

Cancun meetings begin with call for “balanced outcome.”

Cancun, Nov 29 (Hilary Chiew) - The Cancun climate-related meetings were launched at a welcome ceremony by the Mexican President Felipe Calderon, and with opening plenaries of the various bodies of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Indicating its priorities, the G77 and China called for a balanced outcome between the two negotiating tracks (in the groups on the Kyoto Protocol and on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention) and stressed the need to establish a new climate fund under the Convention and an oversight mechanism for climate financing overall, as well as new institutional arrangements for adaptation and technology transfer.

The main meetings in Cancun are the 16th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the 6th session of the Conference of Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP6). The working groups (on the Kyoto Protocol and long term cooperative action under the Convention) and subsidiary bodies (on scientific and technological advice, and on implementation) will also be meeting.

At the welcoming ceremony, Mexican President Felipe Calderon said climate change is beginning to make us pay for the fatal error that humanity has committed against the earth and billions of human beings are expecting the Parties meeting in Cancun to speak for all humanity and for the people who are suffering the ravages of climate change.

Evoking the characteristics of Mayan goddess Ixchel – reason, creativity and weaving - UNFCCC executive secretary Christiana Figueres

urged Parties to weave together the elements of a solid response to climate change using both reason and creativity.

She said the tapestry is urgent as concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere had reached their highest level since pre-industrial times; because the poorest and most vulnerable need predictable assistance to face a serious problem and the multilateral climate change process needs to remain the trusted channel for rising to the challenge.

The task, she added, isn't easy but achievable as demonstrated in past achievements in the form of the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol.

However, Figueres acknowledged that there are a number of politically charged issues that have not yet benefitted from a willingness to compromise, notably the need to avoid a gap after the first commitment period (for greenhouse gas emissions reduction) of the Kyoto Protocol, the mobilisation of long term finance and the understanding of fairness that will guide long term mitigation efforts.

The President of the COP 16, Patricia Espinosa, who is also the Foreign Minister of Mexico warned that the credibility of the multilateral system is at stake. At this juncture, she said, Parties have to make concrete commitments and she urged for flexibility. Achieving this commitment doesn't mean we give up our goal; it will be a demonstration that dialogue and cooperation are the best ways to face major challenges, she added.

She said as the host, Mexico will conduct the process in a transparent manner as it has done until now to foster cooperation and encourage confidence.

Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Dr Rajendra Pauchari warned that delaying mitigation actions will only increase costs globally and unfairly to some regions in the world where the communities had hardly contributed to greenhouse gas emissions increase in the past.

He said even limiting temperature rise to 2°Celsius would still mean that some impacts would not be avoided and reiterated that the IPCC's 4th Assessment Report clearly estimated that global emissions should peak no later than 2015 and decline thereafter.

On the 5th Assessment Report, Pauchari said 3,000 nominations were submitted for the AR5 and 831 been selected as lead authors and review editors and the sCOPE of research has been expanded to include focus subject like potential impacts of geo-engineering. The next four years would be marked by intense actions of the IPCC and the first report would be ready by Sept 2013 while the synthesis report would be completed by November 2014.

At the COP opening session a debate took place on decision-making procedures (regarding consensus and voting). During the adoption of the rules of procedure, **Papua New Guinea (PNG)** raised its concern over the maintenance of the position of Parties in setting aside draft rule 42 (which relates to decision-making procedures that havenot been agreed to yet after all these years) as contained in document FCCC/CP/1996/2.

PNG said it made a proposal regarding the draft rules of procedure at COP 15 in Copenhagen. However, while Parties acknowledged that the adoption of the rules of procedure was important, delegations maintained that the draft rules should continue to be applied with the exception of draft rule 42.

