

Report on the Official launching Event of Cairo Climate Talks
“International Climate Change Negotiations in Durban (COP17) - expectations and perspectives”
Culture Wheel 3.11.2011

Summary

Cairo Climate Talks (CCT), German Egyptian Initiative, was officially launched on the 3rd of November 2011 at the Culture Wheel in Cairo. The talks are a series of monthly events concerning climate change, open for public and experts. In light of the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference in Durban, South Africa, the topic of the evening was “International Climate Change Negotiations in Durban (COP17) - expectations and perspectives”. Cairo Climate Talks will serve as a platform to raise awareness, exchange experience, build networks and serve as capacity building for the Egyptian society to help fight climate change and limit its negative effect. It should furthermore foster cooperation between the policymakers, the business community, the scientific community as well as the civil society. 350 distinguished guests and experts from policy, business and science were invited to this big event to launch “Cairo Climate Talks”. The launching event took place in a talk show atmosphere, moderated by Cornelia Wegerhoff, the WDR correspondent in Culture Wheel located just beside the River Nile.

The overall objective of Cairo Climate Talks is to develop clear and tangible goals to serve the environment by establishing a platform to expose the problems of climate change and find solutions for them. Cairo Climate Talks is a step on the road to effectively raise awareness in Egypt and build capacity... It will address a wide array of topics, not only technological aspects, but also developmental, economic and societal issues that are closely linked to climate change. Cairo Climate Talks is only one example of the outstanding cooperation between Egypt and Germany. This series of events is held under the umbrella of an extensive network with both Egyptian and German partners: the German Embassy in Cairo, in cooperation with the Egyptian Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs, the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA), the German Academic Exchange service (DAAD), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the Egyptian German High Level Joint Committee for Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency and Environmental Protection (JCEE). Cairo Climate Talks is thus a symbol of German-Egyptian cooperation.

Event Proceedings

Statements

After a warm and brief welcome of Mr. Mohamed ElSawy, the host and founder of the Culture Wheel, the opening speeches started. In his opening address H.E. Mr. Michael Bock, ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany, stated how this decisive and critical timing of launching Cairo Climate Talks coincided with Durban negotiations, which are searching for an effective and fair agreement to shape a post-2012 agreement. Climate change is not a

matter of queer scientists, but a real threat for humanity: it is happening while we speak, and has very concrete consequences. H.E. Mr. Bock reminded the audience how Ban Ki Mun, the Secretary General of the United Nations placed climate change as a threat to international peace and security. Mr. Bock also confirmed that Germany is committed to a global level solution. He highlighted why climate change is vital to Egypt despite the intensive domestic agenda due to the coming elections: First, Egypt is a key player in the Arab World and has a certain weight in the region. Second, Egypt has a lot to lose, since it is heavily affected by possible climate change effects, such as droughts and the rise of sea level. The agricultural sector will be severely affected. Finally, Egypt can benefit immensely from changing into a "low-carbon green economy". This sector offers job opportunities and guarantees sustainable growth, which are crucial for the Egyptian economy. Despite the full domestic agendas in Germany and Egypt, climate change is a global issue that all countries of the world are facing. The potential is high: Egypt has perfect conditions for renewable energy sources like solar and wind energy, and it has educated scientists. In the same time Germany can offer the reliable expertise and technology.

Dr. Hossam elDin Ali Hegazi, Chief Executive Officer of the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA), represented H.E. Maged George Minister of State for Environmental Affairs, and made the opening address. He declared that Cairo Climate Talks is an example of the excellent partnership. We need to work together to make sure our core values and quality of the future of our children remain unharmed, Dr. Hegazi pointed out. Cairo Climate Talks thus provides an excellent opportunity to foster cooperation on this important topic.

Discussion

Following the opening addresses the panel discussion began. Mr. Stefan Auer, Deputy Director General for Energy and Environment at the German Federal Foreign Office, stated how climate change is back on the agenda since it poses a systemic risk for the whole globe. Mr. Auer expressed the necessity to avoid another Copenhagen. Although one should not conclude a comprehensive and effective international agreement post 2012, but we need to find a foundation for an agreement to limit the temperature rise to 2°C margin, he said.

