

Opinions and assessments of the results of December's climate negotiations in Bali vary according to the level of expectation. For Brazil, the outcome of the 13th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, was less than the seriousness of the problem requires but, undoubtedly, significant progress was achieved and this should not be underestimated. Bali reinforced the understanding that — in spite of their different interests, needs, circumstances and priorities — all nations must contribute to solving such a serious problem as climate change. There is still no better alternative to the multilateral system for consolidating this collective effort, even though its capacity to provide appropriate responses to global problems leaves room for doubt.

The international community's expectations for Bali were raised substantially in a year which had climate change at centre of the global agenda. For international institutions, governments and citizens, the reality emerging from the data published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is unequivocal, visible to the naked eye and leading to the almost unanimous conclusion that urgency, responsibility and commitment are required. The issue has now most definitely left the desks of scientists and negotiators to permeate the concerns of whole sectors of society; these are now not only better informed, but better trained to intervene and propose alternatives to join the wide array of policies and technical solutions to address the problem.

For developing countries, the Bali conference was an excellent opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to participating in global efforts to combat climate change. This helped deflate the arguments of some developed countries which — when called upon to shoulder their own responsibilities — protected themselves by pointing a finger at nations that historically have contributed little to the problem. Brazil vigorously defended the concept in Bali that developing countries, recognizing that they are part of the problem, should show the world that — within their specific circumstances — they are also part of the solution.

The oft repeated principle of common but differentiated responsibilities should not be used to hide or evade obligations. Brazil's actions over climate change concentrated on its common responsibility — towards its own population and that of the world - -rather than on the unacceptable position of waiting for developed nations, the ones most responsible for the situation, first to do their part. We therefore supported the Bali decision that developing countries should adopt suitable mitigation actions — through programs and policies to reduce emissions — that are measurable, reportable and verifiable. This historic decision, for the first time, very clearly translates the provisions of the Convention that establish the common responsibilities of all countries.

It must be said, however, that this was not easily accepted by developing countries. When invited to take part in solving a problem to which, historically, they have barely contributed, several pointed to the inconsistency of the developed countries, which not only have done little at home, but have failed to meet their international commitments to support developing countries — through financial resources and technology transfer — in pursuing socially, environmentally and economically sound development models. For the world's poorest nations, the ones certainly that will be most affected by the perverse effects of climate change, this is not an acceptable form of leadership.

Despite being very controversial, the developing countries' acceptance of language that made their commitments to the Convention very clear neutralized the reactive attitude of developed ones who still resisted their own role. Although a timid and unambitious text, the decision approved by the Bali Conference led to a consensus that represents a significant result: it opens the doors to a new round of negotiations, which will finally be based on the perspective that all countries are part of the solution.



# climate community

by Mari

Brazil's Environment Minister Marina Silva was named a UNEP Champion of the Earth in 2007. The award is given annually to seven outstanding environmental leaders who have significantly influenced the protection and sustainable management of the planet's environment.

Each issue of Our Planet features the views of one of UNEP's Champions. For more information on the UNEP Champions of the Earth award see <http://www.unep.org/champions/>.



# Year Commitment Marina Silva

The period that now begins — when we are all invited to implement the Bali Plan of Action — must be marked by a responsibility in keeping with the urgency and commitment that the problem demands. Developed and developing countries recognize their responsibilities, but there will need to be equality in the negotiations now starting. There is no way to pare down the rich countries' enormous and incomparable responsibility over climate change: it cannot be divided with the other nations of the planet.

If we seek equality in solving the problem, this will take place at the moment when the more developed countries adopt — with due haste, and in a mandatory and binding way — the non-transferable measures they owe the planet. Developing countries also have commitments, but they are of another kind and depend on assistance if they are to be accomplished without compromising the basic, and ethical, need to provide goods and services — such as food and energy — to millions of people that lack them.

What is at stake is the conceptual and practical construction of this equality. Brazil has much to say. We are in favour of developing countries participating more in the global efforts to mitigate climate change: this strengthens the sense of commitment to policies and measures that lead to effective and concrete results. In practice we have undertaken an intensive series of domestic actions in the last three years that have resulted in an accumulated reduction of about 60 per cent in our rates of deforestation, our largest source of emissions. We have also made continuous efforts to control and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in other sectors: over the past five years, Brazil's energy based emissions have grown less than GDP, showing that it is possible to promote growth without increasing emissions at the same rate.

Brazil also starts the new year in the light of an unprecedented decision in Bali that establishes the basic guidelines for encouraging action to reduce emissions arising from deforestation. At the conference we presented the elements of a National Demonstrative Project for Incentives for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation. This proposes creating a voluntary investment fund to combat deforestation and promote forest conservation based on resources provided by countries, businesses and institutions proportionate to the reduction in emissions. The Project, which will start in 2008, developed the idea of positive incentives for reducing emissions from deforestation, using the Amazon as an example.

The idea is that Brazil could provide recognition to interested donors based on a scientifically proven monitoring system and a fund to administer their contributions to emissions reductions. These resources would be managed by a steering committee made up of federal and state governments, academia, the business sector, NGOs and social movements.

This is just one example of the opportunities provided by the Convention to reduce emissions without compromising national strategies, priorities and demands. Discussions over the next two years should include the paths that international society must follow to deal adequately with one of the planet's greatest threats. It is, therefore, essential that all nations realise that solving the climate change problem implies, first and foremost, meeting the needs of the Earth, of its ecosystems and of its most vulnerable citizens. Economic growth and maintaining consumption patterns cannot be seen as the only way of meeting humanity's needs. Incentives are required to change development models - but so are policies, options and decisions based on doing what is right. And this necessarily implies some kind of surrender and sacrifice, both national and personal. 