It said in view that there are several decisions to move forward in Cancun, and the exclusion of draft rule 42 is akin to some Parties holding the process hostage. Unfortunately, it said, as climate change is such a challenge we cannot move forward at the pace of the sloth. Citing the rejection of the Copenhagen Accord on the last day of COP 15 in the Danish capital last year, it said the situation could have been averted with rule 42.

When all else fail and when consensus is not possible, rule 42 could help in moving important decisions forward, it said.

Rule 42 states: *The Parties shall make every effort to reach agreement on all matters of substance by consensus. If all efforts to reach consensus have been exhausted and no agreement has been reached, the decision shall, as a last resort, be taken by a two-thirds majority vote of the Parties present and voting ...*

In response, **Bolivia** said it was obliged to take the floor to clarify that what happened at Copenhagen was due to the fact that the rule of multilateralism was not followed. It said a group of countries tried to impose their views on others and tried to twist our arms at 3 am on December 18 (2009) with a document (the Copenhagen Accord). Hence, it said after Copenhagen, it is more essential that the rule of consensus is preserved.

India said consensus is the paramount principle that we have always operated and held together. It said in Nagoya (COP 10 of the Convention on Biological Diversity in October 2010 and the Meeting of Parties of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety)), it was the basis of consensus that led to the protocols (on access and benefit sharing, and on liability and redress for damage caused by genetically modified organisms).

Supporting Bolivia and India, **Saudi Arabia** reminded that consensus didn't prevent Parties from adopting the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol in the past.

PNG said the point it raised is to deal with the concept of last resort and conceded to letting the President of the COP to undertake consultations on this matter.

The COP President urged Asian delegations to continue discussion to decide the host for COP 18. Initially, Qatar has made an offer but South Korea has also made a similar offer at the Tianjin climate meeting in October. Meanwhile, South Africa confirmed its hosting of COP 17 in Durban from November 28 to December 9 next year.

Representing Group of 77 and China, Yemen said it is time to secure an outcome that fulfils the mandate that Parties agreed upon in Bali (COP 13).

It stressed that balance between the two negotiation tracks – the Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments of Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP) and the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long term Cooperative Action under the Convention (AWG-LCA) –

must be respected and that balance in the degree of details of decisions within each track must be maintained.

It added that whatever outcome we might reach in Cancun must not compromise or prejudice the overall objective of reaching a comprehensive, fair, ambitious and legally binding outcome in the future.

It said one of the key components of the Cancun outcome is finance, reiterating its proposal for the New Fund and for Governance and Oversight of Climate Finance, and the provision by developed countries through a percentage of their GNP to address climate change in developing countries.

A decision to establish a new climate change fund must address the four components – structure, scope, scale and sources.

It said the group also supports the establishment of a Standing Committee to be supervised, at present, by the AWG-LCA and ultimately by the Subsidiary Body on Implementation.

The steering committee would provide guidance to the operating entities of the Financial Mechanism, make recommendation to other organisation dealing with climate change finance to ensure coherence in delivering of climate finance, assure the accountability of the operating entity, assess the adequacy of climate finance for the developing countries, manages registry for measuring, reporting and verifying the fulfilment of contributions by developed countries, flow of total financial resources and review the contributions by the developed countries.

The Group, it said, would like to reiterate its desire to immediately engage on the two issues, the establishment of the new Fund under the Convention and a mechanism for continued governance of this fund, with a view to their finalisation at the earliest.

It also stressed the importance of establishing the adequate institutional arrangements for adaptation and technology transfer.

It underlined the fact that developing countries continue to suffer from the adverse impacts of climate change while there is a lack of inflow of capital to the Special Climate Change Fund and the Least Developed Countries Fund, bearing in mind that these funds are under-funded to start with. It called for more contributions particularly

for the latter and to treat adaptation in an equal manner as the case for mitigation.

It also expressed its concerns on the trends visualised in the report on national greenhouse gas inventory data from Annex I Parties (developed countries) for the period 1990 to 2007 where it showed an increase of 11% of emissions excluding Land-use, Land-use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) and by 12.8% including LULUCF, a tendency that goes against their commitments. Therefore, further actions are needed in order to assure the fulfilments of existing commitments of developed country Parties and their compliance.

