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The workshop 2 focused yesterday on the challenges related to energy, climate change and environment. It was chaired by Professor Richard Cooper and was opened by a recorded speech from the French Minister of Foreign Affairs Laurent Fabius calling for a global action from all the actors to fight climate change and for the urgent need to adopt a global agreement on climate change in Paris in 2015.

The dynamics of the global energy system are changing, of course China is today the main engine for global energy demand growth, but tomorrow India, Southeast Asia, Middle East, Africa and Latin America will take over. Asia is today at the heart of the energy and environmental challenges. If Asia fails to effectively address these challenges, it will become the world main concern on the long term. It will also be the world saviour if it succeeds.

Asia could become the world main concern because the effects of climate change are devastating. It was shown yesterday that climate change has indeed a negative impact on food security and water availability and leads to increase infectious diseases. Health risks are also increased with natural disasters and with human displacements. There are also a growing number of viruses and vectors all around the world, with the main channel of propagation related to deforestation. Climate change is also expected to increase concentration of air pollutants. Air pollution has been identified as one of the main key risk factors for health in China.

All these facts clearly emphasise the crucial need for adaptation and mitigation strategies.

There were however some good news brought during this workshop. There is a clear shift today in the way energy companies are addressing the climate change issue. Companies are taking initiatives to reduce gas flaring, to improve energy efficiency and the accessibility of all to energy. An initiative launched by Christophe de Margerie last year gathering major oil and gas companies opens the door to a new kind of cooperation between national oil companies and international oil companies to work collaboratively and share best practices and technical solutions to address climate change and sustainable energy.

So there are some changes in our energy system, but this transformation is not strong and fast enough to achieve the 2°C target. CO₂ emissions are still rising. To achieve this target, we need a very strong signal from Paris in 2015. The recent agreement between the US and China on climate change did send a powerful message, but there is a need for a wider policy sharing and coordination and for a broader dissemination of innovative technologies.

To overcome the energy and environmental challenges, a stronger focus should be put on improving energy efficiency, expanding widely smart grids and renewable energy, developing electric vehicles, but also reducing subsidies to fossil fuels. The workshop also raised the role of natural gas, which is considered to be the least pollutant fossil fuel, but is it the right answer on the long term? Most participants considered that natural gas should be seen as a bridge solution, as a base load capacity to support the development of renewable energy, until long term solutions are widely deployed such as carbon capture sequestration.

It was also highlighted yesterday that the fight towards climate change should be addressed together with the growing global energy demand, with the need to provide cheap and available energy. It was observed that countries such as India should be provided the opportunity to grow.

In this context, the expectations for the COP21 in Paris are high, but multilateral negotiations have proven to be a difficult exercise in the UN institutions, and were often dominated by geopolitical and economic concerns. Some participants considered that the Paris conference could be a successful diplomacy, but there is a risk that it may not reflect a meaningful agreement.



Participants considered that, to be successful, the agreement in Paris should be related to the sustainable development goals. There was also a consensus on the fact that the debate on climate change should be shifted from quantitative targets to actions, such as the implementation of the adequate financing tools. Participants also called for a joint global effort to implement carbon pricing mechanisms in order to reduce carbon emissions.

To be successful, the fight towards climate change should reflect local, regional and global alliances, including private sector and civil society, and should be driven by a strong and sustainable political will.