

## Discussions ongoing to chart way forward for climate talks

Bangkok, 7 April (Meena Raman) – On the eve of the conclusion of the climate talks in Bangkok under the working groups of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Kyoto Protocol (KP), discussions were ongoing on how to set the direction for further work from here to the next session in Bonn to be held in June this year.

The Ad-hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex 1 Parties under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP) held its second contact group meeting on Thursday morning (7 April) with discussions centering around what pre-conditions were necessary for the Annex 1 Parties (developed countries) to adopt a second commitment period to reduce greenhouse gas emissions under the KP. The first commitment period will end in 2012.

In the Ad-hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the UNFCCC (AWG-LCA), discussions were ongoing in an informal meeting, which was closed to observers, to find agreement on an agenda for its current 14<sup>th</sup> session.

### Work under the Convention (AWG-LCA)

It was learnt that prior to the informal plenary of the AWG-LCA, the Chair of the working group, Mr. Daniel Reifsnyder of the United States met with the G77 and China and its members and presented an alternative agenda to that of the G77 and China which was called “A birthday wish” (as his birthday was on 7 April).

Apparently, the Chair’s alternative agenda was made following a meeting with some Annex 1 Parties. According to some sources, the alternative agenda

proposal initially came from New Zealand, which was then “adopted” by the Chair as his own proposal.

During the meeting with the AWG-LCA Chair, several members of the G77 and China strongly opposed the Chair’s proposed agenda as they viewed this as going against the wishes of Parties when he had no mandate to prepare such an agenda.

When the AWG-LCA informal plenary meeting convened around 8 pm (and ended at midnight), the issue of the Chair’s proposed agenda arose again, to which the Chair responded that it was no longer on the table unless some Parties forwarded the proposal as their own. This led to Australia then “adopting” the proposal as its own.

It was learnt that the G77 and China showed much flexibility by considering various suggestions that came forward, including one by Tuvalu and the Alliance of Small Island States to use the headings of the elements from the Bali Action Plan as contained in the G77 and China proposal and to add two further items under each of the headings. These two items related to (i) items for implementation and (ii) items for further resolution without a listing of specific issues.

The EU had proposed that instead using the headings as contained in the G77 and China proposal, the headings as contained in the Cancun decision could be followed, to which the G77 and China was agreeable.

However, according to sources, the Annex 1 Parties, including the US and Russia, kept changing the goal post by insisting on the need for a listing of specific

items in the agenda to reflect a prioritization of the issues. The G77 and China was not agreeable to this.

Discussions are expected to continue today on the agenda to be adopted on the final day of the Bangkok meeting.

### **Work under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP)**

Since the start of the Bangkok climate talks, developing countries have challenged developed countries to make explicit their political intent on whether there was support for the second commitment period of the KP.

At the meeting of the contact group on Thursday, the European Union, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland and Australia gave their responses to questions by developing countries to make clear exactly what the pre-conditions were for Annex 1 Parties to adopt a second commitment period. However, there was deafening silence from Canada, Japan and Russia on the issue.

(The Chair of the AWG-KP, Adrian Macey from New Zealand, had issued three documents – ‘Questions by the AWG-KP Chair to facilitate discussion’, ‘Questions posed by Parties’, and ‘Ideas from the discussion in the first meeting of the Contact Group.’ Tuvalu and Saint Lucia supported discussing question 1a by Parties which was “What pre-conditions have been met by the Cancun outcome that will enable your country (in particular Annex I Parties) to adopt a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol?” and “What further pre-conditions are necessary for your country (in Particular Annex I Parties) to adopt a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol?”)

The **European Union** said that its starting point was the need for common endeavour by all Parties. At the last meeting of the Conference of Parties in Cancun in December 2010, it said that Parties agreed to keep temperature rise below 2 degree Celsius and to do that, work on all tracks was necessary (referring to the AWG-KP and the AWG-LCA).

The EU said that the KP track was important and the EU had its own domestic legislation target of 20% emissions reduction by 2020 (based on 1990 levels). It could move to 30% reductions in the context of an

international agreement and that was its offer. It was heartened by progress in Cancun where all Parties showed willingness to reduce emissions with their pledges and economy-wide targets but Cancun did not fully meet all the conditions as what rules were needed to fulfill the targets were still unknown.

