

Durban Platform: Developed countries outline 'vision' for new agreement

Bangkok, 1 Sept (Meena Raman) – At the roundtable discussions held in Bangkok under the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform (ADP), on the 'vision' of the new post-2020 climate regime, developed countries including the United States, Australia, Russia, the European Union, Japan, Norway and Switzerland outlined what they wanted to see in the new agreement.

The US highlighted some characteristics of the deal which needed to be "flexible, dynamic, take account of national circumstances and individual capacities of countries" to attract enough Parties to join the new agreement. The other developed countries also reflected similar ideas, insisting that such an approach was not a rewriting of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) but one that reflected the "changed context" of "new realities" that required a "dynamic differentiation" among developing countries.

Russia wanted the "notorious firewall" between developed and developing countries to be removed.

The discussions on the 'vision' began on Thursday, 30 August and continued on Friday, 31 August.

Dr. Jonathan Pershing (the lead climate change negotiator for the US) stressed the "compelling need" to act to address climate change (he referred to the most recent experiences in the US involving serious drought in more than 60% of the counties, resulting in reduction in food supplies and bad weather affecting the Republican Convention in Florida these past days), and then said that Parties would need to think about what would happen if there was no climate change agreement (post-2020). Hence, it

was useful to think of what "we would get" that would be additional to the UNFCCC.

He said that the new agreement must benefit all Parties, stressing that nothing is sustainable if it only "benefits one side". Pershing stressed the need for "incentives for engagement" in the new agreement and that such an agreement was better than no agreement.

(This prompted one observer to remark privately during the session that this sounded like "my way or no way".)

Pershing then outlined what the characteristics of such an agreement could be, looking at what has worked and what has not. He said that in the history of the process, the Kyoto Protocol (KP) works for some but not for all. He asked those who do not have commitments under Annex B of the KP (the developing countries) if they were prepared to take on legally-binding commitments. He remarked that not a single new country – except those who joined the EU – are prepared to do this. Hence, if this was the model, then it falls short, Pershing said further. He said that the "costs of this model outweighed its value".

He then asked what could work and referred to how Parties brought commitments and actions forward beyond what was delivered under the KP through the Cancun pledges for emission reductions.

Pershing stressed the importance of 'flexibility', which allowed for the consideration of "national circumstances" to forward pledges on the table and to see what others are doing in a transparent process. He also said that this was not time bound but would be "dynamic" with iterations, review and a process to modify actions. This was a model that is working and not one which tells Parties what to do. Pershing stressed that the

characteristics of the deal needed to be “flexible, dynamic, takes account of national circumstances and individual capacities”. If this was not the case, it could not attract enough Parties.

On the issue of finance, he asked where Parties were on “massive new financial transfers”. He said that the reality of the world was that most of the “generous donors” in Annex 2 of the Convention are facing difficult political times. The US was facing a deficit; the EU was having difficulties in the Euro Zone and Japan is facing a long-term economic problem. He asked how countries could commit to provision of financial resources in the future when they did not have money now.

Australia referred to the notion of “climate effectiveness” which would move Parties to a global goal and international framework for domestic action. On the issue of the new agreement being “applicable to all”, it said that this means broad participation by all major economies. There was need to design a new agreement that attracts the participation of all countries and accommodates diversity, flexibility, takes account of a full range of national circumstances and capabilities. It should be universal but not uniform in its application. It should promote the increasing of ambition with a process for broad economic transformation to close the emissions gap and is capable of evolving over time responding to economic, scientific and political realities. Australia said that having schedules (reflecting the mitigation actions of Parties) could be considered.

Australia also proposed a framework for domestic implementation with the creation of incentives for climate action, including broad and liquid carbon markets to address the costs of abatement.

It said that this approach did not amount to a rewriting of the Convention but was a “dynamic approach” to the Convention, taking into account the changing context, which was not static. Australia said that there was need to explore how ‘differentiation’ can accommodate the national circumstances of all countries with differentiation among developed countries and differentiation among developing countries.

Russia in response to the issue raised by developing countries that the Convention should not be renegotiated, said it agreed with that but there was need not to avoid the recognition of

“new realities of the 21st century”. What was relevant in 1995 may not be the case for 2012 and 2020. Hence, there could not be a freezing of “parameters and realities”.

What Russia was aspiring for was to combine the efforts of developed and developing countries and not to retain the “notorious firewall” between the two anymore. The new agreement should not prevent the contribution by all and those who can do more.

In reference to the work of the ADP in relation to the other working group on long-term cooperative action under the Convention (AWG-LCA), it said that Russia’s intention is not to treat the ADP “as a dumpsite for unresolved issues”. It did not want a “toxic spill-over or contamination”.

Norway said that the ADP’s exercise is not to rewrite the Convention. However, in 2020 the Convention will be 30 years old and there is need to discuss how the principles of the Convention should be operationalised in 2020 and 2030, taking into account economic strength, capabilities and emission levels of countries.

It said that there was need to have an assessment criteria to see if an agreement is effective. Does it deal with the temperature rise of less than 2 degree C? Is it fair over time? Is it realistic and possible to implement? Is it flexible enough for future trends in the world?

For it to be fair, effective and flexible, it must be science-based and capture global emissions in 2020 and beyond. It must include countries’ relative capabilities. Norway said that universality of application is not uniformity. Differentiation is key but there has to be a “dynamic differentiation” with different models, said Norway.

The **EU** said it was also not rewriting or renegotiating the Convention but called for a new approach to achieve the collective goal. It was for a ‘protocol’ under the Convention.

It said that in relation to the principles of the Convention, the context of their application is important as we are not in 1990 but in 2012 and 2020. Many developing countries are richer than they were in 1990 and their emission trends have also changed. All have legally-binding spectrum of commitments associated with the levels of emissions and all Parties can take fair and

ambitious actions in accordance with their respective responsibilities and capabilities.

The EU in its intervention during the ‘ambition’ (of emissions cuts) discussion said that it is unlikely to see changes in the pledges of developed countries to reflect the higher level (of ambition) this year.

Japan said that the future framework had to be flexible and dynamic, taking into account national circumstances. The principles of the Convention should be dynamic and evolving, in accordance with economic and social realities. It

agreed with the EU on the changing context since 1992.

Switzerland said that the new regime should be effective and ambitious, with the participation of all. It should be fair and dynamic, reflecting the economic and social realities of 2020.

(The views of developing countries on the ADP outcome expressed at the plenary session on 30 August are reported in TWN Bangkok Climate News Update #2: “Durban Platform outcome must not rewrite UNFCCC, say developing countries”).