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## **Summary of the UNFCCC Climate Change Conference in Bangkok, Thailand, 30 August – 5 September 2012**

Governments gathered in Bangkok, Thailand for an informal session of the UNFCCC negotiations 30 August – 5 September, 2012. The meeting was the first major meeting since the UNFCCC inter-sessional in Bonn, Germany held in May 2012. The Bangkok meeting was organised, primarily with the support of the Government of Qatar, as an informal session without the normal Secretariat services of interpretation and documentation preparation. As a result of this informal status no formal decisions were taken at the meeting in Bangkok but it was an important opportunity for parties to exchange views on the elements required for a successful outcome at the 18<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP) and 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP) to be held November-December 2012 in Doha, Qatar.

Informal meetings for three negotiating bodies were held in Bangkok, including the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention (AWG-LCA), the Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP) and a session of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP).

Over 1600 participants came to Bangkok, representing governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, academia, the private sector, indigenous peoples and the media. Without the formal structures of the regular negotiations, the organisation of the work in Bangkok took on a more relaxed, but not less serious tone as parties grappled with the numerous outstanding issues that require resolution in Doha.

### **Roundtables used to build confidence in the Durban Platform**

Bangkok took a step forward in the newest negotiating body, the 'Durban Platform' (ADP) which was agreed at COP-17 to launch a process that would increase ambition and develop a protocol, another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force under the Convention applicable to all parties for adoption no later than 2015 and for implementation from 2020.

After the protracted discussions in Bonn in May 2012 to agree on an agenda and co-chairs, substantive discussions under the Durban Platform started in Bangkok. In light of the conceptual nature of the process at its start, the co-chairs of the ADP organised a series of open-ended roundtable discussions on two themes: (1) a vision for the ADP and (2) enhancing ambition pre-2020. The co-chairs had also proposed to hold a third series of roundtable discussions to discuss how the 'Principles of the Convention' would be applied under the new agreement, especially 'common but differentiated responsibilities and capabilities' and the principle of 'equity'. However, the third roundtable was not convened in Bangkok as some groups of parties expressed the view that the proposed topic was a cross-cutting issue and it could be addressed within the other two roundtables in a manner in keeping with the delicately balanced two-workstream agenda agreed for the ADP in Bonn.

To help guide the discussions the co-chairs posted a series of questions for parties to respond to and they actively engaged with parties to encourage an interactive dialogue. While parties were at first

hesitant to move beyond general statements of initial positions, what developed over the course of the meeting in Bangkok was a dynamic exchange of views on the roundtable themes. At the closing informal plenary meeting of the ADP in Bangkok parties expressed the view that the discussions at this session had been constructive.

In the roundtable on vision for the ADP, many parties expressed their views on what the general contours of a new legal agreement should look like. Most parties agreed that the new instrument should be built on the positive features of the existing climate change regime while including new approaches and respecting the basic principles of the Convention. Developing countries emphasized strongly that the Durban Platform discussions should not be a forum for re-writing the principles of the Convention and highlighted the need to consider national circumstances noting that universal application does not necessarily mean uniformity in application. Developed countries emphasised that the new agreement would be 'applicable to all Parties' and should ensure that the climate regime remains dynamic with changing socio-economic realities.

In the roundtable on enhancing ambition many large emerging economy parties maintained a position that 'enhanced ambition' applies not only to mitigation, but also to adaptation, finance, technology and capacity building. Small island developing states (SIDS) and some other parties called for a focus on enhancing pre-2020 mitigation ambition so as to close the mitigation 'gap' identified between the current emissions reductions pledges on the table and an emissions pathway consistent with achieving the 2°C global goal agreed in Cancun at COP-16 in 2010. Developed country parties in particular stressed the need to consider new and innovative complementary actions and initiatives with a view to considering how the ADP process could encourage increased ambition both inside and outside of the Convention.

In both roundtable discussions developing countries in particular reiterated the importance of the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities', and the large emerging economies further emphasized their view that the principle of equity needed to be central to any new agreement. There was also discussion on the potential role for ministerial-level political guidance for the ADP process. Some groups of parties called for ministerial-level engagement at the pre-COP meeting scheduled for Korea in October and in Doha while other parties, including some large emerging economies felt that it was too early in the process to seek political guidance on issues under the ADP. Parties generally agreed that a work plan for 2013 under the two workstreams of the ADP should be agreed in Doha, however the modalities and level of detail of such a plan remains to be determined.

## **Kyoto Protocol a top priority for Doha**

A clear message on the Kyoto Protocol negotiation track was delivered in Bangkok: parties need to prioritize the Kyoto Protocol negotiations in Doha so that the second commitment period agreed politically in Durban can be smoothly initiated in 2013 without legal or operational ambiguity. There is an overall understanding that an amendment to the Kyoto protocol securing the 2<sup>nd</sup> commitment period has to be agreed and adopted in Doha and that the 2<sup>nd</sup> commitment period should start on 1 January 2013 following the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> commitment period in 2012.

The key outstanding political issues surrounding the Kyoto Protocol include the length, level of participation, and ambition for, the 2<sup>nd</sup> commitment period. In Bangkok, the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) made a joint statement calling for a 5-year commitment period to avoid locking in low mitigation ambition as compared with the longer 8-year term preferred by developed countries and some larger emerging economies who argue for the need for alignment with the start of implementation (in 2020) of the new agreement being discussed in the ADP. Developing parties generally called for increased ambition from developed parties in the KP discussions (the EU reiterated in Bangkok that it is very unlikely they will be able to increase their emissions reductions pledge before Doha) and have sought clarity about the still uncertain participation of countries such as Australia and New Zealand in the 2<sup>nd</sup> commitment period. An additional, and related political issue for resolution in Doha, is the need to clarify the rules for access to the Kyoto Protocol flexible mechanisms (mainly for the CDM) by those countries who would not accept quantified emission limitation or reduction objectives in the 2<sup>nd</sup> commitment period.

