



Earth Negotiations Bulletin

A Reporting Service for Environment and Development Negotiations

Vol. 12 No. 1 Published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) Monday, 6 February 1995

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Increasing scientific evidence about the possibility of global climate change in the 1980s led to a growing awareness that human activities have been contributing to substantial increases in the atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases. Concerned that anthropogenic increases of emissions enhance the natural greenhouse effect and would result, on average, in an additional warming of the Earth's surface, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988. The Panel focused on: assessing scientific information related to the various aspects of climate change; evaluating the environmental and socio-economic impacts of climate change; and formulating response strategies for the management of global climate change. In 1990, the finalization and adoption of the IPCC report and the Second World Climate Conference focused further attention on climate change.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INC/FCCC

On 11 December 1990, the 45th session of the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution that established the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Framework Convention on Climate Change (INC/FCCC). Supported by UNEP and WMO, the mandate of the INC/FCCC was to prepare an effective framework convention on climate change. The INC held five sessions between February 1991 and May 1992. During these meetings, participants from over 150 states discussed the difficult and contentious issues of binding commitments, targets and timetables for the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions, financial mechanisms, technology transfer, and "common but differentiated" responsibilities of developed and developing countries. The INC sought to achieve a consensus that could be supported by a broad majority, rather than drafting a treaty that dealt with specific policies that might limit participation.

ADOPTION AND ENTRY INTO FORCE

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC) was adopted on 9 May 1992, and opened for signature at the UN Conference on Environment and Development in June 1992 in Rio, where it received 155 signatures. The Convention entered into force on 21 March 1994 (90 days after receipt of the 50th ratification). The first session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) will take place in Berlin from 27 March - 7 April 1995.

PREPARATION FOR THE COP

Since the adoption of the Convention, the INC has met five more times to consider the following items: matters relating to commitments; matters relating to arrangements for the financial mechanism and for technical and financial support to developing countries; procedural and legal matters; and institutional matters. During these INC sessions, scientific work was done to improve the methodologies for measuring emissions from various sources, but the larger scientific problem is choosing the best methodology to estimate the removal of carbon dioxide by "sinks," namely oceans and forests. The other major task before negotiators has been to work on the difficult issue of financial support for implementation, particularly for developing country Parties who will require "new and additional resources" to obtain data and implement energy-efficient technologies and other necessary measures.

INC-9

The INC held its ninth session from 7-18 February 1994, in Geneva. In discussions on matters relating to commitments, delegates examined methodologies for calculations/inventories of emissions and removal of greenhouse gases, the first review of information communicated by Annex I parties, the role of the subsidiary bodies established by the Convention, and criteria for joint implementation. Delegates also reviewed the adequacy of commitments. The need for broader action beyond the year 2000 on the commitments in Article 4.2(a) and (b) was considered, based on the understanding that the provisions of this article refer to the present decade.

In its discussions on matters relating to the financial mechanism and technical and financial support to developing country Parties, the Committee chose to focus on the implementation of Article 11. It was agreed that only developing countries that are Parties to the Convention would be eligible to receive funding upon entry into force of the Convention. There was general support for a cost-effective arrangement for the Permanent Secretariat that would encourage collaboration with other secretariats. The question of the location of the Permanent Secretariat was not resolved, but it was agreed that the Permanent Secretariat will start operating on 1 January 1996, and, in the interest of continuity, will be organized along the same lines as the Interim Secretariat.

INC-10

The tenth session of the INC was held from 22 August - 2 September 1994, in Geneva. The Committee agreed on the mechanisms for the first review of information communicated by

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Annex I Parties. Some countries expressed the need for a cautious approach to the review of the adequacy of commitments, since the scientific and technical assessments upon which existing commitments are based were essentially unchanged. Some countries also felt that the first meeting of the COP would be a good occasion to make progress on the elaboration of additional commitments. On the issue of joint implementation, comments were invited on: objectives, criteria and operational guidelines, functions and institutional arrangements, and communication and review and early experiences.

On matters related to the financial mechanism, countries agreed to stage-by-stage funding modality for adaptation measures. The temporary arrangements between the Committee and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) was also adopted. On agreed full incremental costs, the Committee concluded that this issue was complex and that further discussion was needed. Delegates also concluded that the concept should be flexible and applied on a case-by-case basis. The Interim Secretariat was requested to prepare a paper on transfer of technology and delegations were invited to submit their views on this issue. On the subject of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI), the provisional recommendation to the COP is that the SBSTA will be the link between the scientific and technical assessments and the information provided by international bodies and the policy-oriented needs of the COP. The SBI will develop recommendations to assist the COP in its assessment and review of the implementation of the Convention.

