

Climate Change and Technology Transfer: Domestic Innovation, International Aid and Collaboration

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Climate change is an essential issue that the global community is addressing together. The rapid development and global diffusion of clean technologies (i.e., technologies necessary for adapting to or mitigating climate change) is regarded as a key solution.

Yet, a stalemate has been persisting in the recent rounds of global climate change negotiations at the United Nations, caused partially by diverging views regarding the role of intellectual property rights (“IPR”) in the development and diffusion of clean technologies. The developed nations insist on strong IPR for clean technologies, while the developing nations, charging IPR to be a major barrier for international transfer of clean technologies, asks for no or weakened IPR for clean technologies.

Hence, this paper takes on the exploration of two questions: 1) Is IPR a major barrier for international transfer of clean technologies, and 2) why has international transfer of clean technologies to the developing nations been limited? Analyzing empirical data available regarding clean technologies and reviewing existing scholarship on international technology transfer, this paper concludes that IPR likely is not a major barrier to international transfer of clean technologies, and that successful international transfer of clean technologies needs certain prerequisites.

To set up such prerequisites and to continue advancing the effort of addressing climate change via the development and deployment of clean technologies, this paper explores an alternative model. This model emphasizes domestic innovation, international aid and international technology collaboration, instead of international transfer of clean technologies.