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Hope for the best, prepare for the worst! What next with American climate finance?

CLIMATE CHANGE The recent elections have had a sobering effect on expectations regarding US federal actions on climate change, although true to form, President-elect Trump seems to be changing positions on the hoof as he trots along.



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While some disastrous scenarios on what Mr Trump might do have been mooted in the press since election day, there has also been some cautious optimism that not all will be lost because a lot of the action to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions is mandated by State governments. California, for example, recently adopted the same mitigation target as the European Union, which by American standards is very impressive indeed, and Governor Jerry Brown made clear in the wake of the elections that the State would continue to confront the existential threat of climate change.

While extremely crucial, mitigation is not all there is to the global response to climate change, nor all of the Paris Agreement. The provision of financial support by the better off for combating climate change and its adverse effects in the poorest and most vulnerable countries is also key. Indeed, many developing countries have joined the Paris Agreement with the explicit understanding that their pledges both with respect to limiting their greenhouse gas emissions and making their economies more resilient to climate impacts, depend on international financial support.

The problem with US federal support in this context is two-fold. For one, it has for some time been, and would have continued to be even under a Clinton Presidency, extremely difficult to appropriate federal money for climate action, let alone climate action abroad, and for that matter multilateral climate funds. The Obama Administration has pledged and signed -- "subject to the availability of funds" -- \$3billion (roughly one-third of the total) to the UN Green Climate Fund for the initial resource mobilization period from 2015 to 2018. To date, only 1/6 of this has been disbursed, and even that under considerable push-back from Capitol Hill, because it did not go through Congressional appropriation. Even if Mr Trump changes his mind on the need to reduce greenhouse gasses, it is most unlikely that he would be willing or able to expend the sort of political capital to overcome this opposition.

However, unlike in the case of mitigation, there is currently no reason for "cautious optimism that not all will be lost" in this context. Public sector international climate

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Public debate on climate change needs to get louder if we are to head off the threat it poses, says Professor Jim Hall, Director of the Environmental Change Institute.



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Amongst the many shocks and surprises this year in the world of politics, there has been a quiet but important strengthening of global momentum to tackle climate change.

Developed Countries Fund (LDCF), from State governments to fall back on. And while it may be other developed countries could step into the breach and make up at least partially for an American shortfall, having no American support at all would send an extremely unhelpful signal to the signatories of the Paris Agreement in general and developing countries in particular.

As Quebec demonstrated in Paris by donating \$5million to the LDCF, the good news is that (North American) sub-nationals can also step into the breach. Indeed it has been argued that the best way forward would be through a collaborative effort by socially responsible Canadian Provinces and American States setting aside a small share of proceeds from emission trading schemes or carbon taxes for, say, the LDCF. When thanking the Quebec people in Paris for this contribution, Al Gore said that they were "becoming true heroes in the world's effort to solve the climate crisis" and setting an example that would reverberate to regions and countries around the world.

The Bernie Sanders phenomenon in the recent elections has demonstrated that a significant number of Americans are not isolationists wishing to build walls to be paid for by others, but have a social conscience that goes beyond their front porch. They now must stand up and be counted, not just to follow Bernie in his demand for an energy system transformation, but also to insist that their State governments do the decent thing and show solidarity with the poorest and most vulnerable countries in the world in their struggle to fight climate change and its adverse impacts.

It is crucial that California and other willing States continue with their valiant mitigation efforts, but with the recent election, the sub-national mantle of being a climate champion has become more onerous, requiring financial solidarity in addition to progressive mitigation action. If the federal authorities abrogate their responsibility, the States have the moral duty to step in and make good as best they can.

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