



NINTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UN FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE: 1-12 DECEMBER 2003

The Ninth Conference of the Parties (COP-9) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Nineteenth Sessions of the COP's Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) open today at the Fiera Milano Congress Center in Milan, Italy.

Over 4000 participants are expected to attend the session, where delegates will continue to address a number of issues. Participants will consider financial matters, including the Secretariat's programme budget for 2004-5 and the Special Climate Change Fund, as well as other issues related to the review of implementation of commitments and provisions of the UNFCCC. Issues related to the preparations for the first session of the COP serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (COP/MOP-1) will also be addressed, including land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) activities under Protocol Article 12 (Clean Development Mechanism). A high-level segment including round-table discussions will be held from 10-11 December.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNFCCC AND THE KYOTO PROTOCOL

Climate change is considered one of the most serious threats to sustainable development, with negative impacts expected on human health, food security, economic activity, water and other natural resources, and physical infrastructure. Global climate varies naturally, but scientists agree that rising concentrations of anthropogenically emitted 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 a majority of scientists believe that precautionary and prompt action is necessary.

The international political response to climate change began with the adoption of the UNFCCC in 1992. The UNFCCC sets out a framework for action aimed at stabilizing atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases in order 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 188 Parties.

THE KYOTO PROTOCOL: In 1995, the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP-1) established the *Ad Hoc* Group on the Berlin Mandate, and charged it with reaching agreement on strengthening efforts to combat climate change. Following intense

negotiations culminating at COP-3 in Kyoto, Japan, in December 1997, delegates agreed to a Protocol to the UNFCCC that commits developed countries and countries making the transition to a market economy (EITs) 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 at least 5% below 1990 levels between 2008 and 2012 (the first commitment period), with specific targets varying from country to country. The Protocol also established three mechanisms to assist Annex I Parties in meeting their national targets cost-effectively: an emissions trading system; joint implementation (JI) of emissions-reduction projects between Annex I Parties; and a Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) that encourages projects in non-Annex I (developing country) Parties.

At subsequent meetings, Parties negotiated most of the rules and operational details determining how countries will cut emissions and measure and assess emissions reductions. To enter into force, the Protocol must be ratified by 55 Parties to the UNFCCC, and by Annex I Parties representing at least 55% of the total carbon dioxide emissions for 1990. To date, 120 Parties have ratified the Protocol, including 32 Annex I Parties, representing 44.2% of the emissions.

THE BUENOS AIRES PLAN OF ACTION: In November 1998, Parties met at COP-4 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and agreed to a set of decisions known as the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA). The BAPA set COP-6 as the deadline for reaching agreement on the operational details of the Protocol and on strengthening implementation of the UNFCCC. Issues to be addressed included rules relating to the mechanisms, a regime for assessing Parties' compliance, accounting methods for national emissions and emissions reductions, and rules on crediting countries for carbon sinks. Issues under the UNFCCC requiring resolution included questions of capacity building, the development and transfer of technology, and assistance to those developing countries particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change or to actions taken by industrialized countries to combat climate change.

COP-6 PART I: COP-6 and the resumed SB-13 were held in The Hague, the Netherlands, from 13-25 November 2000. During the second week of negotiations, COP-6 President Jan Pronk (the Netherlands) attempted to facilitate negotiations on the many disputed political and technical issues by convening high-level informal Plenary sessions. After almost 36 hours of intense talks in the final two days of COP-6, negotiators could not agree on a range of topics, particularly financial issues, supplementarity in the use of the mechanisms, compliance and LULUCF. On Saturday afternoon, 25 November, President Pronk announced that delegates had failed to reach agreement. Delegates then agreed to suspend COP-6 and resume negotiations in 2001.

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COP-6 PART II: In March 2001, the US administration repudiated the agreement reached in Kyoto, stating that it considered the Protocol to be “fatally flawed,” as it would damage its economy and exempt key developing countries from emissions reduction targets. Parties reconvened at COP-6 Part II and SB-14 from 16-27 July 2001, in Bonn, Germany. After protracted consultations, President Pronk presented his proposal for a draft political decision. Despite support from several Parties, disagreements surfaced over the nature of the compliance regime. After several days of consultations, ministers agreed to adopt President Pronk’s political decision, with a revised section on compliance on 25 July 2001. The political decision – or “Bonn Agreements” – needed to be operationalized through COP decisions. These decisions were considered a “package,” and since no agreement was reached on the mechanisms, compliance and LULUCF, all draft decisions were forwarded to COP-7.

COP-7: Delegates continued discussions on the “Bonn Agreements” at COP-7 and SB-15 in Marrakesh, Morocco, from 29 October to 10 November 2001. After lengthy negotiations, a package deal on LULUCF, mechanisms, Protocol Articles 5 (methodological issues), 7 (communication of information) and 8 (review of information), and input to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) was proposed. Although the deal was accepted by most regional groups, some Annex I Parties, including Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, and the Russian Federation, did not join the consensus, disputing, among other things, eligibility requirements and credit banking under the mechanisms. However, following extensive negotiations, the “Marrakesh Accords” were agreed.

