

THIRTEENTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UN FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND THIRD MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE KYOTO PROTOCOL: 3-14 DECEMBER 2007

The “United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali” begins today and will continue until 14 December. The event includes the thirteenth Conference of the Parties (COP 13) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and third Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (COP/MOP 3). In addition, the twenty-seventh sessions of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI 27) and Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA 27) will be held, as well as the resumed fourth session of the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG 4). A joint COP and COP/MOP high-level segment will take place from 12-14 December.

Delegates will deliberate on a wide range of topics and agenda items, with a major focus being post-2012, when the Kyoto Protocol’s first commitment period expires. In particular, delegates will seek to agree on a negotiating process to finalize a post-2012 regime. Other issues that will be taken up include the Kyoto Protocol’s flexible mechanisms, reducing emissions from deforestation in developing countries, technology transfer, financial issues, and issues relating to adaptation, including the Adaptation Fund.

A large number of “side events,” “parallel events” and other meetings organized by various stakeholders will also take place on the margins of the official UN negotiations.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNFCCC AND KYOTO PROTOCOL

Climate change is considered one of the most serious threats to sustainable development, with adverse impacts expected on the environment, human health, food security, economic activity, natural resources and physical infrastructure. Scientists agree that rising concentrations of anthropogenically-produced greenhouse gases in the Earth’s atmosphere are leading to changes in the climate. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the effects of climate change have already been observed, and scientific findings indicate that precautionary and prompt action is necessary.

The international political response to climate change began with the adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992. The UNFCCC sets out a framework for action aimed at stabilizing atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases to avoid “dangerous anthropogenic interference” with the climate system. Controlled gases include methane, nitrous oxide and, in particular, carbon dioxide. The UNFCCC entered into force on 21 March 1994, and now has 192 parties.

KYOTO PROTOCOL: In December 1997, delegates at COP 3 in Kyoto, Japan, agreed to a Protocol to the UNFCCC that commits developed countries and countries in transition to a market economy to achieve quantified emission reduction targets. These countries, known under the UNFCCC as Annex I parties, agreed to reduce their overall emissions of six greenhouse gases by an average of 5.2% below 1990 levels between 2008-2012 (the first commitment period), with specific targets varying from country to country. The Protocol also established three flexible mechanisms to assist Annex I parties in meeting their national targets cost-effectively: an emissions trading system; joint implementation (JI) of emission reduction projects between Annex I parties; and the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), which allows for emission reduction projects to be implemented in non-Annex I parties (developing countries). Following COP 3, parties began negotiating many of the rules and operational details governing how countries will implement and measure their emission reductions. To date, the Kyoto Protocol has 176 parties, including Annex I parties representing 61.6% of Annex I greenhouse gas emissions in 1990. The Kyoto Protocol entered into force on 16 February 2005.

BUENOS AIRES PLAN OF ACTION: In November 1998, COP 4 agreed on the process for finalizing the rules and operational details of the Protocol in a document known as the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA). The BAPA set COP 6 as the deadline for finalizing these details and strengthening implementation of the UNFCCC. In November 2000, parties met at COP 6 in The Hague, the Netherlands, to complete these negotiations. They were not successful, and COP 6 was suspended until July 2001 when it reconvened in Bonn, Germany. After further talks, parties adopted the Bonn Agreements, a decision that provided high-level political direction on the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol. But delegates were still unable to finalize text on some issues, and agreed to forward all the draft decisions to COP 7 for final resolution.

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MARRAKESH ACCORDS: In November 2001 at COP 7 in Marrakesh, Morocco, delegates reached agreement on the outstanding matters in the Marrakesh Accords. These Accords consisted of a package of draft decisions on many of the details of the Kyoto Protocol, including the flexible mechanisms, reporting and methodologies, land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF), and compliance. The Marrakesh Accords also addressed issues such as capacity building, technology transfer, responding to the adverse effects of climate change, and the establishment of three funds: the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Fund, Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF), and Adaptation Fund.

Delegates built on the Marrakesh Accords at COP 8 and COP 9, elaborating on various technical rules and procedures. At COP 10 parties also agreed on two new agenda items focused on adaptation and mitigation, and began informal negotiations on the complex and sensitive issue of how parties might engage on commitments to combat climate change in the post-2012 period.

COP 11 AND COP/MOP 1: COP 11 and COP/MOP 1 took place in Montreal, Canada, from 28 November to 10 December 2005. COP/MOP 1 took decisions on the outstanding operational details of the Kyoto Protocol, and formally adopted the Marrakesh Accords.

The meetings also engaged in negotiations on longer-term international cooperation on climate change. COP/MOP 1 addressed possible processes to discuss post-2012 commitments and decided to establish a new subsidiary body, the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I parties under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG).

