

On the way to Copenhagen

On 16 November 2009 a panel debate “**On the Way to Copenhagen. The Role of the European Union in the International Climate Change Negotiations**” took place at the Zielna Conference Centre in Warsaw. Approximately 80 guests from Poland and abroad participated in the meeting organized by the Warsaw Office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation.

The introductory word was delivered by **Edwin Bendyk**, a journalist from “Polityka”, the debate moderator. He referred to the opinion of “Foreign Policy” columnists, who have recently predicted a fiasco of the summit in Copenhagen. Bendyk declared his scepticism for such pessimistic forecasts; however, according to him there is also no reason to be extremely optimistic.

The keynote speech was delivered by **Janusz Reiter**, the Polish Ambassador for Climate. In his opinion Poland should not be ashamed and should not conceal its approach towards the climate policy. The issue of climate changes and the negative effects of CO₂ emissions was raised in Poland many years later than in the western countries. However, it is now present in the public debate in Poland. Of course, joining the EU has brought forward the changes; however, in the last few years Poland has made great effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This was not caused by the fall of industry after 1989, as it has been recovered in the last 20 years. On the other hand, according to Reiter, Poland does not have a good opinion in the EU, which is a failure of the Polish government. Poland is a big country, whose position in the EU is not as strong as that of Germany and France, and continues to be on a lower level of development. Therefore, it is an easy target to criticize. Furthermore, Poland does not have an effective public relations policy, as government representatives tend to use sharp language, but at the same time accept compromises. Moreover, the EU fails to make use of its international successes, such as introducing the climate package. According to Reiter, EU countries should accept the fact that there is a common EU target, but the ways to achieve that target may vary. Poland cannot be expected to become a second Sweden or Denmark. The “old EU countries” tend to perceive the entire world as their own continuation, which is unrealistic and may deteriorate the relations with other countries, including the USA. The EU should persuade the United States to change its climate policy, but the USA should do it in accordance with their plans. After the election of president Obama, some European politicians held unrealistic views that the Americans will entirely change their approach to climate issues. Furthermore, the EU should not count on the accomplishment of unreasonable expectations towards

China, which needs to develop its own strategies to achieve climate targets. According to Reiter, Poland plays a similar role in the EU, as China plays in the world, as we have problems resulting from backwardness and the significant role of coal in our economy. This should be taken into consideration by both Polish and EU authorities. It is not possible to set the same targets for Poland and the industrialized countries of the EU. Poland needs to develop its own climate policy, taking into consideration its specific characteristics. According to Reiter, it is worth sending out signals about lower expectations in order to declare success later. Despite numerous pessimistic voices, there is still a chance to achieve a moderate success and receive optimistic declarations from China at the Copenhagen summit.

The discussion following Reiter's speech was opened by **dr Nicola Notaro** from the Climate Strategy, International Negotiations and Monitoring of EU Actions Unit in the DG Environment of the European Commission. Notaro presented the EU approach towards the climate summit. He admitted that at the moment there seems to be a lot of sceptical opinions about the possibility of achieving a compromise in Copenhagen. Presumably, no binding legal agreements will be concluded during the summit. On the other hand, the EU wishes to prepare the foundations for a comprehensive agreement that would be binding for the entire world. At the moment, the USA is a particularly difficult partner for the EU. The new administration has a more friendly approach towards climate targets than the previous one, but it is dependent on the sceptical Congress. However, in the last few months such countries as China, India and Brazil have been quite active in the field of climate changes. China and Brazil have voluntarily agreed to partially reduce coal emissions. However, a global solution needs to be developed. Many countries are waiting for the decision of the US. Notaro observed that although the situation remains difficult, it has improved. It is worth remembering that the USA and China have not signed the Kyoto Protocol. Currently, the EU wants to introduce a wider plan than the Kyoto Protocol. The new solutions must take into consideration the situation of African and insular countries that may be directly affected by climate changes. The opinions of the trade unions, which want to combine climate targets with employee solutions, should also be taken into consideration. NGOs have also been pressing to introduce more ambitious solutions. On the one hand, there seems to be an impasse in the negotiation process, but on the other hand, more and more ambitious targets are being set up. Notaro also observed that many specific ideas for the treaty have been proposed, but of no specific content. Currently, scientists say that carbon dioxide emissions in the world need to be reduced by 25-40%. Many politicians want to include developing countries in the project, as the accomplishment of climate targets in rich countries is not enough to satisfy global commitments. On the other hand, it is going to be extremely difficult to persuade developing countries to accomplish ambitious targets

without specific financial propositions. According to Notaro, developing countries should receive approx. 100 billion Euro per year. The money could come from the emissions trade market and international contributions, which could amount to 24-25 billion Euro. The EU has declared its contribution to achieve the above target; however, it expects the support of other countries. According to Notaro, we should not be too pessimistic before the summit in Copenhagen, as there seems to be a chance of reaching an agreement and the situation has improved in the last few months. It is worth remembering that a few years ago USA and China wanted to increase gas emissions. Now there is a will to reduce the emissions.

