

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Bureau for Development Policy
Environment and Energy Group



Summary of April 2011 UNFCCC Inter-sessional Negotiations

Governments recently reconvened in Bangkok, Thailand, for the ongoing negotiations under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol. This session was the first meeting of the AWGs after the Cancun Agreements were adopted at COP 16/CMP 6 in Cancun, Mexico. In the three days before the official negotiations, parties participated in three one-day workshops mandated by the Cancun Agreements. The workshops addressed 1) developed country mitigation pledges, 2) developing country nationally-appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs) and 3) the Technology Mechanism under the Convention. In a collaborative and open exchange, parties presented their activities and views on the different topics. For detailed summaries of these meetings, please see Annex I.

The Agenda as Proxy

Within the main negotiating body under the Convention, many governments came away from Bangkok expressing a sense of frustration with the progress made at the session. Negotiations under the Convention stalled over what the agenda and focus of work should be in 2011—between taking forward the implementation elements of the Cancun Agreements (such as the NAMA registry and Adaptation Framework) and going back to the Bali Action Plan to address those issues that Cancun failed to resolve (such as work toward a legal treaty under the Convention).

Most developed country parties stated that the agenda should be based on the elements of the Cancun Agreements and provide a structure for discussing the implementation arrangements of the mechanisms established at COP 16/CMP 6. The G77 and China argued that an agenda based on the Cancun Agreements would be incomplete and should instead include the elements of the Bali Action Plan that were not addressed in the Cancun Agreements. The result of these discussions was that negotiations in 2011 will progress with a combination of both implementation of the Cancun Agreements as well as work on those issues not resolved in Cancun.

To Kyoto or Not to Kyoto

In Bangkok parties engaged in a renewed conversation on the way forward under the Kyoto Protocol, although major divisions remain between them. Developed countries restated that they want to see tangible evidence of major emitting non-Annex I parties undertaking ambitious NAMAs. In addition, many developed countries reiterated previous positions that it, for them, it is crucial to have clarity on the rules and methodologies that will apply to the 2nd commitment period (post-2012). Developing countries, on the other hand, demanded that the political commitment by developed countries must come first – before defining the rules – so that a post-2012 period is assured. There was little compromise.

Green Climate Fund

While not taken up in the formal negotiations in Bangkok, parties met informally within regional groupings to discuss the way ahead for the design and operationalisation of the Green Climate Fund (GCF). The majority of nominations for members were confirmed in Bangkok for the 40-government Transitional Committee mandated by the Cancun Agreements to design the fund¹. Parties confirmed that they would meet in New York immediately following the Bangkok sessions to confirm the remaining seats. The Transitional Committee will meet for the first time in Mexico City on 28-29 April; this meeting will likely focus on how the committee wants to undertake its significant task and what is achievable by Durban. From there, the committee will engage in the detailed technical discussions needed to design the GCF.

Annex I: Technical Workshop Reports

Workshop on Annex I mitigation targets

The workshop was structured around presentations from Annex I members states, most of whom outlined their mitigation actions and future pledges.

Developed countries (EU, Norway, Switzerland, Australia, US, Russia, Poland, Japan, Germany, New Zealand, Sweden, France, Iceland and UK) delivered the message that they will fulfill their commitments for the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol and that many already have the necessary policies and measures in place for meeting their future targets. The majority also nuanced this by explaining that their higher range of pledges are conditional (global agreement, including all major economies, rules on LULUCF, use of offsets). Japan assured the audience that it will continue to pay serious attention to the climate change even though after the recent disaster they have to reconsider all their policies. The US presentation was devoted mostly to the domestic action and legislation to be adopted, yet it is not known when it may be in place. It stressed that current administration is committed to the economy-wide 17% 2020 target compared to 2005 levels, although the final target will be formally communicated to the Secretariat only when the relevant policies and/or legislation is enacted.

Four presentations from developing countries (Brazil, Micronesia, India, Bolivia) stressed that conversion of political pledges into formal quantified emission limitations and reduction objectives (QELROs) should be clarified and issue of complementarity (the role of international carbon credit offsets) be considered. Bolivia advocated that with current pledges the burden of mitigation is transferred to developing countries, especially as use of international offsetting picks the "low hanging fruit" in developing countries. Many developing countries in their statements from the floor (and Micronesia in its presentation) emphasized the need to increase the ambition of developed countries targets so to close the gap between current pledges and those required by science.