Speaking on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), Grenada said evidence of climate change is all around with the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) describing 2010 as a year with an unprecedented sequence of extreme weather events. The evidence is clear that climate change is happening at an unprecedented rate and if left unchecked could bring damage to many people.

Referring to the hurricane that destroyed 60% of the GDP of St Lucia and the cyclone that hit Cook Islands and damaging 80% of houses, it said Parties could and must do better and work with a heightened sense of urgency. Business as usual must end; we the small island states must be able to survive, it added.

We need actions now that radically limit growth of GHG and peaking of emissions by 2015. We need actions to bring global emission down to a level that will ensure survival of our countries and our culture, it stressed.

To do this, it said two critical outcomes are necessary in Cancun – a legally-binding instrument as the main outcome of the AWG-LCA and a work programme to conclude in South Africa (in 2011) a new protocol.

Democratic Republic of Congo speaking on behalf of the African Group said Parties must continue working towards achieving concrete results to achieve a legally-binding agreement in South Africa next year.

It said agreement of a comprehensive framework is a priority outcome in Cancun and it would need developed countries to agree to new obligations and predictable funding that is additional to Official Development Aid (ODA), and committed to ensure that COP 16 will produce concrete

results in key areas that advance global climate change agenda.

On the conclusion of the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, Parties must ensure that a second commitment period enters into force, it said.

Venezuela, speaking on behalf of the ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America) stressed the importance of the Kyoto Protocol and said the UN cannot allow it to disappear due to boycott by one country (referring to the United States).

It said ALBA and other G77 and China countries stand united to achieve consolidation of the second commitment period as this should be the concrete outcome of Cancun so that there is no legal vacuum between the first and second commitment periods of the Protocol.

Lesotho representing the Least Developed Countries (LDC) said it is not in favour of those who want to see Cancun as the demise of the UNFCCC process as this is cannot be accepted. It said Cancun should provide fresh impetus as climate change will not disappear by itself and the UNFCCC should remain the central platform to address the problem. Continuation and completion of the Bali Roadmap is critical to the Convention.

It said LDCs attached high expectation to the adaptation plan and called for establishment of a new global climate fund and an ad hoc finance committee to operationalise the fund. The issue of IPRs (intellectual property rights) which are a barrier to technology transfer should be dealt with.

Speaking for the Umbrella Group, Australia said the group is committed to legally-binding mitigation commitments by all major economies which include many countries around this room that represented 80% of global emissions as reflected in the pledges in the Copenhagen Accord

and that Parties should now anchor these pledges as the basis for future work.

Recognising the importance of finance for developing countries, it said collectively the contributions for fast-start are already close to the US\$30 billion (pledged in the Accord) and a number of the group's members had published details of the financing through the range of bilateral and multilateral channels including REDD-plus (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) activities.

Belgium representing the European Union said making progress for a post-2012 regime is urgent as science tells us that the window is closing as indicated by the recent World Meteorological Organisation findings which show continuing increase in greenhouse gas concentration in the atmosphere even with the economic recession in 2009.

It is expecting a balanced package in both negotiation tracks and the meeting in Cancun must put in place institution and architectural arrangements on the ground. Parties must capture progress and make incremental steps needed for all issues including MRV (measuring, reporting and verification), finance, adaptation, REDD-plus and capacity-building.

It said the negotiation documents and elements suggested by the Chair (of the AWG-LCA) should enable Parties to start immediately to construct the balanced package and to limit the number of key issues for political decisions (in the second week when ministers arrive).

It said multilateralism within the UN framework remains in the core of finding solutions and the EU is optimistic and believed that Cancun can deliver a substantial outcome. The EU role is to make a legally-binding outcome in line with the 2°C objective.