

GLOBAL WARMING AND EQUITY

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As the Copenhagen conference on global warming approaches, there is a growing concern about the possibility of its failure. In this ambiance, Thomas Stocker, president of the Group of Experts on Global Warming, expressed, in a recent interview to the newspaper *Le Monde* (Nov. 24, 2009) his indignation against the "denie't, financed by oil and mining companies, who try to cast doubt on the scientific evidence about this phenomenon. The scientific evidence, however, is beyond all doubt: in the last century, average temperatures increased more than 0.7 degrees Celsius, ocean level rose 17 cm, 10% of all glacial cover were lost, and the salt content of sea water increased.

I dont believe in the failure of the conference as a whole, although we cant possibly expect rich countries to commit themselves to reducing gas emissions at the necessary level. The relatively consensual target among experts is a global reduction of 80% in emissions by 2050, as compared to the 1990 level. The European Union, which is more advanced in this issue, intends to comply with this target, increasing energy efficiency by 30% and renewable energy to 60%. The United States finally committed themselves to reducing emissions by 17% in 2020 as compared to 2005 levels, whereas China proposes to reduce emissions by 40 to 45% also in 2020, but per unit of GDP: instead of multiplying its emission by three, it will multiply it by two. Among

developing countries, Brazil is willing to establish a target of 80% reduction in Amazonian deforestation and, more broadly, to reduce by 36.1% to 38.9% its emissions of carbonic acid gas by 2020 - an ambitious target, but that will not prevent the countrys development.

The conference shouldnt fail because the deniers and those who presume that the problem could be solved simply by new less polluting or more energy-saving technologies do not represent the dominant thinking. There is a real concern about the problem in the world. But governments are still not in a position to establish definitive targets. They use different criteria when they establish them, and there is no guarantee that they will meet them. On the other hand, the issue of equity in the setting of objectives for rich countries and developing ones is still confused.

On this issue, the proposition that seemed more interesting to me is that of establishing a maximum amount of emissions per capita that could be supported by the world and to define this amount as the target for each nation. Contrarily to what happened in Kyoto, past emissions would not be accounted for, but a kind of "right of emission" would be determined, identical for everyone. A target that would imply higher costs for rich countries, but that would also keep the other countries responsible for a problem that belongs to all. To establish this target, it will be necessary to take into account the demographic projections that presuppose the stabilization of world population around 2050. I dont know what should be this per capita target, but besides having a basic equity principle (nothing justifies that rich countries emissions should be higher than emissions of poor ones), it would be clear and simple, not only in its definition and adjustment but also in its monitoring.