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## MODULE 6 Post 2012 climate policy: Issues and Priorities

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### Background

The need for political action against climate change is urgent and the discussion on next commitment period has started for advancing the international climate change agenda beyond 2012. Having different priorities, it is essential that all countries play an important role in framing the future climate policy. In this light, this module focuses on bringing forward important issues to be defined in the construction of a future regime. These are based on scientific research, as well as intense multi stakeholder's exercises. It also highlights the concerns and priorities of relevant actors from the South to ascertain their concerns based on criteria, including economic, financial, technological, equity and efficiency, and international political implications. The aim is to gather issues which are important in shaping an equitable future climate regime.

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### Present climate change Regime

The UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) is an international institution with the mandate to respond to climate change, including implementing and developing the present and future global regime respectively. The ultimate objective of the UNFCCC is to stabilize GHG (greenhouse gas) concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.

The present framework comprises of Kyoto Protocol which was agreed upon in Kyoto, Japan, in 1997. It was the first legally binding instrument that obliged developed country parties to a quantified emission limitation or reduction target. The overall reduction commitment of the Annex I Country Parties is 5.2% below the 1990 level by 2008–12. .

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### Limitations of the present regime

Though defining a framework for participation by both developed and developing countries, the present shape of the Kyoto Protocol is not effective and a GHG inventory of Annex I Parties, excluding countries in economic transition, showed that by 2004 their emissions increased 11% over the 1990 level (UNFCCC 2006). The protocol also fails to get United States to ratify it. It is the only developed country that has not ratified the treaty and is one of the significant greenhouse gas emitters.

The increasing emissions trend of Annex I countries shows their lack of commitment to the problem. Furthermore, recent assessment of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) reported that temperature has increased 0.74 °C over last 100 years and is projected to increase by another 1.8–4.0 °C (best estimates for low and high scenarios) in the next 100 years (IPCC 2007).

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## Beyond 2012

The increased understanding and evidence of impacts, lack of effectiveness of existing response measures, and gradual increase of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere call for effective responses to deal with climate change beyond the first commitment period, widely known as the ‘beyond 2012’ climate regime. Discussion and interaction among the Parties have started and there is a need for deeper cuts in GHGs and enhanced cooperation for adaptation and mitigation. The Bali action plan recognizes the need to enhanced actions by both developed and developing countries but also emphasizes the need for financial and technological support for developing countries.

The UNFCCC dialogue process discussed the need for a shared vision and interdependence, including various principles that would underpin a global response to climate change, and interaction and discussions among research and environmental groups on the following:

- Fairness
- Common but differentiated responsibilities and capabilities
- Environmental integrity
- Economic efficiency, flexibility to allow for differing national circumstances
- Importance of sustainable development priorities

As far as the goal of emissions reduction goes, dialogues under the UNFCCC and Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex-I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol have started and are working towards coming up with specific results before Copenhagen Conference of Parties.

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## Adaptation

Adaptation post-2012 was ignored in early dialogues and adaptation was discussed at great length in Bali, where the Adaptation Fund was put onto operation. In Bali, it was agreed that adaptation would need support mechanisms and sustained funding from developed countries, with one proposal that funding could come from widening levies on existing and future GHG (greenhouse gas) reduction mechanisms. Bali discussions also emphasized international cooperation for vulnerability assessment and capacity building and called for enhanced adaptation action through risk management, risk reduction, and risk sharing.

At present the research agenda of adaptation has shifted from modelling to assessment to learning-by-doing. The major research issues related to vulnerability and adaptation are: “ what are the factors influencing adaptive capacity” and “identifying interventions that enhance adaptive capacity”. Indicators are necessary to measure the success of an intervention and to shape the intervention itself. Therefore, assessment of adaptation need would be required at local level after considering local circumstances.

- **Building capacity on adaptation**

Increased cooperation is required on adaptation, including capacity to identify the risks countries are likely to confront and to develop effective strategies to manage the risks and build resilience. Understanding on the fundamentals of adaptation is still limited and future analysis is needed on the likely impacts. A review of experiences and exchange of best practices would be valuable to the governments. Capacity is also required for identification of priority adaptation activities at the national level.

