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Hopes dim ahead of Copenhagen talks

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World Vision CEO Reverend Tim Costello says no-one knows what a politically binding agreement means. (AAP Image: Jon Reid)

Expectations for Copenhagen's climate change summit are being wound down.

Britain's climate change secretary Ed Miliband says the Copenhagen climate summit will not produce a legally binding treaty.

That statement will not please African nations, which have already staged a walkout in the lead-up to the conference in Barcelona.

African nations are upset that industrialised nations, like Australia, are too timid with their reduction targets for greenhouse gas emissions.

Now it looks likely that Copenhagen will come up with only political, not legally binding targets.

World Vision CEO Reverend Tim Costello has been at the Barcelona conference and he says despite the walk-out, there is common ground.

"There's no developed nations here, including Australia, saying Africa's wrong," he said.

"The moral claim, which is very powerful, is it's already costing lives in Africa and it's costing livelihoods and if we don't get agreements from developed countries as to the cuts on the table, as Copenhagen anticipated, it will cost more lives.

"There's not a nation here that doesn't agree with the moral imperative with how utterly important this is. They just say, as Australia does, 'look, we've got to win elections, there's blue-collar jobs at stake in marginal swing electorates, just really difficult. You're absolutely right about the moral claim costing lives and its importance but just too difficult at the moment', that's the message."

Mr Costello says no-one knows what a politically binding agreement means.

"Political accountability, political binding still is good and we can write in amendments or a legally binding treaty in six, maybe 12 months," he said.

"It's hosing down disappointment to keep it alive but the truth is that at Copenhagen we were to get to this point of a binding agreement, thus the terrible disappointment and why the least developed countries have a right to feel let down.

"I might say their arguments are really in Australia's interests. Our scientists and the (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) say Australia, of all western nations, is the most impacted by climate change so the Australian interest may be at odds even with our Australian Government push at the moment.

"The world has to get an agreement. We cannot afford to allow sterile rationality and national self-interest torpedo what is essential for global justice."



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Expectations lowering for Copenhagen summit

Tony Eastley reported this story on [Friday, November 6, 2009](#) 08:12:00

<http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2009/s2734833.htm>

TONY EASTLEY: Expectations for Copenhagen's climate change summit are being wound down. Britain's climate change secretary Ed Miliband says the Copenhagen climate summit will not produce a legally binding treaty.

That statement won't please African nations which have already staged a walkout in the lead-up conference being held in Barcelona. African nations are already upset that industrialised nations like Australia are too timid with their reduction targets.

Now it looks likely that Copenhagen will come up with only politically binding target.

The CEO of World Vision Reverend Tim Costello has been at the Barcelona conference.

Tim Costello the walkout by the African nations highlighted some of the differences. Was there common ground though?

TIM COSTELLO: There is common ground. There's no developed nations here including Australia saying Africa is wrong. The moral claim which is very powerful is it's already costing lives in Africa and it's costing livelihoods and if we don't get agreements from developed countries as to the cuts on the table as Copenhagen anticipated, it will cost more lives.

There's not a nation here that doesn't agree with the moral imperative, with how utterly important this is. They just say, as Australia does, look, we've got to win elections, there's blue collar jobs at stake in marginal swing electorates, just really difficult. You're absolutely right about the moral claim costing lives and its importance but just too difficult at the moment. That's the message.

TONY EASTLEY: Is a politically binding agreement good enough?

TIM COSTELLO: No, no-one here knows what a politically binding agreement means...

TONY EASTLEY: Because that's what a lot of industrialised countries are talking about isn't it?

TIM COSTELLO: Yeah look it's a lowering of expectations to say as Yvo de Boer said, political accountability, political binding still is good and we can write in amendments or a legally binding treaty in six maybe 12 months.

It's hosing down disappointment to keep it alive, but the truth is that at Copenhagen we were to get to this point of a binding agreement, thus the terrible disappointment and why the least developed countries have a right to feel let down.