After Notaro, **Bärbel Höhn**, the Deputy Chairperson of the Parliamentary Group Bündnis 90/Die Grünen in the German Bundestag, took the floor. At the beginning she stated that it is necessary to promote the awareness that climate changes are really taking place and if we fail to stop this process millions of people will suffer. Further climate warming will result in droughts, floods and mass hunger. Most of the potential victims live in the southern countries, but the negative effects of changes would affect the entire world. According to current estimates, preventing the negative effects of global warming may soon take up 20% of the world's GDP. Therefore, failure to react to climate changes is simply unprofitable and its effects may prove more serious than the current economic crisis. In this situation, the summit in Copenhagen cannot be unsuccessful. It would be a success to reduce the growth of temperature from the pre-industrial era to 2°C. The growth of 2°C would have huge consequences, therefore it is worth considering even more ambitious targets, for example 1.5°C, but 2°C would also be a great success. According to Höhn, industrialized countries should reduce CO₂ emissions by 40% to the year 2020, whereas developing countries by 15-30%, in comparison with the current situation. Höhn agreed with Notaro that industrialized countries should allocate 100 billion Euro per year to support developing countries. Another important matter is the conclusion of legally binding agreements, which may not be possible in Copenhagen. However, there is a chance that such agreements may be signed at other summits in Bonn or Mexico. Currently, a number of countries, including Russia and India, are waiting for the American declaration. According to Höhn, European leadership in the area of climate policy is necessary, as only the EU may play a leading role in achieving ambitious climate targets, especially that European countries have the greatest responsibility for global warming. Furthermore, the EU has modern technologies and resources necessary to introduce the changes. On the other hand, in the last few months, including the summit in Poznań, some EU countries, such as France and Germany, for the first time blocked ambitious proposals from other countries. The package for developing countries was not approved of and Germany and Poland failed to propose specific amounts, which was highly disappointing. Höhn declared that this is a time for international solidarity.

Poland should bear relatively lower costs of preventing global warming than Germany, but higher than Brazil. We have to remember that Poland is dependent on coal, like North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany, and therefore it is difficult to base the Polish economy on renewable energy. In Germany renewable energy started to develop in the year 2000, when it constituted 4% of the entire energy. Currently, it constitutes 16%, but in some regions it is still below 5%. It seems that renewable energy is promising for the future, as it creates more jobs than in the coal sector. Furthermore, mainly small and medium-sized enterprises invest in renewable energy, whereas bigger enterprises invest in nuclear and coal energy, sharing the market among themselves. Nevertheless, there is a widespread opinion in Germany, also in the business sector, that renewable energy will become an important part of future economy. According to Höhn, when Europe was divided into two blocks, political changes were triggered by courageous societies. Similarly now, a grass-root initiative is necessary to initiate climate changes.

After Höhn the floor was taken by the Director's Plenipotentiary for International Cooperation from the Institute of Environmental Protection, **Prof. Maciej Sadowski**. Sadowski raised the issue of the relation between science and politics. According to him, science is often misunderstood in political spheres, which leads to the marginalization of its diagnosis. However, the real effects of climate warming should be demonstrated in order to show how scientific evaluations correspond to specific consequences. According to Sadowski, specific decisions will not be reached in Copenhagen, as the time for negotiations was very limited, and there remain great divergences between particular countries. What is important at the moment is the process of preparing the agreement, including the education of politicians, who until recently did not understand the problem of CO₂ emissions. The situation in Poland is particularly difficult, as we do not have our own studies concerning the effects of climate warming. According to Sadowski, no binding decisions will be made during the summit in Copenhagen, because two negotiation paths were accepted instead of one, like in the case of Kyoto. The EU represents an idealistic approach and EU politicians assume that they will be able to persuade other countries to accept their opinions. In Kyoto, the EU wanted to reduce CO₂ emissions by 15%, but managed to achieve only 5%, because the project was based on wishful thinking. The EU seems to be applying double standards, because when Belarus wanted to reduce CO₂ emissions, the EU started to create obstacles. Sadowski expressed his opinion that the EU cannot use its own criteria in relation to other countries and needs to take into consideration their interests. Furthermore, the position of not only USA, but also Russia, may be another obstacle in the negotiations. Summing up, Sadowski said that it is worth promoting scientific knowledge, but in order for this to be effective, scientists should use a language that politicians understand.