### 3 Format for TERI project reports at a glance

Similar needs have been identified as key challenge of adaptation, given national circumstances and adaptive capacity (Ott et al. 2004).

Expanded adaptation mechanisms are needed in the second commitment period, involving assistance and compensation funded by industrialized countries to deal with impacts of climate change. Widening levies to other existing and future GHG reduction mechanisms to fund adaptation has been proposed. Considering that the principle adopted 'new and additional and adequate and predictable', present modalities of voluntary contribution have failed to meet required level of support. Therefore, future climate change regime should agree on mandatory contribution by developed countries, without which implementation of adaptation will be limited in the developing countries and specially in the LDCs due to lack of financial and institutional capacity.

#### *Setting adaptation measures and action*

At present, there is a complete disconnect between the impacted and the responsible with regard to climate change. Future vulnerability to climate change will depend on real reduction of future GHG. Based on vulnerability, adaptation measures will be defined, which will lead to the assessment of resources required. An adaptation work Programme should initiate discussion and agree a range of financial resources for financing both adaptation and mitigation. The following are also suggested.

- There is a need to identify specific actions based on level of vulnerability of a country.
- The programme should include a process to develop vulnerability index and categories of countries according to their vulnerability in order to identify the scale of specific needs and actions for adaptation to climate change under future climate change regime. It will be a huge challenge both scientifically and politically to get endorsement.
- Up to 2009, urgent and immediate adaptation needs of developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, especially the LDCs, small island developing states, and African countries affected by drought, desertification, and flood can be dealt with, along with other ongoing agenda items under the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol.

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## **Mitigation: Perspectives on reducing GHGs in future**

It still remains the case that the largest historical emitter must act earlier and most decisively. The convergence of two sets of expectations appears critical in establishing a political contract zone. The message from the developing countries has been clear: they take their responsibility seriously and are willing to do more, but '...the trigger to strengthen the regime must come from the North'. If a new US administration planned to rapidly pass domestic cap-and-trade legislation, it would still need to bring that comparable effort into the multilateral negotiations and bind itself.

Re-engagement by the US in multilateral, legally binding emission reductions remains the key. The level of ambition one can expect from more proactive, incentivized leadership of the South will still depend on developed countries taking the lead. On the other hand, developing countries increasingly face the reality of their own growth in emissions, spelled out clearly in the Fourth Assessment Report. It is essential that

more concrete and result oriented actions are taken both by developed and developing countries to solve the problem of climate change and there has been positive responses observed in Bali. For e.g. developing countries talked about their willingness to take more urgent action to mitigate and to adapt to climate change

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### Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)

After the IPCC's AR4, it is beyond debate that more urgent action is needed in both developed and developing countries. Politically, differentiating between countries with different responsibilities and capabilities will remain necessary. Otherwise, it is hard to imagine any possible architecture being seen as fair and therefore acceptable. The basis for climate protection must remain equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. What is needed is to raise the bar on both sides of the historical divides. The climate regime after 2012 will have to see deeper cuts in emissions in the North and reduce emissions in absolute terms.

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### Challenges faced by the South

Growing energy demand for development along with high level of vulnerabilities places developing countries uniquely in the whole process of negotiations.

The challenge that many countries in the South are facing up to is to address development priorities, as well as leapfrog to a low carbon-intensity development path. This will have to be accompanied by two sets of balances – that between adaptation and mitigation, the two 'action area' building blocks; and between those two as a group and the 'means of implementation' building blocks, finance and technology transfer. These balances will be key to incentivizing developing countries to raise the bar on climate action, which is needed together with greater levels of ambition from developed countries.

Trust, as a basis for further agreements, will first depend on the meeting of existing commitments, and secondly, on future commitments. These commitments by the North should acknowledge the North–South development deficit and address the distributional issues in the climate regime by means of a substantive and credible offer on technology and financial transfers. In short, to get to a climate deal, we will also need to strike a development deal. A clear signal is needed from the North, complemented by more proactive leadership of the South.

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