

Lively exchange over need for additional fall meeting

Bonn, 14 June (Hilary Chiew)-- The 'touch-base' session of the Ad-hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA) under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on 13 June saw a lively debate on the necessity for an additional meeting between Bonn and Durban in the autumn.

The Chair of the AWG-LCA Daniel A. Reifsnyder (United States) raised the issue if there was need for another session in autumn should there be funding as it was important to have further elaboration of negotiating texts. He asked Parties for feedback on the structure of the meeting and if it should be expert or workshop type meetings, or to move into informal groups for negotiations as that would save time and effort.

He said that South Africa, the in-coming presidency for the 17th Meeting of the Conference of Parties of the UNFCCC, is conducting informal consultations on how to take the work forward. (See TWN Update 17 for details).

Several developed countries voiced their scepticism of the usefulness of a meeting in autumn while a number of developing countries said it was necessary, to ensure a balanced and comprehensive outcome in Durban.

India supported the need for a further meeting to consider all issues on the table and that the session should include all subsidiary bodies and ad-hoc working groups as well. It said suggestions (by developed country Parties) for holding joint contact group meetings of the AWG-LCA and AWG-KP (Ad-hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex 1 Parties under the Kyoto Protocol) may be a bit premature unless the Bonn session makes substantial progress. There were technical issues that needed to be completed and some were of a long-term nature. There were also issues that have fallen off the

table of Cancun that need to be brought back, he said, adding that cross-cutting issues which involved issues of financing in adaptation, mitigation and technology need to be addressed.

Chair Reifsnyder clarified that he did not suggest a joint meeting of AWG-LCA and AWG-KP but meeting in contact groups (of the respective AWGs without a full plenary of those two bodies).

Saudi Arabia said as this is a Party-driven process, it is for an additional meeting and any programme of work should enhance the understanding among participants. The negotiations should be conducted in the AWG-LCA in a formal session. It could not accept looking at texts at the fall meeting as it was not expecting to come out with texts as this is being developed by Parties. On prioritising issues, it said all issues are crucial to cut a deal in Durban and if they are not onboard there will be no deal in Durban. It said there was a general tendency to refer to the Cancun Agreement as a milestone, and for Saudi Arabia, the reference point is the (2007) Bali Action Plan. It asked Parties not to limit submissions to only what had been decided in Cancun.

In response, Chair Reifsnyder said there is no question about the Bali Action Plan being the mandate as that issue was resolved in Bangkok.

Singapore said the question of a fall meeting should not be framed as whether there is a text or not as the level of maturity of issues in the different informal groups varied. What is key is whether Parties are building understanding and that is happening. Even if there is no text from every group, we need to proceed to build understanding. It said there was need that the number of spin-off groups will remain and sufficient time allocated for all groups to ensure balance to avoid the perception of selective

preference of issues.

South Africa supported the idea for a fall session to be a continuation of work in Bonn, adding that it should address all issues and to the extent possible starting with texts.

Barbados said it was important to think of the maturity of issues and what technical work needed to be done and suggested that the Chair could be assigned to compile those views in a fashion that can be better understood by Parties.

Venezuela highlighted the proliferation of “innovative ideas” outside the AWG-LCA that were not communicated to the AWG-LCA. (It was referring to proposals by South Africa on consultations and ministerial meetings outside the formal process). Invitations to those meetings are not open and not all developing countries can afford to attend them as they are not budgeted for. It wanted the Chair to ensure that there is reporting back to the AWG-LCA the results of those meetings. It also said the fall meeting should be about advancing the texts but acknowledged that not all issues can have texts by then.

Nicaragua expressed concerns that some Parties were placing conditions on having a fall meeting. It said Parties should appreciate that it was due to good planning last year that there were decisions in Cancun but may not be so in Durban if there is insufficient work.

Brazil supported the need for a fall session for detailed work to move us quickly into consideration of texts.

China said Parties already agreed at the last session in Bangkok to move the process in a balanced manner on all issues of the Bali Action Plan and was happy with progress in Bonn.

Switzerland said it also misunderstood the Chair on the joint contact group but felt there could be a huge benefit of a joint-session for the AWGs’ contact groups. It said the autumn meeting will only be useful if Parties are able to look at negotiating texts which will depend on the progress in Bonn. It was not convinced that all

topics needed the same amount of time but progress is needed in all issues. Some issues need further methodological and technical work.

Japan said Parties should conduct discussions in a professional manner to use the limited time as efficiently as possible. Referring to wrangling over the agendas of the AWG-LCA meeting in Bangkok and that of the subsidiary bodies in Bonn, it wondered if it could explain to taxpayers the necessity for a fall meeting. Echoing Switzerland, it said there was different speed in different group discussions and as the issue of mitigation is complex and important, it suggested utilising some spin-off groups on the issues of MRV (measurement, reporting and verification), ICA (International Consultation and Analysis) and IAR (International Assessment and Review).

Australia was not convinced that an additional session is warranted pending a review on progress at the end of the week in Bonn. It was frustrated by the agenda fight and welcomed the Chair’s suggestion of moving straight into contact groups.

The United States while open to the idea of a fall session in order to reach a balanced package in Durban, welcomed going straight into contact groups and informal meetings.

Earlier, Parties heard reports from facilitators of 10 groups of the negotiations so far with many saying that discussions were rich with converging and diverging views as well as views on conditions to move towards a legally-binding agreement in Durban.

The informal groups under the AWG-LCA are on shared vision; finance; mitigation commitments by developed country Parties, nationally appropriate mitigation actions by developing countries; REDD-plus (reducing emission from deforestation and forest degradation etc); various approaches including opportunities for using markets; economic and social consequences of response measures; adaptation; technology development and transfer; and legal options.