More information could be found on http://unfccc.int/conference_programme/items/5884.php

¹ http://unfccc.int/cancun_agreements/green_climate_fund/items/5890.php

Workshop on NAMAs by developing countries

During a second day's workshop a number of presentations of countries and group of countries provided better understanding on the diversity of the nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs) submitted by developing country and their on the ground actions. There were as well explanations on some underlying assumptions on preparation of NAMAs, and finance, technology and capacity-building support needed for their implementation.

Some common underlying principles of the NAMAs presented were pointed out, such as voluntarily submitted; sustainable development as a guiding principle together with the economic growth; poverty eradication; importance of agriculture sector and the need for international support.

The submitted NAMAs of non Annex I parties so far are in a different form – from absolute numbers of reduction from a base year, percentage of deviation from the business as usual (BAU), energy intensity, carbon intensity, absolute numbers of tones of CO₂eqv reduced, measures in sectors, to individual projects. (Relevant document: FCCC/AWGLCA/2011/INF.1) This makes difficult to make calculations on the possible aggregate emission reductions or those in some cases of an individual country.

Presentations (Mexico, China, Ghana, India, Republic of Korea, Peru, AOSIS, Singapore, South Africa, Australia, Marshall Islands, Bangladesh, Brazil) identified enormous diversity in actions (from simple measures as cook stoves to economy wide low-emission development strategies and plans, including economic instruments as emission trading schemes), as well as identified broad diversion in national circumstances. Significant part of the presented NAMAs was announced to be domestically implemented (considering the fact that some of the countries are advanced developing countries). It was stressed that with international support developing countries will be able to deliver more emission reductions. (Presentations are available at: <http://unfccc.int/meetings/awg/items/5928.php>)

Some common barriers were identified, such as lack of initial finance, access to finance, human capacity, expertise in methodological issues, socio-economic problems, institutional problems. There was a discussion if common guidelines (on BAU, MRV, reporting) are needed (with some flexibility for different groups of countries) or given the wide diversity of national circumstances it will be left to the countries to decide. Some parties proposed common guidelines to be developed also for construction of baseline scenarios for BAU development, however, this was strongly opposed by some other parties, emphasizing that the national conditions and assumptions are so divers that common guidelines could not bring any value added to the process.

At the end there was a presentation by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), explaining that under GEF-5, countries could receive support in identifying long-term emission scenarios, identify options and costs, and develop MRV methodologies.

There were brief discussions on the registry, matching mechanism, interactions between NAMAs and carbon mechanisms, methodological issues, what is considered as a international support. It was mentioned that in some cases there is an overlap of the activities of the donors in identifying NAMAs in the same country.

It was decided that a written report will be produced for the workshop to be sent to the LCA and SBI, and in terms of future work more workshops are needed that could focus on the registry, domestically and internationally supported NAMAs, involving countries that have NAMAs but

without pledges. Although the workshop was found very useful and fruitful, it might be said that issues more of relevance for the negotiations (registry, domestic vs. international support, and methodological issues) were not broadly discussed and without proposals to be brought to the formal sessions.

Workshop on the Technology Mechanism

The Cancun Agreements created a Technology Mechanism (TM) under the Convention, comprised of a Technology Executive Committee (TEC), Climate Technology Centre (CTC), and Climate Technology Network (CTN). This workshop focused on parties' proposals for the function and form of the CTC and CTN.

A large number of parties made presentations of various models for the TM, many of which focused on a hub-and-spoke model for the CTC (hub) and CTN (spokes). Within this model, however, there was a selection of perspectives:

- Some parties proposed a global CTC that would support a global network of national and regional actors (the CTN); others advocated for a set of regional centres, rather than a single global institution. These views were not clearly split along group or developed/developing country lines.
- Australia was keen to promote a high level of autonomy for the CTC and CTN, whereas India indicated that the TEC should oversee and govern these implementation structures.
- On the competencies of the various parts of the TM, there was general agreement that the institutions must be responsive to country needs and requests, rather than top-down. It was noted, though, that the set of services will be a factor in determining the location or host of a global CTC.
- India indicated that in its view the TM should receive dedicated funding from the Green Climate Fund, whereas developed countries were more cautious about prescribing public financing arrangements. China suggested that the TEC should give guidance to the financial mechanism of the Convention, and that this should then direct a specific technology window in the Green Climate Fund.

Overall there was a very positive attitude among parties attending the workshops. The EU's suggestion that the TM could be operational by 2012 was encouraging in this respect.