

**Interview with
Paul Oquist, Minister-Private Secretary of Public Policies of Nicaragua**

“Without means for implementation, there can not be a Global Agreement on climate change in Paris”

The negotiations on climate change reached a decisive moment with the celebration of the COP20 in Lima; but, the path for the adoption of a Global Agreement at the summit that will be held at the end of 2015 in Paris appears to be tortuous. The Minister- private secretary of Public Policies of Nicaragua, Paul Oquist, assures in the interview he gave to the newsletter of the EU-LAC Foundation on the occasion of his visit to the Foundation’s headquarters in Hamburg last October, that his country will work constructively; although, he warned that “there can not be an agreement without means of implementation”.

Minister, do you think that the recent meeting held in New York at the initiative of the General-Secretary of the UN, Ban Kin Moon, has helped to mobilise the negotiations on Climate Change and has paved the way for Paris?

I don’t think so

Why?

Because important issues weren’t addressed in New York. Substantive issues need to be negotiated between the countries that are parties to the Convention on Climate Change, and the next meeting will be held in Lima, where I hope a new process will be opened to negotiate profoundly and in good faith on the way to Paris.

Which, in your opinion, are the important issues?

The nature of the agreement. Will the agreement be legally binding? or will it be, as the Durban document portrays even though nobody knows what it means, an agreement under the Convention with legislation effect? But, besides, another issue is at stake: how to ensure that the Members State will comply with it? That is, we have to devise a reliable mechanism that ensures that the States will implement the agreed reduction of emissions and with the financial provision that the Developing countries require.

This is the position the Developing countries maintain, there are no changes.

Developing countries have adopted the position by which they demand means of implementation, and by which they will not sign any agreement if it does not include the financial aspects, technical assistance and the necessary training for the compliance with them. It would be irresponsible to assume those commitments that cannot be reached. Developing countries cannot continue doing that with climate change agreements.

Talking about funding. In the summit of Copenhagen in 2009, a \$30 billion fund of quick implementation was agreed, which would rise to \$100 billion from 2020

The funding issue is a complicated one. The initial supposed mechanism of quick implementation, which was dealt with in Copenhagen, has not been observed by most of the countries. It is true there were many commitments, few allocations and much lesser amount of disbursements. There is a lack of credibility. And talking about \$100.000 million per year from 2020 is too little and arrives too late. Who says that climate change starts in 2020, when there are countries in Asia, Small Caribbean Island States, regions in Central America that are enduring the consequences of climate change year after year right now? Those countries require a compensation to face the needs of adaptation right away.

Let's stay in this region. What can Latin American countries do to favour an agreement in Paris?

It is just what I said. They have to maintain that there shall not be any agreement if no means of implementation are included. We can be committed to significant reductions, we can be committed to energy efficiency measures, but only if we have the funding, technical assistance and training. It is a logical argument, don't you think?

The logical procedure is to think that in the case there is no agreement, the most adversely affected will be those countries that don't have the knowledge and the financial resources to face climate change effects. Don't you agree with the fact that Developed countries don't need the assistance of Developing countries to proceed to an energetic transformation or to adapt to climate change?

Indeed they could do it by themselves if they wished to. But, we are talking about political will. If we say there won't be an agreement and you don't show political will, there won't be an agreement. However, if (the Developed countries) agree on a true negotiation by defining the reductions, emergency measures and means of implementation, we can come to an agreement, start working and try to reverse the progress of global climate change, which is alarming. Because it is certain that the aim of 2°C is already lost in this cycle. The International Energy Agency speaks of 3.5 to 6°C. The World Bank published a very interesting study in November 2012 namely "We can and must avoid a world of 4°C" and points out the great damages that humanity would have to face if temperature increase 4°C in this century. This is what is at stake; this is what we have to avoid.

You were talking about the Developing countries as a compact unit, but actually there isn't a common opinion even within Latin America, am I wrong?

Our group is G77 plus China. Latin America, Asia, Africa and Oceania: this group agrees on a common position within the United Nations.

The G77 didn't act as a group in Copenhagen, it was split.

We have to work so that it doesn't happen again in Lima, and above all in Paris.

How?

Working on a better appreciation on the consequences our countries would have to face if we didn't do anything. There is a group inside the G77 who is working to increase the level of consciousness.

What is the commitment that Nicaragua has adopted in relation to climate change?

Our commitment is to attain a strong agreement. We advocate for 1°C and come back to the levels before the industrialisation so that the impacts are reduced, but this idea didn't work because that would imply that countries would have to use renewable energies really fast, which is what we are doing. Nicaragua was using 25% in 2007 and it increased to 51% of renewable energy usage in 2013. We are proving that this can be reached when there is political will. Our intention is to come to 90% of renewable energy usage.

Is that a consistent commitment or a voluntary one?

It is a consistent voluntary commitment. It's a commitment that is already working at the level of agreements among the hydroelectric power stations, as a consequence of an agreement with the Brazilian Development Bank. The signed contracts speak of a combination of thermal energy, wind power, biofuels and solar energy, and that will take us to 90% of renewable energy usage. That's not a plan, it's a portfolio.

As we are in the headquarters of the EU-LAC Foundation, we ought to ask you: in which way could the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean add up more consensuses in the count-down before Paris 2015?

To come to an agreement between EU and Latin America?

Do you think it is impossible?

It is perhaps possible in relation to the means of implementation and then we would have to wait for the "umbrella group" formed by the US, Canada, New Zealand and Japan, to accept this position too. That would be a strategy.

Are you optimistic about the appointment in Paris?

I think it is too early to answer this question. First, we need to see what happens in Lima and see if there has been a progress in the direction we expect. I think the strategy you imply by which agreements would be adopted in parts, might be pretty interesting, providing an agreement is attained at all.

What do you mean?

The first two groups must attain an agreement, and then start negotiating with the other groups and try to unify them.

Any strategy is valid if we want to prevent Paris from turning into a disaster. Looking back, don't you think it is a mistake to sacrifice any opportunities of an agreement because of semantic or procedure problems? I ask you this, because Nicaragua was part, together with Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia and Sudan, of those countries who most opposed the measures in Copenhagen.

No, it wasn't a mistake. That agreement, completely voluntary in relation to reduction of emission commitments and funding, was a failure. Our target was neither to terminate the process of negotiation nor to impose a parallel agreement with no negotiation, without the participation of developing countries, our countries. That's not how a multilateral process works. The fact that a group of developing countries prevented the imposition of an arbitrary agreement on the part of powerful countries seems to me very positive. The multilateral process must be respected, and we need to go out from the impositions that have transformed the parties' conferences and start negotiating through consensus.

The appointment in New York coincided with massive demonstrations for specific actions against climate change, from the Patagonia to New York, passing by Brussels and Madrid. How could these mobilisations be managed?

Social mobilisations are necessary. I even think that there should be more mobilisations. I think society need to rise up through the great social movements against climate change, because that's going to be translated into pressure upon the politicians all around the world. In many countries, politicians have adopted the position of political stalemate, and that cannot be permitted. Social pressure is good for preventing climate change. Extreme climate phenomena and the disasters caused by these phenomena, namely floods, draught, typhoons, hurricanes, can affect the global food management.

If in Paris, a global agreement against climate change is not attained, it is possible that more demonstrations will arise, but this time expressing frustration and discomfort.

True. That is why we are going to fight for an agreement in Paris. It's much necessary.