



SEVENTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UN FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE: MONDAY, 29 OCTOBER 2001

The Seventh Conference of the Parties (COP-7) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) opened on Monday, 29 October, in Marrakesh, Morocco. Delegates met in the morning for an opening Plenary session to hear speeches and address organizational matters. In the afternoon, the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) met separately to begin their work. SBI discussed organizational, administrative and financial matters, non-Annex I communications, and issues referred to it by the COP. SBSTA considered various organizational issues, as well as the Third Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

OPENING PLENARY

COP-6 President Jan Pronk opened COP-7 on Monday morning. Suggesting that the events of 11 September had cast international agreements in a new light, he said the Bonn Agreements demonstrate the effectiveness of multilateralism and international cooperation in solving global problems within the framework of the UN. He expressed confidence that COP-7 will complete the process of translating the Bonn Agreements into legal language, and bring work on the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA) to a successful conclusion.

The COP then elected Mohamed Elyazghi, Morocco's Minister of Territory Planning, Urban Management, Housing and Environment, as COP-7 President. President Elyazghi welcomed delegates to Morocco, adding that this was the first UNFCCC COP to be held in Africa. He thanked COP-6 President Pronk for his perseverance and for leaving an "indelible mark" on the process.

Abdelaziz Saâdi, President of the Regional Council of Marrakesh, presented the best wishes of Mohamed VI, King of Morocco, for a successful conference, and noted that COP-7 offered an opportunity to make significant progress in facilitating effective action in combating climate change. Omar Jazouli, President of the Urban Community of Marrakesh, outlined efforts to preserve and protect the green heritage of Marrakesh, as well as projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the waste treatment and transportation sectors.

Michael Zammit Cutajar, Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC, said the Bonn Agreements represented a significant move forward in negotiations and a breakthrough for multilateralism. He suggested that successes at COP-7 could include the start of the CDM on a solid basis and giving special consideration to the needs of African countries.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: President Elyazghi noted that 42 Parties had so far ratified the Protocol and called on the remaining Parties to do so in time for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in 2002. On the rules of procedure, the COP decided to continue applying the draft rules, with the exception of rule 42 (voting). Participants then adopted the agenda, with the exception of the item "second review of the adequacy of UNFCCC Article 4.2(a) and (b)" (review of commitments), which is to be addressed in informal consultations. The election of officers other than the President was postponed pending consultations. On the organization of work, the COP decided that delegates would resume in three negotiating groups dealing with the mechanisms, compliance, and Protocol Articles 5 (methodological issues), 7 (communication of information) and 8 (review of information), and that informal consultations would be held on LULUCF and, if necessary, on P&Ms. UNFCCC Executive Secretary Cutajar drew attention to a proposal by the group of Central Asia, Caucasus and Moldova to replace the term "developing countries" with "developing countries and other Parties not included in Annex I" throughout the draft decisions.

PARTIES' OPENING STATEMENTS: Many Parties thanked UNFCCC Executive Secretary Cutajar, COP-6 President Pronk, and the Secretariat for their invaluable contributions to the progress made in negotiations. Several speakers, including the G-77/CHINA, the EU and CG-11, supported entry into force of the Protocol in time for the WSSD.

IRAN, for the G-77/CHINA, supported completion of work forwarded from COP-6 Part II, adding that this is not the right forum to raise the question of new or additional commitments by developing countries. BURKINA FASO, for the AFRICA GROUP, underscored the high expectations of the international community that COP-7 will be a success. SWITZERLAND, on behalf of the ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY GROUP, said the current stage of negotiations should be concluded at COP-7, and stressed the need for entry into force of the Protocol. GHANA highlighted Africa's needs, noting that the continent was both the lowest emitter of greenhouse gases and the most vulnerable to climate change.

MALI, speaking for the LDCs, hoped that developing countries, and especially LDCs, would benefit from meaningful assistance. AUSTRALIA and JAPAN welcomed President Elyazghi's intention to consult and report back to the COP before the ministerial segment on the agenda item "second review of the adequacy of Article 4.2 (a) and (b)," and said they looked forward to a full discussion of this issue at COP-8. The EU said the review of commitments should not be debated at COP-7 or the WSSD, but only after the Protocol has entered into force, possibly at COP-8.

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**SBSTA**

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: SBSTA Chair Harald Dovland (Norway) opened the first meeting of SBSTA's fifteenth session. Regarding the agenda, the EU requested consideration of decision 17/CP.5 containing operational parts on the consideration by Parties and SBSTA on limiting emissions of hydrofluorocarbons and perfluorocarbons. He further underscored an EU proposal on terms of reference to develop definitions and modalities for including afforestation and deforestation projects under the CDM in the first commitment period for consideration at SBSTA-15. MALAYSIA, supported by SAUDI ARABIA, noted that this was premature since the rules and modalities of the CDM were being discussed separately and had not been completed. Chair Dovland said the EU proposal would be distributed.