After lengthy negotiations, COP 11 agreed to consider long-term cooperation also under the UNFCCC "without prejudice to any future negotiations, commitments, process, framework or mandate under the Convention." This would take place through a series of four workshops constituting a "Dialogue" on the matter through to COP 13.

AWG AND CONVENTION DIALOGUE: Since COP 11 and COP/MOP 1, post-2012 arrangements have been discussed in a series of meetings. The AWG and Convention Dialogue have convened four times, at SB 24 (Bonn, Germany, May 2006); COP 12 and COP/MOP 2 (Nairobi, Kenya, November 2006); SB 26 (Bonn, May 2007); and the "Vienna Climate Change Talks" (Vienna, Austria, August 2007).

The AWG began by considering the focus of its future work. At its second session in November 2006, the AWG agreed on a work programme focusing on the following three areas: mitigation potentials and ranges of emission reductions; possible means to achieve mitigation objectives; and consideration of further commitments by Annex I parties. At its third session in May 2007, the AWG adopted conclusions on the analysis of mitigation potentials and agreed to develop a timetable to complete its work so as to avoid a gap between the first and second commitment periods. The fourth session of the AWG started in Vienna in August 2007 and will resume in Bali. Delegates focused on mitigation potentials and possible ranges of emission reductions for Annex I parties. The AWG adopted conclusions referring to some key findings by Working Group III of the IPCC, including that global greenhouse gas emissions need to peak in the next ten to fifteen years and then be reduced to well below half of 2000 levels by the middle of the 21st century in order to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at the lowest levels assessed by the IPCC. The AWG's conclusions also recognize that to achieve the lowest stabilization level, Annex I parties as a group would be required to reduce emissions by a range of 25-40% below 1990 levels by 2020.

The Convention Dialogue workshops began with an initial exchange of views on the four thematic areas identified at COP 11: advancing development goals in a sustainable way;

addressing action on adaptation; realizing the full potential of technology; and realizing the full potential of market-based opportunities. The second and third workshops involved exchanges of views on the four areas, while the fourth focused on bringing together ideas from the previous workshops and addressing overarching and cross-cutting issues, including financing. The final two workshops also considered the next steps after the Dialogue's four scheduled meetings had come to an end. The Dialogue's co-facilitators will present their report on the entire workshop series to COP 13 in Bali.

As well as the AWG and Convention Dialogue, recent UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol meetings have also addressed long-term issues in other settings, including a first review of the Protocol required under Article 9, and a proposal by the Russian Federation on "voluntary commitments."

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

UN HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON CLIMATE CHANGE: On 24 September 2007, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon held a high-level meeting on climate change in New York. The event, which followed an earlier UN General Assembly "informal thematic debate" in late July and early August, drew senior officials from more than 150 nations, including 80 heads of state or government. The high-level meeting aimed to promote dialogue and mobilize political support on the need to achieve a breakthrough at the Bali conference. Many participants called for binding emission targets or referred to the need to halve emissions by 2050 and limit temperature rise to 2°C.

MAJOR ECONOMIES' MEETING ON ENERGY SECURITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE: This US-hosted event was held in Washington DC, from 27-28 September 2007. Representatives from 16 major economies were invited to discuss this initiative, which sought to support the development of a new post-2012 framework on climate change by the end of 2008. Participants discussed a long-term global goal for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, as well as national actions over the short and mid-term. While there was no final agreement on these matters, participants agreed that there was value in reconvening another meeting of Major Economies after the Bali conference, and that the discussion would be "informed by the outcomes in Bali."

BOGOR INFORMAL MINISTERIAL EVENT: This meeting of environment ministers was held on 25 October 2007, in Bogor, Indonesia. It was attended by representatives of almost 40 countries. Participants agreed in general that the building blocks of mitigation, adaptation, technology, and investment and finance are at the core of a post-2012 framework. They also agreed that equal weight must be given to adaptation and mitigation, and that issues such as deforestation and forest degradation should also be addressed.

IPCC: The IPCC held its 27th session from 12-17 November 2007, in Valencia, Spain. The session marked the culmination of several years' work by finalizing the Fourth Assessment Report. Having completed the reports of its three working groups earlier in 2007, the IPCC session in Valencia included the adoption of both the Summary for Policymakers of the Synthesis Report and a longer version of the Report. The 23-page final draft of the Summary for Policymakers contains sections on the observed changes in climate and their effects, the causes of change, projected climate change and its impacts, adaptation and mitigation options, and the long-term perspective. The report suggests that neither adaptation nor mitigation alone can avoid all climate change impacts, but that they can complement each other and together can significantly reduce the risks of climate change.