Orchestra of Treaties: A Future Climate Regime Scenario with Multiple Treaties among Like-minded Countries

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Abstract. The Orchestra of Treaties scenario emerges if countries share the following principles for re-building the climate regime: (1) recognize the sovereignty concerns attending energy policies; (2) build upon national interests in technology and development; (3) avoid conflicts and enhance cooperation by appropriately framing core issues; and (4) address not only short-term emission cuts but also long-term technological change. In this scenario, countries will share these principles by drawing on the hard lessons of past UNFCCC negotiations. The framing of the climate change problem as the allocation of emission quota created an adversarial style of negotiation that resulted in distrust among countries. Moreover, the negotiations have been characterized by unpredictable outcomes. Since energy policies were deemed as sovereignty concerns, countries did not want to put such issues on the agenda to avoid a potentially intrusive outcome. This negotiation style brought about shortcomings of the Kyoto Protocol and may lead to a stalemate in future negotiations.

The scenario captures the dynamics that emerge when multiple efforts are pursued by flexible coordination of actors motivated through diverse incentives. The emerging regime, the Orchestra of Treaties, will consist of four building blocks, of which three grow outside of UNFCCC.

(1) Group of Emission Markets (GEM) begins with separate domestic markets without internationally imposed emission targets. The markets are then gradually coordinated through price signals. The advantage of this pathway is that it fosters the establishment of emission markets without conflicting with sovereignty concerns for energy policy, thereby enabling key large emitters to establish emission markets.

(2) Zero Emission Technology Treaty (ZETT) that addresses long-term technological change. This will set zero CO₂ emission from the energy sector as the long-term goal, thereby creating strong signals to stakeholders. It will begin as a non-binding pledge and review system so that it does not conflict with sovereignty concerns.

(3) Climate-wise Development Treaty (CDT) that addresses the concerns of developing countries, which are development, adaptation, technological transfer and mitigation. In this treaty, developed countries agree to revise their assistance policies to make development more sustainable and climate-wise.

(4) UNFCCC will serve as an information exchange arena, target funding mechanism and a political focal point.
If the political interests and views remain diverse across countries, the Orchestra of Treaties may be the most environmentally effective regime among the alternatives. As for the evolution over time, once the technological and political feasibility of some climate policies have been demonstrated by key developed countries, all countries will be confident enough to deepen their commitments in the wider issue area. They might eventually return to a Kyoto-type structure with full participation once confidence has been built, but this may take decades.

Concerns frequently voiced about this scenario include that the regime may impose additional negotiating burden upon developing countries, or that a departure from a Kyoto style framework may end up with losing political momentum.

Key words: climate policy, like-minded countries, post-2012, scenarios, technology treaty


1. Introduction

The Orchestra of Treaties scenario captures the dynamics that emerge when multiple efforts are pursued by flexibly coordinated actors that are motivated by diverse incentives.

The structure of the paper is as follows. The key feature of regime under this scenario is described in Section 2. Section 3 covers how the regime may emerge, including the guiding principles of the regime, the rationale for each of the building blocks, and how the current situation could evolve toward the regime. Section 4 analyses the environmental effectiveness of the regime and presents the results of a quantitative modeling exercise.

2. What Will the Regime Look Like?

The regime in this scenario consists of four building blocks. Three blocks grow outside the UNFCCC, including a Group of Emissions Markets (GEM), a Zero Emission Technology Treaty (ZETT), and a Climate-wise Development Treaty (CDT). The other block includes protocols for emissions monitoring and information exchange, along with targeted funding mechanisms, all of which grow within the UNFCCC. An overview is given in Box I.