In his speech H.E. Ambassador Ehab Gamal EIDin, Minister Plenipotentiary for Environmental Affairs and Sustainable Development, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, contextualized the dilemma of the climate change in the international political sphere: the seventeenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 17) poses us at a crossroads: either we keep following a rule based system or change it to a non-binding pledge & review system, he said. Further he highlighted that we need to keep faith in the United Nations and multilateralism as the way to for solving our problems in the world. H.E. Mr. Gamal EIDin confirmed how Egypt and Germany both share an interest in making Durban a success. The guiding principles should be fairness, equity and historic responsibility. The world shares a common yet differentiated responsibility, he added. Africa is only responsible for 4% of the CO₂ emissions in the world,

yet it will suffer severely from the repercussions and extreme weather events, especially droughts and desertification. Thus, based on Cancun agreements the developed countries should take the lead by offering the expertise and science to keep the risks to a minimum.

In his statement Dr. Ezzat Lewis, Head of Climate Change Central Department, Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency, explained that the dilemma of Kyoto Protocol lies in the different perspectives of developed and developing countries to narrow this gap the developed countries can help the developing countries better save the environment. Egypt cannot do this without the financial and technological support from industrialized countries. He mentioned existing successful bi-lateral projects of the implementation of Clean Development Mechanisms (CDM) in wind energy and hydropower energy projects. The potential of Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA) is high, yet its implementation in Egypt depends on two parameters: the capability and the political will. However, Dr. Ezzat is confident the Egyptian-German cooperation will remain intensive. Cairo Climate Talks, in the final analysis, is actually a bilateral cooperation event, he remarked.

Ms. Silvia Kreibiehl, Vice President at Deutsche Bank Group, had three general remarks. First, she mentioned the double-sided perceptions of climate change: in the scarcity of energy in developed countries on one side and the enhancing of energy efficiency in developing countries on the other side a second issue concerns the financing of green projects that compete with the traditional fossil energy. The private sector needs attractive investment kits that yield higher returns in the renewable energy sector. A third aspect is the legal certainty that developing countries alone cannot achieve; they need backing from the developed economies that have the necessary track record.

After the initial statements given by each panellist, a lively discussion was facilitated by Ms. Wegerhoff. Mr. Auer assured again that Europe is committed to limiting its emissions. Environment protection and development can go hand in hand. Job creation opportunity of immense importance for Egypt, a green economy is efficient. The interests are mutual, yet slightly shifted between industrialized and developing countries. Ms. Kreibiehl agreed that a converting to a low carbon economy creates jobs, but she was more conservative in estimating the numbers of jobs created in Egypt.

H.E. Dr. Ehab Gamal EIDin stated how Africa cannot afford a failure of Durban since it cannot implement the Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA) on its own. He noted a disquieting tendency of shifting the blame on the developing countries, and pointed out the existing differences of emissions between lifestyle and excessive consumption or for development. The developing countries want to avoid empty shells devoid of financial and technological solutions. Yet Durban is only one step in a long road, it is not the end of the road. The Cairo Climate Talks panel discussion witnessed debates on some controversial issues, for example regarding the potential amount of jobs created when converting to green

economy and the amount of financial support from developed countries. This debate proved the need for this forum to address the related issues.

Questions by the Audience

Following the panellists' discussions representatives from the audience participated in a questions and answers session. The feedback showed the pressing issues for the Egyptian side. Mr. Ossama Abdel Rahman, a representative of the private sector and civil society, said it is crucial to extend the Kyoto Protocol. Clean Development Mechanisms (CDM) experiences a growing demand in Egyptian enterprises. We are just at the beginning, ending it now would be a negative message to the private sector. Mr. Mohamed Nasr, First Secretary at the Office of Deputy Assistant Minister for Environmental Affairs and Sustainable Development, posed the question what will happen if there is no second commitment period of the Kyoto protocol that offered incentives and regulations for the private sector was met in Durban. Yet Mr. Auer showed confidence in finding a sort of agreement in Durban. The European Union wants to keep the previous accomplishments. Dr. Ezzat explained how six scenarios were possible in the COP 17 in Durban, ranging from the worst case (no deal at all) till the optimum scenario (full agreement on all issues).

