

Tumultuous start to Bangkok climate talks

Bangkok, 6 April (Meena Raman) – It was a tumultuous start to the Bangkok climate talks which officially opened on the afternoon of 5 April with a stark challenge by developing countries to developed countries to show their political commitment on whether or not there would be a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol (KP) for greenhouse gases emission reductions.

(The first commitment period of the KP that sets the emission reduction targets for Annex 1 –developed countries – expires in 2012).

The challenge was first put by Tuvalu and was echoed by several developing country groupings at the opening plenary of the 16th session of the Ad-hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex 1 Parties under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP).

Tuvalu said that there was need to unlock the political commitment to the KP and its second commitment period and called on Parties who wished to continue with the KP to stand up and say so, or leave the room.

The need for a political decision now in Bangkok on the KP was supported by Gambia for the Least Developing Countries (LDCs), Grenada for the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), Egypt for 22 countries in the Arab Group, the African Group, the Philippines, China, Bolivia and Saudi Arabia.

The **Group of 77 and China** led by Ambassador Jorge Arguello of Argentina made a strong statement that the adoption of the second commitment period of the KP was key for Durban (where the next Conference of Parties would be held) and this was not only a political imperative but a legal obligation that must be met.

Many developing countries also stressed that there was no point in going round in circles in the AWGKP negotiations on technical issues and numbers as it was time for a political decision now on the KP.

The Philippines said that the corridor talks was that the KP was “in an intensive care unit and that instead of being given life-giving oxygen, the KP’s respirators are connected to a tank of carbon-dioxide”.

Many developing countries also said that if there was not going to be any movement in the AWGKP for the second commitment period, there was little point in having negotiations under the other parallel track of the Ad-hoc working group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (AWG-LCA).

(The Kyoto Protocol is a treaty under the UNFCCC designed to implement legally binding emission reduction commitments of developed countries listed in Annex 1 of the UNFCCC.)

Egypt for the **Arab Group** said that agreeing on the second commitment period of the KP was *sine qua non* for agreement under the AWG-LCA, while taking into account the separation of the two tracks. This was echoed by the **African Group** that said that reaching an agreement on the second commitment period is crucial to reaching agreement in the AWG-LCA track.

Chair of the AWG-KP, Mr. Adrian Macey of New Zealand proposed the establishment of a contact group to discuss matters further, which was agreed to by Parties and this group would meet today (6 April).

AWG-LCA meeting agenda disputed

At the opening plenary of the AWG-LCA which commenced at 8.30 pm on Tuesday after a delay of two hours, there was no agreement on the adoption of the agenda for the Working Group’s 14th session in Bangkok.

The Chair of the AWG-LCA, Mr. Daniel Reifsnyder of the United States, said that a provisional agenda for the session was structured according to the Cancun decision and that following that, the Secretariat had requests from Parties for additional items to be added which was agreed to by the Chair. The requests had

come from the African Group, Saudi Arabia, LDCs, AOSIS, New Zealand and the EU.

The Chair informed Parties that the G77 and China had submitted a new draft agenda for the consideration of Parties.

Ambassador Arugello presented the submission by the Group and said that it was structured to be inclusive of the Bali Action Plan building blocks and was carefully balanced to address the concerns of the Group. He stressed that the agenda addressed the issues from the Cancun decision as well as issues from the Bali Action Plan that have remained open and was a proposal in good faith.

Developed countries did not support the G77 and China proposal, with many saying that it did not reflect the balance needed to move forward from the Cancun decision. While some countries such as the US, Australia, New Zealand, Russia and Switzerland supported the agenda proposed by the Chair of the AWG-LCA, other developed countries including the EU and Norway were willing to consider alternative proposals.

The AWG-LCA will reconvene this afternoon (6 April) to consider if Parties can agree on a way forward on the agenda.

“Mixed reactions” to Cancun outcomes

At the opening ceremony of the Bangkok climate talks which preceded the plenaries of the working groups, Mr. Suwit Khunkitti, the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment said that the outcomes from Cancun had drawn mixed reactions.

He said that many have expressed that the global community may have saved the multilateral system but that was not enough to save the planet from global warming or in helping the poor to address the challenges of climate change.

He stressed that the road to Durban must ensure that the Cancun shortcomings are addressed in relation to mitigation and adaptation as well as in delivering on the promises of finance and technology transfer.

The Minister said that it was a great importance to respect the Bali Roadmap, recognizing the mandates of the Bali Action Plan and the AWG-KP. He said that developed countries must take the lead in taking deep cuts in emissions deductions consistent with what science and equity demands and hoped to see agreement reached in Durban on the second commitment period of the KP.

He stressed that the KP is a legally-binding treaty on mitigation and Parties must not unravel legally-binding commitments with voluntary pledges to limit

global temperature rise to less than 2 degree centigrade.

Ms. Christiana Figueres, the Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC in her opening statement said that many Parties want targets for Annex I Parties to be inscribed in an amendment to the Kyoto Protocol, while others have stated that they will not participate in a second commitment period.

She said that it is essential that Parties find a way forward on this issue, which is particularly pressing given the growing possibility of a gap after 2012 (when the first commitment period ends).

Figueres added that the full implementation of the Cancun Agreements can only become an important step forward for the climate if there is a responsible and clear way ahead on the Kyoto Protocol.

Ms. Noleen Heyzer, the Executive Secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) said that Parties were meeting at a time when climate change is no longer a distant threat but a reality for people in the Asia Pacific region. She said that there was need for a new sense of urgency and responsibility to protect the planet, people and the economy and to prepare for the economy of the future.

Heyzer said that ESCAP has been promoting the concept of inclusive sustainable development for countries of region. She also said that ESCAP has set up a regional trust fund for disasters, which is for financing disaster preparedness, early-warning systems and for building resilience. The Fund is to dedicate resources for people-centered disasters especially for LDCs, land-locked and sea-locked countries. ESCAP has also brought 30 agencies for rapid respond to climate-related and other disasters. It also helped in damage and loss assessments by and with other UN partners.

The official opening of the Bangkok climate talks that are being held in the ESCAP premises were preceded by 3 pre-session workshops from 3 to 5 April. These workshops were on the assumptions and conditions related to the targets of developed countries; on nationally appropriate mitigation actions submitted by developing countries and their underlying assumptions and support needed; and on the Technology Mechanism to be set up following a Cancun decision.

Details of the workshop on the developed country targets have been carried in previous articles (see TWN Updates # 1 to 3) and further articles on the other workshops as well as the opening plenary of the AWG-KP are forthcoming.