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**CHALLENGES 2007-8: CLIMATE CHANGE SPURS NEW WORLD ORDER**  
  
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The gathering threat of global warming appears to have surpassed the fear of  
destruction by nuclear missiles ready to be launched at the touch of a button.  
  
  
Still, the international powers continue to drag their feet on giving the  
climate crisis the absolute priority it deserves. Old divisions and disputes  
over strategic, economic, trade and ideological issues continue to present  
obstacles.  
  
  
For Eduardo Viola, professor of international relations at the University of  
Brasilia, dangerous climate change can only be addressed by cooperation between  
the main greenhouse gas emitters.  
  
  
Brazil should join the European Union (EU), he suggested, in a "virtuous and  
responsible alliance," and distance itself from China, the country that now  
emits the greatest volume of greenhouse gases and has an "irresponsible"  
attitude to climate.  
  
  
Otherwise, in the view of this pioneer Brazilian scholar of global climate  
security, the average surface temperature of the planet could rise by more than  
two degrees during the course of this century.  
  
  
Further, Brazil, the sixth largest greenhouse gas emitter after China, the  
United States, the EU, India and Russia, could contribute to climate-friendly  
progress by allying itself with European governments and Japan to work for "a  
transition to a low-carbon economy," assuming major commitments and recovering  
the degree of environmental leadership it enjoyed in the 1990s, said Viola.  
  
  
The fact that deforestation accounts for 60 percent of Brazil's greenhouse gases  
means that this country can reduce emissions at a lower cost than larger  
emitters, he said.  
  
  
Brazil's annual emissions were one billion metric tons of carbon dioxide  
equivalents in 2004, but have already fallen by more than 30 percent, because  
the rate of deforestation of the Amazon has slowed by more than half over the  
last three years.  
  
  
However, the equivocal attitude of the government of Brazilian President Luiz In  
cio Lula da Silva prevents it from taking advantage of this result to strengthen  
its position in climate negotiations, complained Rubens Born, coordinator of the  
non-governmental Vitae Civilis institute.  
  
  
"If Brazil were more independent of the Group of 77 (G77) and China, it could  
make a difference to the future of climate change," Born told IPS.  
  
  
The G77, now made up of 130 countries, was formed in 1964 to defend the common  
economic interests of developing nations. But it is dysfunctional with respect  
to climate issues, because of the presence of China and the petroleum exporting  
countries, which have conflicting interests with the rest of the group, said the  
activist.  
  
  
Born returned with a sense of disappointment from the Dec. 3-15 Conference of  
the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change  
(UNFCCC) in Bali, Indonesia.  
  
  
Political manoeuvring prevented the adoption of an explicit target for  
industrialised countries' greenhouse gas emission reductions of 25 to 40 percent  
by 2020, and relegated the conclusions of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate  
Change (IPCC) to a footnote, which "weakened the goal" of the meeting, he said.  
  
  
(The Nobel Prize-winning panel of 2,500 scientists said in its final report this  
year that this target range for emissions reductions with respect to 1990 levels  
is necessary in order to avoid the worst climate catastrophes.)  
  
  
Some progress was achieved at Bali, such as including steps to protect forests  
in the Bali "roadmap", the approval of a climate change adaptation fund to help  
poor countries protect their people against climate disasters, and encouragement  
for the G77 to take "measurable, communicable and verifiable" national actions  
for climate change mitigation, even though developing countries are not obliged  
to do so under the Kyoto Protocol.  
  
  
However, these outcomes are insufficient to ensure negotiations will progress at  
the necessary speed, and "we only have two years" to reach a difficult  
agreement, Born said.  
  
  
The new reality demands "a different way of grouping countries," based on  
criteria that differ from the traditional economic or military rationales.  
Environmental and climate issues must climb to the top of the agenda in national  
and international policy-making, he said.  
  
