offer a real opportunity to create employment in innovative sectors of the economy.

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