

Workshop

“RUSSIA’S ROLE IN THE COPENHAGEN CLIMATE CHANGE NEGOTIATIONS”

14th May, 2009, 13.00 – 14.30

«Stanhope» Hotel, Rue du Commerce 9, 1000 Brussels

Report

On 14 May, the EU-Russia Forum and the Heinrich Boell Foundation held a roundtable discussion on Russia’s attitude to the Copenhagen review conference on Climate Change.¹

Mark Entin, Director of the European Studies Institute and Institute of European Law, MGIMO, Moscow, said that although the Russian negotiators were keeping their cards close to their chests, there was no doubt that in official circles climate change was growing in importance in Russia. President Medvedev was taking a personal interest in the subject and a range of NGOs, such as WWF, were actively seeking to raise public consciousness. Russia was flexible in its approach, aware that a consensus would have to be reached between the major players – the EU, US and China. Addressing the link between energy and climate change, Entin said that Russia was ahead of the EU in some areas eg. privatisation of its electricity network.

Rosario Bento Pais, DG Environment, European Commission, stated the EU was following a twin-track approach (LSA and Kyoto). The return of the US to the table was very important. Other countries were waiting for movement on the part of Russia. There were still major differences in approach between the developed and developing world. China, for example, was unlikely to move before they see the developed world doing so. Russia has conventionally been an unpredictable player in climate change matters, often coming late to the table with positions. Energy efficiency was a key area and it was important that Russia came out with its targets on CO2 reductions soon.

Sascha Müller-Kraenner, European Representative to The Nature Conservancy said that the impact of climate change on Russia would be tremendous, considering 60% of the Arctic is in Russia. Russia was one of the world’s major emitters and its emissions were rising. An agreement on climate change would limit consumption of fossil fuels on a global scale. This

¹ COP15 will be the fifteenth Conference of the Parties under the United Nations’ Climate Change Convention. The conference will take place from 7 December to 18 December 2009.

would pose problems for countries like Russia that made a business out of them. He doubted whether Russia really recognised the extent of the problems it faced. The EU needed to ask what incentives/concessions needed to be made to Russia for a global agreement to be possible. This implied taking into account the global picture on energy and climate change.

Fraser Cameron, Director of the EU-Russia Centre agreed that climate change negotiations should not be viewed as an independent set of negotiations, rather as part of a bigger picture, which included economics and energy security. The EU had the ability to help Russia in tackling the problem of energy wastage.

Rikke Reumert Schaltz, Permanent Representation of Denmark to the EU stressed that Denmark, as host country to the UN Climate Change Conference, had not forgotten about Russia and was fully aware of its importance in the negotiations as the world's third largest emitter. It was important to get Russian industry on board and convince Russia that it could be a world leader in this field.

Robert Dollinger, United States Mission to the EU, said US policy was still evolving. It was uncertain whether any US legislation on climate change would be passed prior to Copenhagen. However there was momentum creating a feeling of "cautious optimism." The US was also engaging with Russia on climate change. Russia stood to gain perhaps more than any other country from agreement in Copenhagen.

Eberhard Rhein, Senior Advisor to the European Policy Centre, pinpointed the price structure for energy in Russia as the main problem. No progress could be made unless this was changed. He hoped the current economic crisis would lead to a re-structuring of the Russian economy. A 20% reduction in emissions by 2020 could easily be achieved by Russia, but the "driving force" in Russia needed to be identified.

Bjorn Fagerberg, General Secretariat of the Council, agreed that it would be important to find the Russian "driving force" in climate change. Public perception of climate change in Russia needed to be tackled.

Mark Entin (quoting President Medvedev) said that Russia aimed to reduce its emissions by 50% by 2050. The base level should be 1990 and not 2003. It was a mistake to simply talk about "energy" as a general concept; all different types of energy would need to be taken into consideration. The aim of allowing energy prices to rise to market prices had been delayed due to the economic crisis. Previously public opinion had viewed climate change "not dangerous to today or tomorrow" but this attitude was beginning to change. **Roderick Kefferpütz** of the Heinrich Böll Foundation referred to a BBC poll that claimed 64% of Russian citizens have heard little or nothing about climate change. **Jason Anderson**, WWF, doubted that Russia was really moving on climate change. It would need concerted pressure to bring about change.

Chongjun Bai, from the Mission of China to the EU said that as the world's biggest developing country, China recognised the dangers of climate change and was focussing on energy efficiency

and promoting sustainable energy. China was waiting to see how the developed countries would react.

Henrik H Eriksen from the Mission of Norway to the EU stated that so far, Russia had not participated very constructively in climate change negotiations. But this could change. Although it was always very challenging to deal with Russia it was possible to secure an agreement. An incentive to get Russia on board with climate change needed to be found.

Michael Wriglesworth, Senior Advisor to the Centre for European Policy Studies, said that an element of Russian “self-interest” would need to be found for successful Russian participation. Countries were never altruistic “even when trying to save the world.” Fraser Cameron agreed that Russia would use climate change negotiations as a bargaining chip.

Roderick Kefferpütz, stressed that if Russian domestic CO2 reduction targets were insufficient negotiators should push Russia to offset some of its emissions in the Central Asian Republics. Roderick thanked all of the participants for a lively and interesting discussion adding that it was still unclear what Russia really wants in the climate change negotiations and that further discussion and engagement with Russia would be needed to ensure progress is made.