



Understanding that the world is at the brink of uncontrollable climate change, you would expect nations to come to the negotiation tables with the interest of the planet and humanity as the sole targets. Negotiations are give and take affairs, but at the climate negotiations it appears the game is to give nothing but to take all.

The game depends on how much power you wield and how much spin you can weave. The negotiations appear to be a game of chess – excepting that in this one the king and queen can never be checkmated, but can move across the playing field with impunity. If this is really the way it is, then it is a very tricky game indeed for poor vulnerable nations.

While welcoming delegates to the conference of the parties (COP) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), president Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico stated that the world must embark on the pursuit of green development and green economy as the path to sustainable development. The president also stated that some of the steps to be taken to attain this ideal include progress on the negotiations on Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD) as well as development of technologies to reduce fuel emission. Another key point was that the financing of sustainable development should start with support for the poorest and the most vulnerable countries.

These were nice words. These were also very contentious ideas. There are several red flags and concerns about REDD by indigenous groups and forest dependent peoples as well as mass social movements across the world. The idea of canvassing the extension of financial assistance to the poorest and the most vulnerable countries is also seen by critics as a possible way dividing those same nations and making them pliable to suggestions and decisions that may actually be contrary to their best interests.

The grabbing game is played by both rich and poor nations. This is how it plays out the rich nations throw the bait, the poorer one believing they can swallow the bait and yet escape being choked swallow them line, hook and sinker. It is a long-term game based on the principle of competition and reckless consumption.

If the above scenario were not the case, nations would throw in everything they have got to secure a future for their peoples and the planet. As things stand, most nations approach the negotiation table with national rather than global agenda tucked under their armpits. The hunter and the hunted appear to stand on the same platform one provided by a huge faith in the ability of the market to solve the climate problem. Those who point out the slide towards chaos appear to stand on the fringes of the formal negotiations while the dominant forces roll out cynical and dangerous schemes.

Rejection of carbon markets including CDM and other offset mechanisms that actually provide loopholes for intensification of emissions. Carbon markets according to an analysis by TWN are volatile and vulnerable to fraud.

Insatiable drive for and expansion of use of fossil fuels with promises of clean coal and carbon sequestration has kept the world locked into the climate gridlock. The framework for delivery on climate finance remains contentious. While the rich countries, led by the USA, promised at Copenhagen to deliver \$10 billion within 2010-2012, as at September 2010 only about \$5.2 billion additional funds to what was pledged before 2009 has actually been offered - with \$3.9 billion actually delivered and even at that these are coming mostly as loans. If this trend holds, poor and vulnerable countries will end up with compounded debt profiles and deepened climate challenges.

Another bone of contention with regard to climate finance is about the institutional arrangement to deliver it. While some countries want the funds to be handled wholly within the structures of the UNFCCC, others are angling for the World Bank to virtually become the climate bank. An analysis by Friends of the Earth clearly states why the World Bank should not be trusted with climate funds: The World Bank and other multilateral development banks should have no role in the Global Climate Fund. The World Bank is far more experienced at causing climate change than in preventing it. In fact, 2010 was a record-breaking year for coal at the World Bank, with \$4.4 billion in coal funding, representing a 356 percent increase over 2009. The World Bank has a poor record when it comes to democratic governance, social justice, and environmental integrity.

The opening day brought up some undercurrents that may already be causing ripples in the negotiation lobbies. The delegation of Papua New Guinea fired the first salvo when they suggested that where there is no consensus, decisions should be made by voting. He referred to the rejection of the Copenhagen Accord at COP15 and subsequent signing on by 140 countries. The delegate's submission was that a small minority of states were obstructionist and unnecessarily holding others hostage. The suggestion by PNG was promptly opposed by Bolivia, India and Saudi Arabia, among other states. They insisted that consensus must be maintained as a fair way to reach decisions in the climate negotiations as well as in other multilateral spaces.

With regard to efforts to collapse the two tracks of negotiations, the Group of 77 and China insisted that the two tracks of negotiations, the AWG-LCA and AWAG-KP, must be maintained.

Although parties offered to cooperate and seek a fair agreement at this COP, the opening day did not offer signs of shifting positions as parties mostly reiterated what they have been saying all along. What hopes for an ambitious agreement at the end of the day? These are not on the radar screens, but we do not know what is cooking in the small rooms away from the plenary spaces.