And I might say their arguments are really in Australia's interests. Our scientists and the IPCC say Australia of all western nations is the most impacted by climate change. So the Australian interest may be at odds even with our Australian Government push at the moment.

TONY EASTLEY: The case is with a political binding agreement, I suppose it's better than none at all and then you can work on the legal framework to support it eventually.

TIM COSTELLO: And that's what Africans and the least developed countries, the G77 and China have all had to accept. The world has to get an agreement. We cannot afford to allow sterile rationality and national self-interest torpedo what is essential for global justice.

TONY EASTLEY: Reverend Tim Costello, thanks for joining us this morning on AM.

Disease, malnutrition and depression set to rise with climate change - WHO

03 Nov 2009 16:33:00 GMT

Written by: Laurie Goering



A mother administers oral medicine to her child, suffering from diarrhoea, at the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease & Research in Dhaka, Bangladesh, earlier this year. REUTERS/Andrew Biraj

BARCELONA (AlertNet) - Health problems ranging from heat stroke to malnutrition to depression are set to worsen around the world as climate change takes hold, international health officials warned on Tuesday.

More money and better coordination of information will be needed to help governments and health workers ward off the worst threats and cope with a heavier burden of illness, they said.

"We will be on the front line and we will need enough resources to deal with that," said Roberto Bertollini, a doctor and coordinator of public health and the environment for the World Health Organisation.

He warned that climate change could boost the incidence of heat-related diseases including diarrhoea and salmonella, expand the range of mosquitoes that carry dengue fever and malaria and exacerbate shortages of food and clean water. It could also increase stress, depression and displacement as families suffer through more extreme weather, including storms, floods and droughts.

Studies suggest there may even be a few new threats, such as nutritional deficiencies arising when communities switch from traditional staple foods to growing new crops better suited to tolerate drought or flooding.

"Climate change is the biggest global health threat of the 21st Century," *Lancet*, a leading medical journal, said in a May report.

International negotiators are working in Barcelona this week to prepare a new global climate change pact designed to be adopted at a key climate gathering in Copenhagen in December. However, delays in the process and a lack of firm commitments to greenhouse gas reductions by key emitting countries, particularly the United States, mean a deal now may not be finalised until next year, analysts say.

RISE IN WEATHER-RELATED DISASTERS

Health issues so far have not played a major part in the negotiations, which worries international health officials. The talks have, however, focused on creating a multi-billion-dollar fund to help poorer nations adapt to the effects of climate change.

Today, weather-related disasters kill over 60,000 people a year, and poor nutrition kills another 3.5 million, Bertollini said. Those numbers are likely to rise in the face of climate change, he and others said.

Hospital admissions for diarrhoea in Peru, for instance, have already been shown to rise 8 percent for each additional degree of temperature rise in hot periods, Bertollini said.

Some of the biggest drivers of increased health problems will be variations in water availability, more extreme weather and changes in the distribution of diseases carried by pests like mosquitoes, said Bhupinder Tomar, a senior disaster preparedness officer with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

The federation, which has been looking for answers to the growing problems in the 40 countries where it piloted a preparedness for climate change programme, believes better forecasting and warning systems, combined with better information-sharing by agencies, could help ease expected hikes in diseases.

Often, government weather agencies have accurate long-term forecasts of droughts which aren't necessarily turned into warnings for farmers, he said. Similarly, health agencies often fail to get useful health surveillance data out of their computers and into the hands of policy makers, public or private.

"Partnership is the missing link, in our experience," Tomar said. "Often the solutions exist right there."

Governments preparing for climate change could also get substantial health payoffs by improving early warning systems for weather and health threats, focusing on improving food production yields, adapting pest-control programmes and putting in place regulations to prevent the international spread of diseases, Bertollini said.

France, for instance, developed a heat wave warning system for its large cities following more than 14,000 deaths during a period of intense heat in the summer of 2003. Similar temperatures in recent years have produced far fewer deaths.

But for now, in most places, "the distance between commitment (to moving on these issues) and action is still pretty broad," Bertollini said.

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