Dr. Amal Abdo, a professor at the department of Environmental design at the Faculty of Fine Arts, indicated that Egypt needs a bottom-up change through updating the curricula, education and training processes in Egypt. The panellists agreed that exactly this will provide us with the much needed capacity building in our society. Mr. Amr Mohsen made concrete event suggestions to target the youth, and suggested topics for the next sessions linking Cairo Climate Talks to the everyday issues of the Egyptian public and the governmental policies, like fuel subsidy. At this point H.E. Dr. Ehab Gamal ElDin promptly promised a new beginning in handling the issues by creating a more participatory approach to create more visibility for the climate change issue. The launching event of Cairo Climate Talks was concluded by a dinner where guests exchanged their views on the topic in a more relaxed atmosphere.

Feedback on the launching of Cairo Climate Talks

"Renewable energy is a win-win situation."

When requested to give their feedback on Cairo Climate Talks, all asked guests agreed that it is an important step that will certainly benefit the Egyptian and German partners. H.E. Mr. Michael Bock, ambassador to the German Federal Republic, explained how Cairo Climate Talks emerged from Desertec conference held in Cairo on the 2nd of November 2011 to discuss the massive solar project planned in the Middle East and Africa. Germans have no hidden agenda: Egypt is an important player in the Arab World and Africa and we are interested in developing new and clean sources of energy. Egypt has the soil and sun, perfect conditions we do not have, and Germany has the technology. This is a win-win situation. In the end Egypt can make money from renewable energy as Saudi Arabia makes money from

oil. Mr. Bock added that we want to promote the Cairo Climate Talks now especially to give positive incentives in the New Egypt after the Revolution. Climate change is a real issue that is important; it is not as elitist as some might think. All countries must address this issue because the survival of mankind might depend on it.

“Egypt has tremendous potential and can become more competitive in the world market.”

When asked on launching Cairo Climate Talks H.E. Mr. Auer explained how there is a need to differentiate between two levels of communication: first, the climate change diplomatic negotiations on the political level, where understanding each other's positions is very important to be able to reach a final agreement. But the second and more practical side is what Cairo Climate Talks is trying to achieve. It wants to bring to the attention of the people the direct impact of climate change in their daily lives. People can change the society and drive the policymakers to adopt a green economy. He contradicted to the opinion that sees an ultimate choice between development and environment. For Egypt it is not a choice between economical growth and protecting the environment. Egypt has tremendous opportunities from wind and solar energy, and thus can create a regional green sustainable economy. It could invest with the help with German scientists who will provide high-tech expertise. Renewable energy can address problems like increasing energy demand, or reduce the consumption of fossil energy. Egypt can benefit a lot from its assets in the field of energy efficiency and develop its bi-lateral cooperation with Germany or other countries based on this benefit. To limit down the energy consumption does not only mean emitting less, but also paying less for electricity. This in return is very attractive for industries and raises investments. This means Egypt will be much more competitive in the world market. Mr Auer added how unfortunately climate change in the minds of the people is connected to complicated technological aspects. This is exactly what Cairo Climate Talks is trying to address: to raise awareness that we can do something and that we all are sitting in the same plane. It does not matter if we sit in the first or second class. We need to protect our world, and we can all contribute. Cairo Climate Talks is an example on how we can work more towards the public.

“We need a more appealing persuasive language and avoid negative campaigning.”

Dr. Ezzat commented on the launch of Cairo Climate Talks by saying we want to continue what was started. Egyptian scientists already work in the sector of renewable energy within their capacities and expertise, but they need further support to access to cutting edge technology. Although Cairo Climate Talks is not intended for negotiations but rather as a platform to communicate together, and sensitize Egyptians and Germans for each other's need it is very important especially that the good will is there on both sides. Climate change is a chance to address old problems in the Egyptian society in an innovative way. Cairo Climate Talks can spread awareness connected to spreading new ideas. Also new policies are needed to merge the fragmented Egyptian efforts in this field. Dr. Ezzat addressed the local issues by explaining how the average Egyptian is actually a victim of the energy-environment

dilemma, because the poor people do not have emissions, while the rich have high emissions due to their lifestyle and high levels of consumptions. Yet the repercussions eventually affect us all. So awareness is not hampered by education issues, because those who pursue the high emissions lifestyle normally belong to the educated people in Egypt. We also need to avoid negative campaigning. We need to communicate more effectively with the Egyptian public on this issue in an appealing persuasive language. We can focus on the positive, like the jobs creation and protecting our soil and agriculture.