  
Brazil is pushing for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council,  
but enlarging the membership of the Council will not solve anything, he said.  
Instead, he argued, "its functions and agenda need to be updated to include food  
security and climate security."  
  
  
Brazilian diplomacy is facing a growing movement of environmentalists and  
political opponents who criticise the "postponement" of their environmental and  
trade policy demands. The reason for their anger is the Brazilian government's  
"ideological option for the Third World," said Viola.  
  
  
His view is shared by diplomats and members of the business community who are  
against Brasilia's policy of seeking stronger ties with Africa, the Middle East  
and Asia, in an effort to create trade links which they believe are to the  
detriment of trade with wealthy markets. These alliances have given Brazil a  
leadership role in the negotiations for a new agreement at the World Trade  
Organisation.  
  
  
But when the issue is climate change, these alliances mean that Brazil continues  
to "save China's bacon," according to Jose Goldemberg, who was environment  
minister in 1992 when Brazil hosted the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, where  
the U.N. Conventions on Climate and Biodiversity were approved.  
  
  
It is absurd to place China, now an economic and technological powerhouse, in  
the same category as African countries like Burundi, in terms of need for  
financial aid and technology transfer to help developing countries mitigate and  
adapt to climate change, Goldemberg, a physicist and energy expert, said in a  
televised debate.  
  
  
The crisis requires cooperation by every country, otherwise the ship will sink  
anyway, and it won't matter who was historically responsible for the leaks in  
the hull, he said.  
  
  
China emitted 5.7 billion tons of carbon dioxide equivalents in 2006, surpassing  
the 5.6 billion tons emitted by the United States. More alarming is the  
difference in their annual rates of growth of emissions: eight percent for China  
and one percent for the U.S., according to statistics from several official and  
independent sources, said Viola.  
  
  
Between them, they account for 43 percent of global emissions. China has adopted  
an economic growth model based on heavy environmental and climate impacts, said  
Viola, who puts both countries in the "irresponsible" category.  
  
  
Global climate security depends on a "grand agreement" between the 13 largest  
emitters, which each contribute over 1.5 percent of the world total, to achieve  
a substantial reduction in global carbon dioxide emissions, Viola said.  
  
  
The academic described two alternatives to this future scenario: the Hobbesian,  
according to which nation-states control their populations, while in the  
international arena the most powerful nation controls the world order -- which  
he said would be catastrophic, given current tendencies; and "deepened Kyoto,"  
with more mitigation, but not enough to prevent global temperatures increasing  
by more than two degrees by 2100.  
  
  
"A grand agreement will demand the political will for in-depth cooperation for  
the long term," but the commitment of some leader countries could help to  
persuade others to come aboard, Viola said. The EU is already committed, and the  
United States might become a partner after next year's elections.  
  
  
The "first circle" would be completed with China and India, which is responsible  
for nearly 11 percent of greenhouse gas emissions. However, it would be  
difficult for these two countries to curb the strong growth in their emissions,  
given their dependence on fossil fuels.  
  
  
In the "second circle" of large emitters, made up of Russia, Brazil, Japan and  
Indonesia, the main difficulty may stem from Russia, a big exporter of oil and  
gas, where the elite hope that global warming may grant the country a windfall  
of more agricultural land.  
  
  
Japan has one of the lowest levels of carbon intensity among industrialised  
nations, as it emits only 0.15 tons of carbon dioxide equivalents for every  
1,000 dollars of gross domestic product (GDP), compared to 0.40 tons in the  
United States.  
  
  
But Japan has not confronted the U.S. about climate change because it depends on  
U.S. military protection.  
  
  
Since the break-up of the former Soviet Union, Europe is no longer constrained  
in the same way.  
  
  
The equation is a complex one, but an alliance between the U.S., the EU and  
Japan, with the possible participation of Brazil, might be a very persuasive  
combination and offer a greater contribution to mitigation of climate change  
than the rest of the world put together, Viola said optimistically.