



## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE UNFCCC FOURTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES 2 NOVEMBER 1998

Delegates to the Fourth Conference of the Parties (COP-4) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC) heard welcoming remarks and considered organizational matters. Delegates debated the COP-4 agenda at length, focusing on the deletion of an item concerning voluntary commitments for non-Annex I Parties.

### PLENARY

Hiroshi Ohki (Japan), President of COP-3, recalled the important role played by COP-3 in finding an answer to the Berlin Mandate and said COP-4 faces the challenge of maintaining the political momentum created in Kyoto. He noted the need to review existing economic structures and re-examine lifestyles.

Maria Julia Alsogaray, Secretary of Natural Resources and Sustainable Development of Argentina, was elected President of COP-4. She noted that while Argentina was not one of the countries that has "historic responsibilities" for the climate change problem, it wished to belong to the group holding future responsibilities for commitment leading to a solution. She said she wanted COP-4 to signal a new momentum in the process and said an action plan for future work should be established here. While developing countries share the burden of responsibility in responding to this issue, they have an ethical duty to ensure sustainable development.

Dr. Fernando de la Rúa, Buenos Aires City Government Chief, observed that Buenos Aires translates as "good air" and hoped that this coincidence could be seen as an emblem of this process and a symbol of the success of COP-4.

Michael Zammit Cutajar, Executive Secretary of the FCCC, observed that this was the first COP to be held in a developing country. He anticipated that an action plan with ambitious and politically firm deadlines would be created as a result of this meeting. He noted that COP-4 presents an opportunity to revitalize the FCCC itself, perhaps through strengthening the transfer of technology and know-how, and financial support. COP-4 could mark the occasion where the business community increased its role in combating climate change through efficient programs conducted in an equitable way.

On organizational matters, the Executive Secretary proposed changes to the provisional agenda (FCCC/CP/1998/1). SAUDI ARABIA, supported by KUWAIT, proposed addressing Article 3.14 (adverse impacts) as a separate item on the agenda. MAURITANIA noted that no objections were raised to the proposed agenda changes during informal consultations on November 1. The Executive Secretary proposed expansion of the brackets under Agenda Item 4(e) to include references to Article 3.14. SAUDI ARABIA, supported by VENEZUELA, accepted the proposal, but stressed that discussion under Item 5 (matters related to the Kyoto Protocol) should allow time for Article 3.14.

On Agenda Item 6 (voluntary commitments by non-Annex I Parties), ARGENTINA recalled its request to include this item on the agenda and noted that no consensus had emerged despite its efforts to encourage consultations.

INDONESIA, on behalf of the G-77/CHINA, said this issue had been deliberated at length, but no consensus had been reached. He proposed adoption of the agenda without Item 6. INDIA recalled that the debate at Kyoto rejected the idea of voluntary commitments, stating it is not implied in the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. SAUDI ARABIA, KUWAIT, VENEZUELA and ALGERIA cautioned that discussion of the issue at this stage would be divisive and distract from discussions of compliance and continuing increases in developed countries' emissions. BRAZIL described the FCCC as an exercise in burden sharing, recognizing differentiated responsibilities between Annex I and non-Annex I Parties. He noted that non-Annex I Parties are well ahead in meeting their existing commitments and, with CHINA, cautioned that this item was not intended to promote the FCCC, but to help some countries avoid existing commitments. IRAN and UNITED ARAB EMIRATES noted that neither the FCCC nor the Kyoto Protocol provides for voluntary commitments and cautioned that the discussion could lead to the imposition of commitments on developing countries. EGYPT said that developing countries were entitled to sustainable development to improve the lives of their people.

CHINA noted that developed country emissions are projected to be 5% above 1990 levels by 2000 and 13% above 1990 levels by 2010. He distinguished developing country "survival emissions" from developed country "luxury emissions," and said developing countries risked losing financial assistance and technology transfer under the FCCC. He said voluntary commitments would create a new category

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of Parties under the FCCC and could destroy the unity of the G-77/China. He said the COP Presidency should remain neutral. QATAR, TOGO, CUBA, THAILAND and UGANDA also supported the G-77/China.

TANZANIA and SOUTH AFRICA said methodological and institutional issues relating to the flexibility mechanisms, such as the CDM, should be the focus of deliberation. ZIMBABWE noted that flexibility mechanisms already seek to further reduce non-Annex I emissions. SAMOA acknowledged that the Convention and its objectives stood to gain from a further discussion of voluntary commitments, but discussion at this stage would be detrimental. Discussions should focus on what could be expected from developing countries and initiatives Annex I countries could take to assist developing countries. COLOMBIA suggested that the vulnerability of developing nations, rather than their commitments, be discussed. CHILE said several developing countries were making serious efforts to limit GHG emissions and favored an exchange of views on voluntary cooperation, without entailing binding obligations or ignoring the principle of common but differentiated responsibility.

