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News | 22.06.2012

RIO + 20 Diary

Game over already? Emerging analysis

Friday 22nd June 2012

Since the 'agreement' Tuesday, with only high-level statements and a series of bilaterals to attend, most participants have been enjoying the spectacle of the work of endless TV crews and interviews, with observers relaxing in front of giant screens in between spotting the heads of state who qualify as celebrities. Meanwhile, some more comments on the efforts of the EU have been emerging. The EU tried to push for negotiations to continue among ministers, with a view to producing a more substantial agreement with some ambition but it stood alone. One opinion is that it was too late in trying to push up the ambition at the final stages of the negotiations; that the preparation and setting the scene should have happened years ago and already in the first contributions. On the other hand, there is the view that there has been progress made in establishing the concept of green economy, and the reminder that changing development tracks cannot be done so quickly.

In the end however, the agreement is essentially the same as that announced before Ministers had even arrived. There has been a failure to grasp the reality of the ecological tipping points being surpassed in spite of all the evidence out there. As an outcome, the declaration merely restates former aspirations, and represents a collective global failure of ambition and leadership. We can do better. We must do better.

Read our press release on the outcome (English, Français, Deutsch)

- [Rio +20 sustainable development summit fails to deliver concrete response to ecological crises](#)

Thursday 21st June 2012

Emerging Analysis

It was strange for ministers to land to discover what appeared to be an already agreed document. Some countries arrived with the intention of negotiating at ministerial level, which would have increased political ownership. The NGO community was very clear that the text as it stood was completely out of touch with reality, lacking mention of planetary boundaries and tipping points and thereby making a joke of the title,

'the future we want'. On sustainable development goals, the text does not go very far. All agree that GDP alone is not enough of a guide but targets are too linked to means of implementation and finance and lack the idea that it is in our interest to make commitments. The reinforcement of the UNEP is a step forward, but wholly insufficient. The outright hostility to multilateral frameworks in some countries such as the US is making only meagre progress possible. In climate, the strong link in the Rio draft to common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capacities seems to reinforce the 'firewall' between developed and developing countries (Annex I countries and non-Annex I parties, Kyoto Protocol) and could be a potential step backward. By contrast, in Durban parties agreed that all countries should be covered by a new legal instrument under the UNFCCC. What effect this has, if any, should be watched closely. While not an outright failure, the text is a failure of leadership and governance: dodging decisions, leaders are not willing to lead and governments are refusing to govern. The main message remains today that the world doesn't see the inevitability of our transition towards a green economy. With this document we are missing the opportunity to take a meaningful step. Europe is playing a constructive role but seems unwilling to force any meaningful changes, possibly for fear of being blamed for a failing Summit. So far, this is not enough. Will we add another missed opportunity to an already impressive list? More updates to follow from Rio where it, symbolically, started to rain.

Wednesday 20th June 2012

Expectations were high for this week's Rio Summit as it had the potential to be the long-awaited shift towards a more sustainable and fair future. But as negotiations reach their final phase, how are the results living up to expectations? Events yesterday have dampened expectations, and Green MEPs [Bas Eikhout](#) and [Sandrine Belier](#) have been tweeting their reactions from Rio while pushing the [Green priorities for the Earth Summit](#). More than [150 world leaders and ministers](#) will be present from today for the final high level sessions, so the big question is, will they allow it to end with a whimper or push for [the future we really want](#)? -----

Tuesday 19th June 2012

Game over for Rio + 20?

While the Conference itself is only due to start Wednesday morning (Rio time), the outcome was gavelled through in a spectacular manner by the Brazilian hosts. The Presidency of the conference announced at 2a.m. on Tuesday morning that an agreement had been found, but the text would only be released at 7 a.m. and the plenary convened at 10:30a.m. The agreement was then announced without prior comments and hardly any time for groups to study it. From the point of view of ambition, there is little to celebrate. Practically all innovative elements or progress compared to the status quo have been watered down - even if it was only ever going to be a non-binding declaration. Brazilian hosts had clearly wanted to avoid any public showdown during their conference, and the summit itself looks likely to just rubberstamp the agreement with the usual rhetoric. In splinter group after splinter group, observers commented on delegates' growing reliance on previously agreed text, from UN General Assembly Resolutions to the outcomes of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development. As one delegate commented, "If all we're going to do here is regurgitate what we've said before in other fora, why are we even here?" With many saying they are still looking for vision and leadership – together with the forward-looking ideas and text – the countdown has started. Some have asked if the "Future We Want" will turn out to be the past we already had. -----

Background

Preparations for Rio +20

To prepare for the summit we held a [conference](#) on what was at stake and [the future we REALLY want](#). Calling on the EU to take the lead, the Greens produced a list of Priorities for the summit

- [Green Priorities for the Rio+20 Earth Summit](#)

Former Green MEP Pascal Canfin [spoke to the Guardian](#) on the priorities of France as the new development minister before departing for the Summit.

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Bas Eickhout

Co-President

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