The last person to take the floor was **Marta Śmigrowska**, Chief of the Climate Change Programme from the Polish Green Network. According to her, the position of Poland is not typical, as we are treated as a country that blocks climate initiatives, whereas this is not the case. We should consider the doubts expressed by Polish politicians, as in Poland there is a general lack of knowledge concerning climate issues, we do not have our own studies and the society remains poorly informed in this area. On the other hand, the demands of many politicians, even in Poland, are similar to those of ecologists. It has been agreed that industrialized countries should reduce CO₂ emissions by 25-40% to the year 2020, whereas developing countries by 15-30%, and that a climate fund should be created in the amount of 100 billion Euro per year. According to Śmigrowska, the fund should be fully financed from public money and not from the emissions market. If the EU wants to contribute to the accomplishment of global targets, it should set an ambitious target of reducing CO₂ emissions by 40%. Because of the global economic crisis, this should be easier than a few years ago. The EU should also increase its expenses to support developing countries. We should also start to coordinate the global and national dimension to a larger extent. According to Śmigrowska, Poland is in a difficult situation and may threaten the climate agreement. We have high emission surpluses and even if we agree to an ambitious target, we cannot be sure it will be achieved. Russia may also have problems achieving climate targets. On the other hand, it is possible to reduce CO₂ emissions by 40% in developed countries and by 30% in developing countries, as emissions in the last few months have dropped. According to Śmigrowska, Poland is able to reduce emissions by 30% without any additional costs. The economic crisis has resulted in a significant reduction of the costs of limiting emissions. It is therefore possible to achieve more ambitious targets than those that were previously established, although many people in Poland still fail to understand the significance of the issues related to climate changes.

Following the presentations, there was time to ask questions. Then the guests had a chance to complete their presentations.

Dr Notaro said that it is easy to measure temperature changes in the world and easy to observe that climate warming is caused by men. The entire planet is suffering from climate changes. Therefore, political, economic and mental changes are necessary. He also expressed his satisfaction that, despite the crisis, most countries are still defending ambitious climate targets.

Höhn answered the question about modern methods of coal storage. She said that in Germany there are companies that deal with this and count on EU funding. There are technologies detecting CO₂, but they will only begin to operate in 15-20 years. Until that time, it will be cheaper to build windmills. So far no decisions concerning the introduction of

such technologies have been made. Höhn also stressed that Germany is gradually abandoning nuclear energy and shutting down nuclear reactors. Nuclear energy constitutes only 2.5% of the world energy, whereas the use of this type energy is connected with the problem of waste. She reminded that the renewable energy sector employs more people and investments in this sector are most profitable from the social and economic point of view. She noticed that, currently, half of the energy in Germany comes from coal, 15% from gas, 15% from renewable energy and 20% from nuclear energy. According to her, in the years 2020-2050 all the energy in Germany will come from renewable energy sources. Therefore, it is not worth investing in other forms of energy.

Professor Sadowski referred to the question about the role of coal corporations in the negotiations between Poland and EU. He expressed his satisfaction with the fact that the electrical power engineering sector participated in the negotiations with the EU, as it pressed Poland to fight for more favourable solutions. On the other hand, a too tough approach may result in a fiasco of the summit. According to him, Poland may easily reduce CO₂ emissions by 20%, but may have problems with a 30% reduction, although at the moment the country is undergoing changes and plans to develop nuclear energy. Sadowski agreed with Höhn that modern methods of coal storage are expensive and in Poland there are no conditions for their implementation. According to him, the cheapest method of reducing CO₂ emissions is to increase energy effectiveness, which also has notable economic benefits. He summed up that the Copenhagen summit is a chance to initiate a comprehensive modernization of the world economy.

Śmigrowska said that during the negotiations on the climate package, the government based its position mainly on the electrical power engineering report. She also referred to the question whether CO₂ emissions are actually responsible for climate changes. According to her, research concerning the above issue has improved in the last few years and today it is clear that CO₂ emissions are to a large extent responsible for global warming. She also referred to the question concerning nuclear energy. In her opinion investments in nuclear energy may block the development of renewable energy sources, which is currently taking place in Poland. She summed up that there is a great chance of accepting ambitious targets concerning CO₂ emissions. However, the level of awareness concerning climate issues, also in the EU, is insufficient.

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