On converting the emission reduction pledges to domestic legislation, the EU said that this is not a mechanical exercise but involved convincing Ministers, Parliaments and constituencies to get that done.

On the question of what are comparable efforts, the EU said that since the rules underpinning the targets are not known, it was hard to compare the efforts. Hence, the need to look at targets and rules at the same time and that is the road to comparability.

It said that it was not enough to have the comparability with only those who are KP Parties. There was need for comparable efforts by all Parties.

(In the Bali Action Plan, comparability of efforts was agreed to in the context of developed countries in Annex 1 of the UNFCCC. Since the largest cumulative emitter is the United States this hard won agreement was aimed at the US fulfilling its UNFCCC emissions reduction commitment even though it is not a Party to the KP that sets the numerical targets.)

On the political conditions needed for it to undertake a second commitment period, the EU said that there was need for further work with the expectation that everyone sticks to their pledges and are going to implement them and will turn that into domestic legislation.

New Zealand and Australia echoed the sentiments of the EU.

**New Zealand** said that not all the pre-conditions for the second commitment period have been met as there was need for a comprehensive global agreement to set the path to the 2 degree Celsius temperature rise limit and this needed all developed countries to do comparable efforts and advanced developing countries and major emitters to take actions. This was needed to tell the public that countries were doing their fair share.

The other pre-condition was the need for clarity of the rules on land-use and land use change and forestry (LULUCF) and an effective international carbon market.

**Australia** said that for it to increase its ambition from an unconditional 5% to a conditional 25% emission reductions target (based on 2000 levels), there was need for an international agreement that includes all major emitters.

**Norway** echoed the sentiments of the EU and New Zealand.

**Colombia** proposed (i) an examination of the pre-conditions; about what comparable and global efforts meant, which involved more political and conceptual matters; (ii) what would be the impact of the different rules on the numbers (for emissions reductions); and (iii) what the reality would look like with those who do not want to be party to the second commitment period. Parties needed to look at the numbers to understand what that would look like, it said.

**Marshall Islands** supported Colombia and said that there was need to quantify the Annex 1 Parties' emissions targets and compare them with 1990 levels using the current KP architecture so that Parties can view the aggregate level of the emission reductions.

**Tuvalu** said that there were two sets of rules. One was the precondition for the second commitment period and the other for establishing the numbers. It still wanted clarity on words like "part of a wider outcome", "global and comprehensive framework", "comparable efforts" etc. It said that there was need to focus on these "political conditions" and to unpack these phraseologies. Then, Parties could identify who wants the second commitment period under the KP.

Saint Lucia, for the **Alliance of Small Island States** referred to the "political conditions" set by the developed countries for converting pledges into

targets and said that this had implications for the timing of the second commitment period. On what were effective rules, it was important to ascertain what the atmosphere actually sees in terms of the emissions.

It supported building on the proposals of Colombia, Marshall Islands and Tuvalu to explore and identify the rules that are implicated and to assess what really involves technical aspects and what had political components. St. Lucia was willing to lay out the different rules for Parties to have a better discussion.

**Saudi Arabia**, referring to the pre-conditions of Annex 1 Parties, asked how Parties could force actions from Parties who are not Parties to the KP (in an apparent reference to the US) before committing to the second commitment period. That was going beyond the mandate of the KP and was not a condition within the control of the KP Parties. This, it said, was an indirect way to say that Parties could not accept a second commitment period.

**China** said that Annex 1 Parties say that their commitments have pre-conditions. If the pre-condition is related to whether or not Parties would undertake a second commitment period, there was no room for discussion but if the pre-condition is about enhancing the level of ambition, that is something that can be discussed. It said that its pre-condition was that there was need for the second commitment period. If the Annex 1 Parties agreed to the second commitment period, then Parties could talk about the political and technical issues.

The vice-chair of the AWG-KP, Ms. Madeleine Rose Diouf from Senegal, said that a further meeting to continue discussions would be held.

A stocktaking session of the AWG-KP is also expected on Friday, 8 April.