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State of affairs: EU Commission Energy/Climate package

Report from the 2nd panel of the conference

The second session focused on the EU's climate and energy package of legislation. Coming just three days after key votes in the European Parliament on three of the main legislative proposals, it provided a good opportunity to discuss the state of affairs with the French presidency, which was represented by the secretary of state for environment/ecology, Nathalie Kosciusko-Morizet.

Ms Kosciusko-Morizet stated that the French presidency wants the legislative package to be adopted during its term, not only to claim as a result for the presidency but also so the EU can have a clear position agreed for the international climate negotiations (COP15) in Copenhagen next year.

However, while the presidency wants to achieve a coherent agreement on the whole package, many member states have concerns about how it will affect the competitiveness of their industry and are seeking protection against 'carbon leakage'. The current financial crisis has not helped this. The French presidency believes a border mechanism should be introduced, based on the Emissions Trading Scheme, to deal with those industries for which 'carbon leakage' concerns have been raised. However, the question of free allocation is also a consideration.

She welcomed the timely votes in the European Parliament and the failure of the attempt to delay the votes, which will help the French presidency to achieve an agreement before the year-end. The parliament's position is now clear and the presidency wants to have agreement from EU environment ministers at the end of October to begin trialogue negotiations with the parliament and commission.

Kathalijne Buitenweg argued that it is a pity that governments do not treat the climate crisis with the same urgency as the financial crisis. The two should not been seen as conflicting. Taking action against climate change will also help guarantee future employment growth in innovative sectors in Europe. By failing to take action, we will pass on a serious 'environmental debt' to our children and grandchildren.

The pre-drafted conclusions for the European Council (15-16 October) also make for depressing reading. They are proposing to weaken the proposals: such as by calling the full auctioning of permits into question, and calling for greater use of external offsets so member states can buy their way out of emissions reductions. Worse, by pre-judging the negotiations between the council and the European Parliament, this threatens to undermine the co-decision process and the role of the European Parliament.

Yannick Jadot recalled the fact that we only have around 100 months left to start reducing global emissions and less than 60 weeks to agree an international agreement. While in theory it is important to have an agreement on the climate package, so the EU can play a credible leading role in the international negotiations in Copenhagen next year, we should not have an agreement at any price. A weak agreement, which would fail to provide the EU with the legislative means to meet its emissions reductions targets,

would be worse than no agreement, as it would undermine the EU's negotiating credibility.

It is worrying that governments are starting to question the automatic nature of the shift from a 20% greenhouse gas emissions reduction by 2020 to a 30% reduction following the conclusion of an international agreement. They are picking holes in each of the legislative proposals: proposing serious exemptions for industry under the Emissions Trading Scheme despite the absence of any evidence that they would relocate (and result in 'carbon leakage'); increasing the level of external offsets allowed, which will mean very few emissions reductions will actually take place in the EU.

The absence of any focus on energy efficiency in the climate package is bizarre. Energy is the cheapest, quickest and most effective way to make progress towards our climate targets. The EU target for 20% energy efficiency by 2020 should be made binding without delay. Instead the French presidency is pushing nuclear, which cannot offer any immediate solution and is therefore useless for tackling climate change.

We are rewarding those polluting industries which have failed by trying to relax proposed rules or giving them bail-outs (President Sarkozy proposed €400 for car manufacturers to invest in electric cars). This will stifle innovation in sectors that can provide real solutions and prevent the necessary shift to a new economy that is not based on polluting industries.

Michelle Rivasi stressed the need for decision makers to take account of the local level and how their legislative decisions will actually be implanted. Improving the efficiency of buildings and simple energy-saving technologies (like energy saving light bulbs) are easy to implement at local level and can make a real difference. The EU should not just whittle away the climate package, so there is a lowest common denominator agreement. This would send a bad to the local authorities that will ultimately implement the rules.

Summing up, **Alain Lipietz** stressed that climate policy must not just be energy policy. There are many other dimensions that need to be taken into account in finding a solution. However, in paying attention to energy policy there must be a focus on energy efficiency. Also, the legislative decisions must be properly communicated to local and regional authorities.

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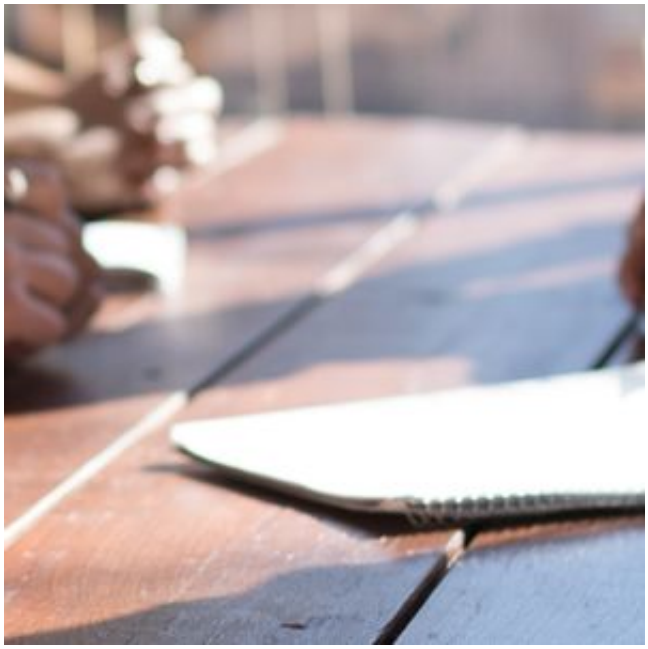

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