

# Save the Kyoto protocol! Take leadership!

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## Reinfeldt should pressure USA

**Prime minister Reinfeldt can as the leader of the European Union move negotiations forward; instead he plays down the expectations for Copenhagen. A unique political momentum is being squandered because EU is waiting for USA, Svante Axelsson, Swedish Society for Nature Conservation and Lasse Gustavsson, WWF writes.**

For more than a hundred years increasing emissions of greenhouse gases has impacted on the earth's climate. Now, humanity has perhaps five years to turn these increases to decreasing emissions. The importance for the world's countries to deliver a just, ambitious and binding agreement to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases at the UN summit on climate change in Copenhagen in December can not be exaggerated. The ambition to keep the global average temperature increase below two degrees is a must.

The road to Copenhagen has shown global cooperation and major scientific unity. But will it be enough?

Over the last few days the EU presidency leader Fredrik Reinfeldt has signalled that, despite countries having negotiated a new commitment period for the Kyoto protocol for three years, he now wants to give this up as it is not possible to get the US on board. The developing countries are, for good reasons, very upset. This way, the only legally binding guarantee that industrialised countries will decrease their emissions would be thrown away, before any possibly new and better future system is in place.

It is provoking when Reinfeldt in media argues that not even poor India, with just about one ton per capita in emissions, can assume a right to increased emissions. This borders cynicism and further undermines the trust between north and south that already is very weak. Surely India and China should also decrease their emissions, but until 2020 this is mainly about substantially reduce the emission increases. What level of ambition the developing countries are prepared to accept is intimately coupled with the level of support that the industrialised world can provide to adaptation and transition to renewable energy in developing countries.

Apart from a second commitment period for the Kyoto protocol, the Copenhagen meeting therefore needs to agree on substantial support to the developing countries. As decided in Bali two years ago the Copenhagen process is about two separate agreements. It is astounding that Reinfeldt gives up the Kyoto process in his political rhetoric, something which means that the possibility for EU to form the necessary alliances with other countries in the lead up to Copenhagen becomes more difficult. Cooperation between countries has historically been decisive for success, and will without doubt be of great importance for success in Copenhagen.

A unique political momentum is being squandered as the EU Heads of state choose to trust the American leadership, despite knowing that President Obama is constrained by the US domestic legal process and despite the fact that USA today is far from the ambitions that correspond to its responsibility. We now risk a 'race to the bottom' that resembles a tea party where countries just announce how much they are willing to commit – without legally binding rules.

More effort should be directed to building trust and creating alliances with strong parties with ambitious climate policies among the developing countries. If EU wants to, it can together with countries in G77 put pressure on the US to provide concrete offers in Copenhagen.

Yet, with a lack of US domestic laws in place, it is possible to negotiate the agreement the EU would most like to see together with a majority of developing countries and other industrial countries that are part of the Kyoto protocol, for example Japan. It is clear that at this moment the US refuses to accept the binding principles that are at the core of the Kyoto protocol. This is deeply irresponsible, but should not prevent the rest of the world to move on. USA would have to be brought into a binding agreement later.

It would be a far better leadership for EU and its Presidency leader Fredrik Reinfeldt to make use of the climate summit to its maximum extent and move the negotiations as far as possible, rather than playing down expectations, as he is currently doing.

The climate negotiations are now in a state with way too low ambitions, not least the support to climate action in the developing countries of the world. According to a new UN report about USD 500 billion will be needed each year in climate support to developing countries. This is a large sum, but cheap in comparison with the costs of climate change if we do not act now.

The mindset that 'the last one out of the fossil era wins' seems to shape many of the negotiators. The approach seems to be that we need to ensure that others do as much as possible so that one's own country does not have to act forcefully and will hardly need to pay.

We want to give our support to the Swedish representatives and negotiators as they travel to Copenhagen to decide about the future of the planet. The earth provide clear images and examples on the way: the dramatic decrease of Arctic ice, the changing weather patterns that hit the poor everywhere in the world, the deserts that spread and the rainforests that are being cut at an alarming pace. Examples are also provided by the statements and actions from leaders in the most vulnerable countries who know that they are fighting for the very existence of their countries and our common future.

We can not negotiate with nature, but must respect its limits. Let us therefore discuss how we shall divide the common responsibility to decrease the global emissions and simultaneously invest all that we can in becoming one of the growing low-fossil economies that creates global, cooperative solutions. Sweden and Prime Minister Reinfeldt has a possibility to play a historic role when the world meets to solve the biggest challenge of our time. Let us together do our utmost to make this possibility a reality in Copenhagen in December.

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