

Emission possible

Romana Jordan Cizelj has high hopes that the EU can return from the Cancún climate change talks with a positive result

The last time I wrote for the Parliament Magazine, I remember I wanted to accentuate the few positives from the Copenhagen climate conference. Half a year later, many things have changed but not my optimism or my determination regarding the European Union making the right strategy to mitigate the man-made causes of global climate change. So as we approach COP16 in Cancún, Mexico I hope for pragmatism over expectation and a belief in the possible.

In the EU, we have around double the US population but four times as many presidents. So, when we speak on the world stage, there is no doubt that we should be heard. But the message must be as if from a single voice.

I'm always saddened to hear that the economic crisis reduces our ability to do what we must to decarbonise our energy and transport activities. It simply is not true to say that. So long as we keep climate change issues as our priority, we can develop our biodiversity, benefit from competitive and almost zero carbon technologies that make better use of our natural resources to provide real sustainable growth and real new green jobs. The danger is to lose sight of our climate goals for the sake of our economic ones. To ensure that we do not do that, there must be an economic climate that incentivises clean energy investment.

So far, forsaking our climate goals has not become a reality and we must enter the next climate conference banging the climate drum louder than the economic recession sirens. This is not just optimism – it is realism. Moving from COP15 in Denmark to COP16 in Mexico, I sense less blind expectation and more pragmatic realism. The awful environmental disaster in the Gulf of Mexico should serve to highlight the necessity to stop going deeper and riskier when pursuing our traditional fossil fuels. Low carbon energy is what the climate needs, what the people increasingly demand and without which economic recovery cannot be sustained. Note that I say low carbon and not just renewables, so that puts wind, solar, biomass, nuclear and all the other clean energies within the same balanced energy mix.

Only if we learn our lessons from COP15 can we influ-



“We must enter the next climate conference banging the climate drum louder than the economic recession sirens”

ence COP16. I believe in our ability to do that. The EU is less idealist – we know we cannot save the planet without the support of all other major, and most of the minor, players. We must stay with the 20 per cent goals because, currently, they are both realistic and can encourage the others to adopt the same.

Assigning blame to the COP15 failures is irrelevant – what matters is global responsibility for the success of COP16. Of course past promises must be kept, especially those related to financing our low carbon and bio-diversified projects. EU Climate action commissioner Connie Hedegaard is committed to fast finance in this respect and the EU must deliver on that promise. Technology and finance are part of the solution, but so too is diplomacy. Russia, Japan, Canada and Brazil have all set their targets and together we must encourage the other economies to do the same.

Finally the EU must retake the initiative – and I know we can. Finding a global agreement is one aspect of the deal, but the second commitment period is upon us and maybe it is our last chance to speak in a single, strong and reasoned voice. ★

Romana Jordan Cizelj is a member of parliament's industry, research and energy committee