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FROM THE TOYAKO SUMMIT TO COPENHAGEN...

Mutsuyoshi Nishimura

The G8 countries at Toyako did the homework left out at Heiligenndamm by committing for the first time as a group to the long-term goal of cutting global CO₂ emissions by more than half by 2050. They also decided to implement ambitious economy-wide mid-term goals and achieve absolute emissions reductions as quickly as possible. For that purpose, they laid out a series of concrete actions to be carried out in the area of energy efficiency, clean energy development, nuclear power, technology development, investment and finance and adaptation.

The views expressed in this piece are the author's own and should not be attributed to The Association of Japanese Institutes of Strategic Studies.

All of these give a political boost to the UN climate negotiations started in Bali in late 2007 and supposedly to be concluded in Copenhagen at the end of 2009.

Yet, Toyako revealed once again the same old fissure between developed and developing countries. Developing countries were no less vocal in asserting their arguments at Toyako. They called for the G8 to make the most ambitious cuts because they are historically the world's biggest polluters. They insisted their per capita emissions are still low and their economic growth should not be sacrificed. Toyako well served the purpose of enabling developing countries to make their perennial point.

They did so not without reason. The prospect of the US coming back into the fold prompted them to brace for a new situation where world pressure descends not just upon rich countries but henceforth upon themselves as well. They are beginning to realize that world public opinion would not tolerate them staying put in the post-2012 action plan.

This has brought them to a new strategy, which essentially goes "If the poor are to do it, the rich must do more and do it harder". In fact, the five key emerging economies issued a formal statement in Toyako demanding the rich do more and do it harder by reducing emissions 25-40% by 2020 and 80-95% by 2050. They called for greater technology transfers and financial assistance. They asked for comprehensive technology development agreements to help poor countries get easier access to technology and IPR.

Despite Toyako, extraordinary difficult negotiations are in store for Copenhagen. The good news, though, is the new US attitude that is likely to be henceforth positive and forward-looking. Without aggressive US action, no international agreement on climate change will be successful.

As Washington is seemingly on a course to enact mandatory limits on CO₂ emissions, it is plausible to contemplate a new globally-inclusive climate agreement.

Reflecting this, Senator John McCain wrote in the *Financial Times* in March, "We need to reinvigorate the US-European partnership on climate change where we have so many common interests at stake. The US and Europe

must lead together to encourage the participation of the rest of the world, including most importantly, the developing economic powerhouses of China and India." A similar tenor was evident in Senator Barack Obama's Berlin speech of July 23 that met with the ringing applause of Europeans.

There is no reason for "the transatlantic partnership" about which the two presidential candidates talk not to reverberate in a trans-Pacific context. Therefore, the new positive US would not only very likely bring the world's largest emitter back to the post-2012 climate regime, but result in giving birth to much-needed unity amongst developed countries. This would certainly be a first in the history of the climate battle. Quarreling amongst rich countries will soon be over, to be replaced, hopefully, with a more cohesive and congenial camaraderie.

Rajendra Pachauri, the chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) since 2002, in urging the world to take immediate actions to address the peak and decline issue, had this to say in his presentation of the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report in Valencia, Spain, on November 17, 2007, "The world would have to reverse the growth of greenhouse gas emissions by 2015 to avert a global climate disaster. If there's no action before 2012, that's too late. What we do in the next two to three years will determine our future. This is the defining moment."

What then did Toyako do to avert a global climate disaster? It did confirm a new welcome commitment by rich countries to vigorous climate actions on a medium- to long-term basis. Despite technical differences over the base year and so on, major industrialized emitters are coming to a broad alignment about the magnitude of the actions and the time span called for to stabilize climate at an acceptable level. Toyako started a new political wind, however faint.

The problem lies in fact with developing countries. To initiate and enhance their new climate actions, which they say they will begin in light of the Bali Action Plan, a new strategy must be found and shared with them. Definitely the new strategy must brighten, not blight, their prospects for sustainable growth and poverty eradication. This must be done soon enough so that the ice between the rich and poor thaws before the permafrost does. Unless this


long-standing divide is closed quickly, this battle is not winnable.

The industrialized world must accelerate the development of key clean coal technology innovations, the number one priority in achieving the medium-term peak and decline of global emissions. Moreover, actions by the rich to substantially reduce CO₂ are absolutely necessary in order to have emerging major economies start doing their part. Substantial technological and financial transfers are a must.

All these are indispensable but not enough if they are not tied into a new inclusive scheme of partnership whereby both developing and developed countries work together and move in the same direction, no longer pointing fingers at each other.

In this new framework of partnership, countries get together to work on the basis of real time-bound clean-up plans for coal firing power plants in major emerging economies, which are absolutely indispensable if we are to avert a global climate disaster. They will do this in a new intimate, down-to-earth and cohesive cooperation formula where countries (governments as well as businesses) would work together on the basis of actual plans and programs instead of debating the issue on an abstract, general and theoretical basis.

Working in this intimate international cooperation would provide emerging economies with the most modern and fitting clean technologies, the necessary finance, and fitting business linkage. It would help build local capacity and smooth out intellectual property rights and other related issues, thus bringing about quicker results.

Most importantly, it will bring developed and developing countries closer together and eventually forge a new solidarity. This is the Grand Compact that must be erected if the world is to avoid a climate disaster and win the battle. The feeble wind blowing from Toyako could result in a new solidarity in Copenhagen. 

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