SB-16: Parties met at SB-16 in Bonn from 5-14 June 2002. Participants considered several issues previously left off the agenda due to the pressing BAPA negotiations. Views on the direction of the climate process differed, with some Parties looking back to recent debates and others looking ahead toward the next commitment period. Many hoped the Protocol could enter into force by the WSSD in August 2002. The EU and Japan announced their Protocol ratifications just prior to the WSSD.

COP-8: Delegates to COP-8 and SB-17 met from 23 October to 1 November 2002, in New Delhi, India. On the final day of COP-8, they adopted the *Delhi Declaration on Climate Change and Sustainable Development*. The Declaration reaffirms development and poverty eradication as overriding priorities in developing countries, and recognizes Parties’ common but differentiated responsibilities and national development priorities and circumstances in the implementation of UNFCCC commitments. Parties at COP-8 considered institutional and procedural issues under the Protocol and adopted several decisions, including on the rules and procedures for the Executive Board (EB) of the CDM.

SB-18: Delegates to SB-18 met in Bonn from 4-13 June 2003, and continued to address issues under negotiation since COP-8 and prepare for the Kyoto Protocol’s entry into force. Conclusions were agreed on a number of issues, but the issue of the Secretariat’s programme budget for 2004-5 and the Special Climate Change Fund proved to be particularly difficult, and will be further considered at COP-9.

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

WORKSHOPS ON SYNERGIES AND COOPERATION WITH OTHER CONVENTIONS: Two workshops, one mandated by SBI-15, and the other mandated by SBSTA-17, were held back-to-back in Espoo, Finland, from 2-4 July 2003. Participants discussed different approaches to addressing synergies among MEAs, focusing on several challenges, including: principles to guide efforts to achieve synergies; practical ways to achieve synergies at the national level; the role of the international commu-

nity in providing impetus to achieving synergies; and enhancement of synergies and linkages at the convention level by the international community. Participants also heard presentations on national experiences in achieving synergies and discussed cross-cutting areas under the UNFCCC, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

WORLD CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE: The World Climate Change Conference was held from 29 September to 3 October 2003 in Moscow, the Russian Federation, and was aimed primarily at the scientific community to address divergent views on existing scientific findings, including those reflected in the IPCC Third Assessment Report (TAR).

WORKSHOP ON ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION: This workshop, mandated by decision 5/CP.7 (adverse effects), was held from 18-19 October 2003, in Tehran, Iran. Participants discussed the needs and options of non-Annex I Parties regarding the need to address economic diversification in the contexts of the adverse effects of climate change and the impact of the implementation of response measures. Participants also considered possible support programmes by Annex II Parties to address developing country needs for economic diversification.

EXPERT WORKSHOP ON LOCAL COPING STRATEGIES AND TECHNOLOGIES FOR ADAPTATION: This workshop was held in New Delhi, India, from 12-13 November 2003, in conjunction with the Climate Technology Bazaar and Conferences hosted by the Government of India. Participants addressed local coping strategies in the context of the science and methodologies for adaptation to climate change. They also held an exchange of experiences on coping strategies and technologies, addressing cross-cutting issues, drought and aridity, and floods, cyclones and tropical storms.

MEETINGS OF CONSTITUTED BODIES: Several meetings of the UNFCCC’s constituted bodies have been held since SB-18. The CDM EB met for its tenth meeting from 28-29 July 2003, in Bonn, and for its eleventh meeting from 16-17 October 2003, also in Bonn. The Least Developed Countries (LDCs) Expert Group (LEG) held its fourth meeting in Thimpu, Bhutan, on 8 and 12-13 September. The Consultative Group of Experts on non-Annex I national communications (CGE) met from 23-24 September 2003, in Mexico City, Mexico. A special meeting of the Expert Group on Technology Transfer (EGTT) was held from 11-12 November 2003, in New Delhi, India.

PRE-SESSIONAL CONSULTATIONS: Pre-sessional consultations were held in Milan in the days leading up to COP-9, addressing: the IPCC TAR; registry systems; definitions and modalities for including afforestation and reforestation activities under the CDM; and the implementation of UNFCCC Article 4.8 and 4.9 (adverse effects) and progress on the implementation of activities under the related decision 5/CP.7. The twelfth meeting of the CDM EB was held from 27-28 November, and the EGTT convened its fourth meeting from 28-29 November.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

OPENING PLENARY: COP-9 will open at 10:00 am in Plenary I.

SBI-19 OPENING PLENARY: SBI-19 will open at 3:00 pm in Plenary II. Parties are expected to adopt the SBI-19 agenda, and address non-Annex I national communications.

SBSTA-19 OPENING PLENARY: SBSTA-19 will open at 3:00 pm in Plenary I. Participants are expected to adopt the SBSTA-19 agenda, and discuss the IPCC TAR and methodological issues.