Some limited progress was made in Bangkok to further elaborate proposals to avoid the 'legal gap' between the 1<sup>st</sup> commitment period and the start of the 2<sup>nd</sup> commitment period. Some groups of developing countries (namely African countries and SIDS) called for the Kyoto Protocol amendments that will be adopted in Doha to be provisionally applied by parties starting 1 January 2013 pending their ratification by governments through their national processes. Many developed countries have signalled that while they intend to ratify the amendments to the Kyoto Protocol, they have constitutional or other legal constraints which will prevent them from provisionally applying those amendments prior to ratification.

While a range of technical issues also remain to be decided in Doha, some progress was made in Bangkok, for example developing countries reached a common position on the sensitive issue of surplus Assigned Amount Units (AAUs) which may be carried over from the 1<sup>st</sup> commitment period to the second, the risk feared by some parties is that 'hot air' created by loopholes in the system will negate the emissions reductions proposed by parties pledging commitments in the 2<sup>nd</sup> commitment period. It remains to be seen if the proposal on the table will be accepted in Doha by the countries holding surplus credits.

## **AWG-LCA: end of the road in Doha?**

A key component of the political bargain struck in Durban at COP-17 to create the ADP included the decision to extend the mandate of the AWG-LCA for one more year until COP-18 in Doha. This ad hoc working group was originally launched in 2007 in Bali at COP-13.

The main political and technical issues in the LCA relate to the widely differing views expressed by parties on whether the AWG-LCA should actually be closed in Doha or not. Several developing country parties signalled in Bangkok that they consider the work of LCA to be unfinished and want to extend its mandate again to reach an "agreed outcome" as required by the Bali Action Plan (agreed at COP-13). Other parties, mainly developed countries, consider the decisions in Cancun and Durban to comprise such an agreed outcome and that the unfinished work should continue under the bodies created for this purpose such as the Technology mechanism, Standing Committee on Finance, Adaptation Committee, Forum for Capacity Building, and Forum for Response measures.

In an attempt to identify areas of convergence on the outstanding issues, informal meetings were held in Bangkok to discuss issues mandated by COP 17, including on: shared vision; developed country mitigation; developing country mitigation; the Review of the long term global goal; REDD+; sectoral approaches; and various approaches, including new market mechanisms. Technology, adaptation, finance, capacity building, response measures, and economies in transition (EITs) were also considered.

The progress in Bangkok on these subjects was captured in an informal note prepared under the responsibility of LCA chair. Many parties expressed frustration at the closing informal plenary meeting in Bangkok on the slow pace of progress on these issues. Divergences have become sharper in many areas, while convergences seem far off.

On finance for example, developing countries called for a decision in Doha on long-term sources of finance, operationalization and capitalization of the Green Climate Fund (GCF), and sought quantified assurances of support for the mid-term post 'Fast-Start Finance' period from 2013-2015. Developed countries pointed to their results in scaling up finance and expressed the strong view that a numerical figure was not required to encourage enhanced provision of means of implementation and that national economic and political circumstances should be taken into consideration. Against this backdrop, countries bidding to host<sup>1</sup> the GCF reached out to parties in Bangkok by conducting presentations and actively seeking support for their candidatures.

## A busy schedule for Doha

Delegates were reminded numerous times in Bangkok that Doha will see the unprecedented concurrent convening of 7 different negotiating bodies; the AWG-LCA, AWG-KP, ADP, SBSTA, SBI, COP, and CMP, in addition to the normal high-level ministerial segment during the annual climate change conference.

In Bangkok there was a widely held view that Doha should focus on strong outcomes under the KP and LCA and that the ADP discussions should not distract from the tasks at hand - to complete the mandate agreed in Durban to launch the 2<sup>nd</sup> commitment period and conclude the work of the LCA. There was also a general acceptance on the need to agree in Doha to a workplan for the ADP in 2013 which may include a variety of submissions and inter-sessional and/or in-sessional workshops. Given the informal nature of the Bangkok meeting the bulk of the work of negotiators in proposing, streamlining and agreeing decision texts lies ahead during the precious few hours available for each topic in Doha.

Additional work in Doha will focus on clarifying and operationalizing the numerous structures and implementation arrangements that have been created over the last several years including the Adaptation Committee and framework, loss and damage work programme, Nairobi Work Program, Standing Committee on Finance, Technology Executive Committee and technology centre and network, and capacity building. Once again the process will be tested to find, and agree on, practical and implementable decisions that meet the political expectations of parties so that the UNFCCC process can deliver for countries on the ground on a scale commensurate with the challenge of climate change.

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<sup>1</sup> Countries bidding to host the GCF: Germany, Korea, Switzerland, Mexico, Namibia, Poland

## Upcoming Meetings

- 1-3 October in Cape Town, South Africa: 2<sup>nd</sup> Workshop on Long-term Finance
- 4-6 October in Cape Town, South Africa: 2<sup>nd</sup> Standing Committee Meeting
- 9 - 11 October in Barbados: SIDS Expert meeting on loss and damage
- 22 – 23 October in Seoul, Korea: Pre-COP Ministerial level meeting
- 26 November – 7 December in Doha, Qatar: COP 18/CMP 8