Institutions for International Climate Governance

Hosted by
The Harvard Project on Climate Agreements

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Developing and Advancing Ideas for Climate Policy

- The Harvard Project on Climate Agreements
  - Mission: To help identify and advance scientifically sound, economically rational, and politically pragmatic public policy options for addressing global climate change

- Drawing upon research & ideas from leading thinkers around the world from:
  - Academia
  - Private industry
  - NGOs
  - Governments

- 45 research initiatives in Australia, China, Europe, India, Japan, and the United States
Potential Global Climate Policy Architectures

- Harvard Project does not endorse a single approach
  - Decision to adopt particular architecture is ultimately political, and must be reached by nations of the world, taking into account complex factors

- Promising policy architectures under three categories
  - Targets & Timetables (as in Kyoto Protocol)
    - Example: *Formulas for Evolving Emission Targets for All Countries*
  - Harmonized National Policies
    - Examples: *Harmonized Carbon Taxes, Cap-and-Trade, or Other Regulations*
  - Independent National Policies
    - Example: *Linkage of National & Regional Tradable Permit Systems*
Institutions for International Climate Governance: The UNFCCC

The UNFCCC has both advantages and challenges as a venue for international climate negotiations.

- **Advantages**
  - International *legitimacy*
  - Administrative resources for *implementation*

- **Challenges**
  - *Number* (190+) and extreme *diversity* of parties
  - Decision-making process gives each country same standing *regardless* of its emission rate or its vulnerability to climate change
  - Decisions require *consensus* among parties
  - Politicized *divergence* between developed & developing countries
Institutions for International Climate Governance: Other Institutions

- Other institutions could potentially *supplement* UNFCCC process

- Among those frequently proposed are:
  - *Major Economies Forum* – 80% of global emissions; initiated & led by U.S.
  - *G20* – finance ministers; since 1999; have met on climate change
  - Other *multilateral* (C30)
  - Various *bilaterals*, including – but not limited to – China-U.S.

- *Lessons* can be learned by examining international regimes in *other policy areas*, including international trade, nuclear nonproliferation, and others
Institutions for International Climate Governance: Key Findings

- MEF and G-20 have been effective venues for discussion
  - Combine developed & developing worlds, and so carry some international legitimacy
  - Neither is a forum for negotiation on climate change
  - Moving negotiations from UNFCCC to MEF or G-20 might simply transfer conflicts apparent in UNFCCC to these new venues
  - Both lack administrative & technical resources for implementation

- “Bridging states” combine interests of both developing and developed countries
  - May therefore help facilitate climate negotiations
  - Candidates include: Mexico, Republic of Korea, and Turkey
Institutions for International Climate Governance: Key Findings (continued)

- Some climate policy aspects may best be addressed in separate institutional venues
  - Loosely coupled set of *regimes*
  - *Portfolio* of international sectoral agreements
  - Separate institutions/agreements for *mitigation, adaptation, and geoengineering*

- Negotiations can benefit from *trust built through institutional learning*
  - Learning decreases *uncertainty*, which countries often use as argument for *inaction*
  - One positive *example*: International Energy Agency
    - Could *assess mitigation* performance, and
    - Develop techniques for *accurately and fairly* comparing national policies
Institutions for International Climate Governance: Conclusions

- Most promising institutional options all involve some combination of UNFCCC and a diverse set of other organizations for negotiation and implementation.

- UNFCCC may increasingly play role functionally similar to G-20 and MEF:
  - Forum for discussing concepts and exploring approaches.
  - Resolving conflicting values, particularly between developing & developed countries.

- UNFCCC may increasingly specialize in data gathering and implementation of policy (as it does now with the CDM, for example).

- Unlike G-20 and MEF, UNFCCC has authority to serve as forum for negotiation,
  - But whether it is capable of using that authority effectively only time will tell.
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