With regard to procedural and legal matters, the Committee decided to continue its consideration of the draft Rules of Procedure at its eleventh session. On institutional matters, a contact group composed of five members of the Bureau, one from each of the five regional groups, was established to consider the various offers of governments and UN agencies to host the Permanent Secretariat for the Convention and make recommendations for the consideration of the Committee at its eleventh session.

Subsequent to INC-10, Trinidad and Tobago, on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), submitted a draft protocol to the Interim Secretariat. This protocol, which was distributed to other Parties, calls for a reduction of emissions of greenhouse gases by "at least 20% by the year 2005."

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

49TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The 49th session of the UN General Assembly considered the Framework Convention on Climate Change from 19-21 October 1994. During the debate, the Chair of the INC/FCCC, Amb. Raúl Estrada-Oyuela (Argentina), noted that although much progress has been made, additional measures may be needed. The participation of developing countries in the Convention needs to be clearer — the only quantitative commitment is that the developed countries must reduce emissions to 1990 levels.

In other statements, Antigua and Barbuda, on behalf of the Caribbean Community, said industrialized countries should take significant steps to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. These concerns are adequately addressed by the AOSIS draft protocol on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. He urged that the debate on the AOSIS draft protocol begin at INC-11, with its subsequent adoption at the first COP. Austria, supported by New Zealand, stated that commitments must be strengthened and that a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions after the year 2000 is necessary to achieve the goals of the Convention.

Algeria, on behalf of the G-77, urged parties to the Convention not to go beyond the original mandate. Distinct categories of

parties should have distinct responsibilities and any attempt to undermine this principle through innovative concepts, such as joint implementation, would have negative repercussions. China said that it did not approve of any attempt to make developing countries accept concrete restrictive targets through amending the Convention or negotiating new protocols. India said there is still a lack of clarity on several concepts in the Convention, including full incremental costs, joint implementation and transfer of technology. While India recognized the need to address reduction of greenhouse gases beyond the year 2000, he did not believe that this is the time to strengthen commitments, since INC negotiations on a new protocol could distract from establishing a fundamental basis to implement the existing Convention.

EXTENDED BUREAU MEETING

Members of the extended Bureau met the week before INC-11 to consult with interested delegates from a number of countries on how to proceed with the 11th session and prepare for the first meeting of the COP. The meeting, which addressed both procedural and substantive matters, was intended to provide guidance to the Chair and the Co-Chairs of the working groups, as well as to the Interim Secretariat.

The following issues were discussed during the week-long meeting: the financial mechanism, especially maintenance of the interim arrangements; treatment of the compilation and synthesis document for communications from developed Parties listed in Annex I; roles of subsidiary bodies; the review of the adequacy of commitments, including the treatment of protocol proposals and possible follow-up; criteria for joint implementation; Rules of Procedure of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies; the Permanent Secretariat (including institutional linkages, financial procedures and budget, and physical location); arrangements for the first session of the COP; and organization of work at INC-11. With regard to the composition of the Bureau for the COP, there is some agreement that it should have 15 members. With regard to Annex I communications, questions were raised as to whether individual Parties' national communications should be referred to specifically in any synthesis or compilation or whether the summary should refer to the collective results of national communications.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: INC-11 will open this morning at 10:00 am in Conference Room 2. Delegates will first deal with organizational matters, including adoption of the agenda and organization of work, as contained in document A/AC.237/77. The Chair of the IPCC, Bert Bolin, and the Chair/CEO of the Global Environment Facility, Mohamed El-Ashry, are then expected to make statements. The Plenary is also expected to get an update on the status of ratification of the Convention. The Plenary will then adjourn to enable the working groups to begin their work.

WORKING GROUP I: Following the conclusion of the Plenary, Working Group I will meet to adopt its organization of work and begin discussion of Agenda Item 7, Questions to the Chair of the IPCC, and Item 7(d), Methodological issues.

WORKING GROUP II: Following the conclusion of the Plenary, Working Group II will meet to adopt its organization of work and begin discussion of Agenda Item 8, Questions to the Chair/CEO of the GEF, and Item 8(b), Maintenance of interim arrangements.

OTHER ACTIVITIES: There will be a roundtable on Central America's experiences with joint implementation today at 1:30 pm. The Climate Action Network will evaluate national communications today at 6:00 pm. The room numbers for both of these meetings will be announced.