MATTERS REFERRED TO SBSTA BY THE COP: IPCC

Third Assessment Report: IPCC Chair Bob Watson introduced the Synthesis Report of the Third Assessment Report (TAR), noting nine policy-relevant questions and responses regarding: contribution of scientific, technical and socioeconomic analyses to the definition of "dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system"; changes in the Earth's climate since the pre-industrial era; regional and global climatic, environmental, and socioeconomic consequences associated with greenhouse gas emissions arising from TAR scenarios; climate fluctuations, extreme events and the risk of abrupt/non-linear changes; inertia and time-scales associated with changes in climate, ecological systems, and socioeconomic sectors; implications of stabilizing greenhouse gas concentrations at different levels; the potential for, costs and benefits of, and timeframe for, mitigation; and interactions between climate change and other environment and development issues.

Chair Dovland then invited participants to consider the implications of the TAR for the future work of the SBSTA and any requests to the IPCC. The EU, supported by JAPAN, CANADA, MALAYSIA, AOSIS, NORWAY, SWITZERLAND and AUSTRALIA, but opposed by SAUDI ARABIA, suggested holding a workshop on the implications of the TAR for the work of the SBSTA. With MAURITIUS, UGANDA and HUNGARY, he suggested consideration of outreach and wider communication of the TAR. SAUDI ARABIA and the G-77/CHINA stressed the inclusion of developing country scientists, and literature in languages other than English.

MALAYSIA emphasized the vulnerability of developing countries and those in poverty and, with the REPUBLIC OF KOREA, supported consideration of adaptation measures. Noting that recent events underscore the role of multilateralism, AOSIS stressed the need for a global solution to climate change with Protocol ratification as a first step.

Chair Dovland noted emerging elements of agreement on how to proceed, including on organizing a workshop prior to SBSTA-16. He invited Halldor Thorgeirsson (Iceland) to conduct informal consultations on a draft decision on the TAR. SAUDI ARABIA stressed that there was no consensus on arranging a workshop that would lead to a decision at COP-8.

SBI

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: SBI Chair John Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda) opened the session, and the SBI then adopted its agenda. On election of officers other than the Chair, Chair Ashe said consultations were ongoing.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL MATTERS: Chair Ashe said he would prepare draft conclusions on interim financial performance for 2000-2001 and hold informal consultations on possible options to respond to late payment of contributions. On implementation of the Headquarters Agreement, GERMANY reported progress on the building of a UN campus, the development of a congress center and matters relating to Secretariat staff and their families. Chair Ashe said he would prepare draft conclusions.

MATTERS REFERRED TO SBI BY THE COP: On input to the WSSD, Chair Ashe said this would be taken up by the COP on Friday, 2 November following informal consultations, rather than in the SBI. On the report of the GEF to the COP, further consideration of this matter was deferred to the next SBI meeting.

Regarding proposals to amend the lists in UNFCCC Annexes I and II, a brief discussion took place on a Turkish proposal submitted at COP-6 Part I. Chair Ashe announced that informal consultations would be held on this matter, and on Kazakhstan's proposal to add its name to Annex I.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETINGS: On the date and venue of COP-8, Secretary of the COP Richard Kinley informed delegates that COP-5 had set 28 October to 8 November 2002 as the date for COP-8. If no offer is received during COP-7, then COP-8 will be held in Bonn. ARGENTINA noted the closeness of COP-8 to the WSSD and suggested postponing COP-8 to early 2003. SAUDI ARABIA and KUWAIT noted that the scheduled end of COP-8 would coincide with the beginning of Ramadan, and suggested bringing it forward by one week.

Regarding the calendar of meetings of Convention bodies for 2005-2007, Richard Kinley noted increasing pressures on the international calendar and highlighted the importance of advanced planning to minimize costly cancellations. ARGENTINA said the calendar should be considered within the wider context of environmental governance. Chair Ashe said informal consultations would be held both on this matter and on COP-8's date and venue.

NON-ANNEX I COMMUNICATIONS: On national communications from non-Annex I Parties, the SBI considered the third compilation and synthesis of initial communications. The US proposed that recommendations from the Consultative Group of Experts (CGE) be considered as a basis for improvements of the UNFCCC reporting guidelines. On the report of the CGE, CANADA, with AUSTRALIA, noted that there might be overlap between the report and the COP-6 Part II funding package, suggesting they be harmonized. The EU, with AUSTRALIA, and opposed by MALAYSIA, CHINA and ARGENTINA, said the report provided a sound basis to initiate the revised UNFCCC guidelines. ARGENTINA, PANAMA and BURKINA FASO underlined the need to integrate the preparation of national communications in the development process of host countries. Chair Ashe said this issue would be further considered in an informal group, along with the provision of financial and technical support.

IN THE CORRIDORS

As the opening day of COP-7 drew to a close, many participants seemed optimistic about the prospects for a successful outcome. While some suggested that the "negotiating fatigue" felt by many veteran delegates in The Hague and Bonn was in evidence on a fairly uneventful first day, several delegates observed a "quiet determination" to finish three years of negotiations in Marrakesh in order to make the Kyoto Protocol ratifiable. A number of observers also speculated that the more "low key" atmosphere at this meeting compared to the last COP might provide an appropriate mood to complete the work.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

SBI: SBI will convene at 10:00 am in Plenary I to consider matters related to LDCs, Annex I national communications, and other matters.

SBSTA: SBSTA will meet at 10:00 am and 3:00 pm in Plenary II to discuss methodological issues, development and transfer of technologies, and other matters.