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COP22 review: what international cooperation exists on climate?

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Prior to COP21, its president Laurent Fabius often referred to the ghost of Copenhagen, which had hovered over climate negotiations since the failure of the COP15 in 2009. This time around it was the shadow of the future US president that haunted the negotiators gathered in Marrakech, as the shock waves of the electoral earthquake hit the Atlas slopes, just two days after the opening of COP22.

Nevertheless, COP22 began under excellent auspices after a year of political and diplomatic climate mobilization, which enabled more than one hundred ratifications of the Paris Agreement to be obtained in record time, not to mention the progress made in the regulation of air transport and refrigerant gases. The Paris Agreement thus came

into force on 4 November, a few days before delegations flocked to Morocco, less than a year after its adoption in Paris on 12 December 2015, which was unprecedented in UN history. This was something that no one had anticipated. Furthermore, no one would have believed that so soon after entering into international law, it would experience its first “stress test”.

Indeed, it is difficult to analyse the COP22 discussions without mentioning the Trump effect, which preyed on the minds of everyone present, providing an undeniable source of concern, conjecture or at least uncertainty. Will he want to bring down the Paris Agreement, for which the international community had unified despite its differences to write a new chapter on climate action, and if so could he do it and would he actually try to do it? The feeling of hesitation shown by delegates was palpable regarding the best way forward: Rejection? Resistance? Passivity? Fighting? Provocation?

After this feverish or even angst-ridden moment, where there was much speculation, **the international community's message of unity at the end of these two weeks was clear: the Paris Agreement initiated the world's transformation towards resilient and low carbon societies and this movement is “irreversible”**. Countries and their present leaders have affirmed this message loud and clear, and the Moroccan presidency has written this reassuring statement into the “[Marrakech Proclamation](#)”: the momentum continues, and the international community remains united and shows solidarity. It was essential to obtain a truly universal agreement last year for several reasons including to compensate for this type of political upheaval. Moreover, due to a lack of American or European leadership, it was the countries most vulnerable to climate change that positioned themselves as drivers, and during the Climate Vulnerable Forum announced their goal to achieve a 100% renewable energy mix as fast as possible, calling for support from Northern and emerging countries.

States were not the only ones to hammer home this message, they were reinforced by those known as “non-state actors” in UN jargon, that is, companies, NGOs, cities and regions that are also committed to climate action. After COP21, the success of which was also that of many regional and sectoral initiatives and coalitions that bring together these new players in climate action, these new actors came to Marrakech en masse to demonstrate that the transition is underway: for the private sector as well as territories, the commitment is strategic and long term. It responds to an economic rationale that is growing and to an increasing demand from their clients, fellow citizens and collaborators, a momentum that is not about to cease. This movement manifests itself well beyond the UN sphere, for example: 1) the letter by 365 major US companies to the future President Trump urging him to continue the domestic climate action without which American prosperity would be threatened; and (2) the second annual report of the Portfolio Decarbonization Coalition (PDC), comprising 27 institutional investors representing a total of \$3 trillion in assets and aiming to redirect \$600 billion towards climate-friendly investments.

The dynamic is now that of the joint implementation of commitments. The launch of a platform for long-term strategies ([2050 Pathways Platform](#)), [supported by IDDRi](#), illustrates this well: in addition to 22 states, more than 30 communities and nearly 200 companies have committed to this effort to share firm action plans to anticipate and drive, each on its own scale, a deep decarbonization that is necessary to achieve the objective of the Paris Agreement.

Finally, the negotiators have also played their part. Without questioning the major principles of transparency, ambition and solidarity established in Paris, they began the technical work aimed at setting the rules and provisions for the implementation of the Paris Agreement, covering subjects as diverse as the measurement of emissions, the valorisation and financing of adaptation actions, and the design of the ambition mechanism that will enable states to go further in their commitments. They agreed to accelerate their work programme so that a conclusion can be reached within two years in time for COP24, which will be held in Poland. Setting a limit is a significant step forward and should enable the international community to relaunch a political and diplomatic dynamic for 2020.

The Paris Agreement therefore seems well equipped to cope with this first “stress test”. The climate community continues its work and has given itself the means and tools to do so. It must, however, integrate the need to respond to a call that general populism too often manipulates: the concept of low-carbon transformation, in combination with the socio-economic context, scares a proportion of the population and certain territories and economic actors, who put up a resistance. This concern is legitimate, and the means of responding to it must be found. This requires the implementation of a [“just transition”](#). This concept, adopted by the International Labour Organization in 2013 and incorporated in the Paris Agreement, is divided into several areas: creating decent jobs, fostering social dialogue, anticipating impacts and training needs, developing plans for local economic diversification, and ensuring the sustainability of social protection and pension systems. Operationalizing this commitment will be decisive in supporting the reconversion of people, activities and territories, and ensuring the successful transition towards sustainable development.

The implementation of all commitments made in Paris and then in Marrakech must now continue. The discourse must thus evolve to reaffirm this message of conviction on a daily basis: **climate action and transition to resilient and low-carbon societies is not only a moral imperative, it is the only way to ensure truly sustainable socio-economic development in both the North and the South**, to respond to the aspirations of people for a safer, more prosperous and fairer world.

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