“Energy scarcity is an issue of relevance for Egypt that it can address accordingly.”

Ms. Sylvia Kreibiehl explained that although Deutsche Bank is still not familiar with the Egyptian market, she was glad that the launching event of Cairo Climate Talks took place. It gave her the opportunity to come here as an advisor to the “Global Energy Transfer Feed-in Tariffs Program” or “GET FIT”. This program is a proposal to support both renewable energy scale-up and energy access through the creation of new international public-private partnerships.

So part of her job is to visit new countries to present new concepts to drive renewable energy investment in the developing regions and in the same time to try to be in contact with regulators and explain what the private sector needs to facilitate investments. Investors need regulations that support the renewable energy in Egypt to make it a lucrative market. They need the TLC-concept: transparency, legitimacy and certainty to make the investors feel comfortable. This is also the part where the German government can help by issuing guarantees for investment in Egypt. This is new terrain for Deutsche Bank, so we need to minimize the perceived risk. We also need to address the local needs here; because climate change might be too abstract. In Uganda a main concern is energy scarcity. Ms. Kreibiehl said she thinks this issue is of relevance to Egypt as well. So securing energy supply will bring concrete benefits for Egyptians. So definitely, Cairo Climate Talks is a great opportunity to address these issues and concerns.

“Cairo Climate Talks can integrate climate change issues in our daily lives.”

Eng. Emad Hassan, managing director of the Energy Efficiency Unit at the Supreme Energy Council, considered Cairo Climate Talks as a very good model of bi-lateral cooperation. In general addressing climate change is a question of necessity. It is a very high priority topic that has not seen enough attention in the public’s eyes. But it is very important matter because of its repercussions on the future. The launching event is a good cooperative effort between the Egyptian and German side to identify issues over a series of events. Today the organizers are setting the stage for launching the Cairo Climate Talks as a stream of activities to discuss details later on. These details will include technical issues, awareness issues, and financial issues. Awareness is only part of the equation because even if there is awareness at the individual level a citizen can do very little without a framework by the policymakers and financial and business community. Cairo Climate Talks wants to start a dialogue. It can target

different communities like the business community, where incentives would motivate them, for example link tourism to energy efficiency. Next events can also be less formal and address issues in layman language, something that an average teacher or nurse or farmer can understand. This is how Cairo Climate Talks can integrate climate change issues in our daily lives because so far it has still been in the headlines as an issue exclusive to politicians.

“Cairo Climate Talks launching event was a successful start.”

Dr. Martin Bergfelder, Head of Science Department at the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Cairo, stated that the launching event was a very successful start; there were excellent speakers and an informed and interested audience. The idea was to kick-start Cairo Climate Talks. The launching event is only the starting point, now the job is to break this complex issue into smaller more concrete topics. He noted how it was obvious that at the international level of the negotiations there is no consensus on every point between Egypt and Germany. But both countries have an interest in making the UN negotiations a success because there is much mutual benefit. Africa and Europe have the most to lose from a failure. A lot of opportunities exist for Egypt; it has potential for economic growth. This is where the German experience comes, because this is where German economy and science are innovative. There is also a strong scientific cooperation between and within universities in Egypt and Germany, like the bi-lateral Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency for the MENA Region (REMENA) project between the universities of Kassel and Cairo. After the Revolution the German academic interest in scientific cooperation in the field of the energy and environment aspects further intensified. We have to be realistic of course, one event cannot create enough public awareness, but it can contribute to networking actors from the academic, business and civil society. The people themselves need to push their governments to protect the environment, and to refuse to live in polluted neighbourhoods. The German Environmental policy since the 1970ies is due to a great extend to pressure from the people and NGOs, e.g. regarding air pollution, renewable energies, water quality and waste management.

“Cairo Climate Talks can address the more local issues for Egypt.”

Finally Dr. Florian Kohstall, Head of the Freie Universität Berlin Cairo Office, thought that Cairo Climate Talks is a good start. It would be easier in the future to concretely address the more local issues, like the impacts and risks on Egypt and the potential of creating green industries. As an academic, he pointed out how this might enhance the scientific links between the German and Egyptian scientific communities, especially in technological issues like the cooperation on Desertec project. There is a great chance to foster the bi-lateral relations both scientifically and politically now.