AUSTRALIA, in supporting Argentina's bid to include Item 6 on the Agenda, noted that Annex I countries alone cannot fulfill the goals of the FCCC. She said it was a sensitive issue that should be discussed in a non-controversial manner. With JAPAN, she said that non-Annex I Parties wishing to adopt voluntary commitments must be given an opportunity to consider their options under the Kyoto Protocol through discussion.

The US expressed regret that divisions among Parties would prevent delegates from putting all the issues on the table at this session. She said that locking doors to discussion would hinder understanding. An open and full discussion on options could clarify a number of questions. These include: how Parties would join Annex B; how base years would be determined; how Parties would develop targets; and whether Parties would still be able to host CDM projects. With JAPAN and CANADA, NEW ZEALAND supported a discussion on this item. He said if this were not done, the President should use her prerogative to facilitate informal consultations. NORWAY supported the right of a Party to bring forward an issue for discussion, but left the method of conducting the discussion to the discretion of the President.

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION reminded delegates that within 15 years, emissions from non-Annex I countries would exceed those of Annex I countries. The CZECH REPUBLIC, with HUNGARY and SLOVENIA, supported the inclusion of Item 6 and noted that it could foster useful debate and dialogue. POLAND said if Parties wanted to adhere to FCCC goals, they should be encouraged to assume voluntary commitments. This dialogue would reflect the dynamic situation in the global economy and changes within Parties.

AUSTRIA, on behalf of the EU, said the question of broadening commitments in the long term is necessary and unavoidable. He recognized what has been achieved by many non-Annex I countries. He said it may not be possible to resolve this issue in plenary and proposed that the COP President make a decision on how to proceed. KOREA said his country was not in a position to take on binding commitments for several years, but supported convening informal discussions.

ARGENTINA said no aspect of the FCCC and the Protocol limited its ability to raise the issue of voluntary commitments. He said the manner in which delegates address the issue would require discussion. Delegates adopted the provisional agenda without Item 6, as no consensus existed on its inclusion. The President noted that as several Parties had expressed interest in continuing discussion, she would facilitate informal consultations. CHINA cautioned against the proposed informal consultations, stating they could jeopardize the

neutrality of the presidency. INDIA and SAUDI ARABIA observed that the item had been deleted because there was no consensus on further discussion. Voluntary commitments should not be considered and the President should not participate in consultations.

Regarding the election of officers, the following delegates were elected: Papa Cham (the Gambia); Mohamed Al Sabban (Saudi Arabia); T. Gzirishvili (Georgia); Harald Dovland (Norway); Ole Ploughmann (Denmark); Espen Rønneberg, (Marshall Islands); John Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda); Bakary Kante (Senegal); Kok Kee Chow (Malaysia); and Maciej Sadowski (Poland).

Delegates also reviewed reports on the work on the subsidiary bodies as presented by their respective chairs. SBSTA Chair Kok Kee Chow (Malaysia) presented document FCCC/SBSTA/1998/5 and SBI Chair Bakary Kante (Senegal) presented document FCCC/SBI/1998/6. AG13 Chair Patrick Széll (UK) stated that the group reached agreement on its final report with the exception of bracketed text regarding the membership of the Multilateral Consultative Committee (MCC). Some Parties had insisted on equal representation of Annex I and non-Annex I Parties, but the G-77/CHINA said membership should be based on equitable geographic representation. The President said she would consult with the Bureau and report to the Plenary on 6 November.

Delegates considered a draft decision on the attendance of inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations at contact groups (FCCC/CP/1998/L.1/Rev.1). SAUDI ARABIA said Rule 7 of the draft rules of procedure (FCCC/CP/1996/2) provided for the attendance of observers and there was no need for the draft decision. The Executive Secretary recalled that the draft decision was in response to a specific request of the SBI as contained in its report (FCCC/SBI/1998/6). The CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, SWITZERLAND and the US noted the FCCC stands to benefit from NGO and IGO experiences. The President noted that the draft decision contained not only rules, but also ways of acting in contact groups. Delegates accepted the draft decision.

A number of countries also presented general statements that outlined their domestic and international programmes, and elaborated their expectations for COP-4 and future negotiations.

### **IN THE CORRIDORS**

Delegates opposed to the host country's initiative on "voluntary commitments" and the COP President's compromise proposal for informal consultations are preparing to stand guard over the remaining deliberations to ensure that the issue does not re-enter the formal deliberations. One concern is whether and how the issue might re-emerge under the guise of other agenda items such as the second review of adequacy of Convention commitments (Item 4 (d)). Delegates have noted there are a number of outstanding issues to be resolved under the Convention and several Protocol elements to be elaborated. These issues should take precedence at this point in the negotiations.

### **THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY**

**SBI:** SBI will meet at 10:00 am in Plenary I.

**SBSTA:** SBSTA will meet at 10:00 am Plenary II.