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SBI session closes on a positive note, with more to be done

Cancun, 6 Dec (Hilary Chiew) - The 33rd session of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) closed on the night of 4 December with the adoption of 14 conclusions and decisions respectively.

Overall, Parties have found the session to be effective and useful as it allowed Parties, particularly the Group of 77 and China, to be engaged constructively in discussions in order to achieve real progress on different issues under the SBI.

Developing countries underscored the importance of the work of the SBI, the need for more efforts towards implementation-oriented decisions and conclusions on important issues to be adopted by the Conference of Parties (COP) in enabling them to deal with the effects of climate change.

The key decisions were the extension and expansion of the mandate of the Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG) by 5 years and the highlighting of Annex I (developed countries) Parties' poor records in emissions reduction based on the review reports of their greenhouse gas inventory data for the periods 1990-2007 and 1990-2008.

Representing the G77 and China, Yemen said the SBI is the body responsible for implementing climate change related activities and it underlined the word implementation.

Therefore, it would like to see more efforts towards implementation-oriented decisions and conclusions on important issues to be adopted by the Conference of Parties (COP) in enabling developing countries to deal with the difficulties they are facing in terms of lack of technical and financial support, predictability of funding and the provision of the agreed full costs for national communications. This, it said, will eventually allow them to overcome the barriers on implementing activities and programmes on adaptation and mitigation of climate change.

The Group, it said, considers the operation of the Adaptation Fund and the direct access to funding to be an excellent example of successes that Parties have achieved, which will help pave the road for an equal and balanced treatment of adaptation, in providing funding as it has been historically given to mitigation.

It welcomed the review process of the Adaptation Fund and its institutional arrangements that will be conducted in 2011 as important steps.

It reiterated the group's concerns articulated in its statement at the opening plenary (30 November) of key issues, namely, review of the financial mechanism; governance of long term finance; review of the Adaptation Fund and its institutional arrangements; implementation of decision 1/CP.10 (Buenos Aires programme of work on adaptation and response measure); lack of inflow of capital to the Special Climate Change Fund and the LDC Fund to enable developing countries to deal with the adverse impacts of climate change; predictability of funding; and the provision of the agreed full costs for the preparation of National Communications from non-Annex I (developing) countries.

On development and transfer of technology, it called for the creation of a technology mechanism consisting of the key elements that are necessary for scaling up of development and transfer of technology for adaptation and mitigation by the developed countries. Hence it is important that financing technology transfer should come from public resources of developed countries.

In recognising the work of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) carried out under the Poznan Strategic Programme on development and transfer of technologies, the Group strongly recommended the GEF to align these activities with those of the Technology Mechanism to be established under the UNFCCC.

It said future sessions of SBI must switch from the habitual 'to take note of documents' to a proactive action to raise (findings of those documents and reflect them) as COP decisions. It was referring to the National Greenhouse Gas (GHG) inventory data for the period 1990-2007 which showed Annex I Parties with an increased trend of GHG emissions. A strong message must be sent to all Parties for such countries to limit and effectively reduce their anthropogenic emissions of GHG, enhance their GHG sinks and establish a mechanism to ensure compliance.

At the same time, the Group considers that it is urgent to adopt a COP decision to implement the recommendations prepared by the Consultative Group of Experts on National Communications (NC), for non-Annex I Parties to cope with the constraints and gaps affecting non-Annex I Parties in the process of and preparation of their NCs and the assessment of their capacity-building needs.

Lesotho speaking on behalf of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) said the SBI is a key component of the UNFCCC process as it oversees implementation of climate change activities on the ground. In our view, the 33rd session of the SBI has been a tremendous success and therefore, Cancun has registered some success already.

It said the item on matters relating to LDCs addressed issues fundamental to the LDC programme particularly to assist the effort of this group of countries with acknowledged extremely limited capacity to adapt to the effects of climate change.

It further said the LDC work programme provides for the Group an opportunity to implement programmes to respond to the challenges of climate change. The NAPA (National Adaptation Programme of Actions) story is a success story. Forty-four countries have their NAPAs approved by the Global Environment Facility Council with a number of them already under implementation.

The agenda item on LDC Fund was debated and completed to the satisfaction of the LDC Group. It appreciates the decision for GEF to facilitate in the implementation of the remaining broader elements of the LDC work programme. These include development of longer term national adaptation plans that aim at deepening the efforts to mainstream climate change in the LDCs.

It welcomed the decision to expand the LEG membership from 12 to 13 which included three experts from Annex I countries in addition to 9 and now 10 experts from the LDC Group. The varied and diverse backgrounds of this membership result in the LEG becoming a very effective tool to build and to transfer capacity.

It said further that the LEG has ably performed its mandate to support the LDC Group in preparation and implementation of NAPAs, and welcome the draft decision of the SBI to extend the mandate of the LEG by 5 years.

It said it is now clear to the world and also a source of pride to submit that the NAPA process, the LDCF and the LEG, are the best practices in implementing programmes, and it hopes for a continuation of this practice.

It thanked countries that have made financial contributions to the LDCF and those that have offered financial, technical and expert support to the work of the LEG. It further requested other countries that have not yet done so to make contributions in support of the LDC work programme.

Belgium, representing the European Union (EU) said it was encouraged that Parties were able to extend the LEG mandate as well as coming to a positive conclusion on the review of the LDCF as it showed that Parties have the capacity to build consistent adaptation support for developing countries.

It said the 4th review of the (UNFCCC) Financial Mechanism has been successfully concluded as well as the assessment of the Special Climate Change Fund and additional guidance to the GEF was issued, all of which should enhance the provision of financial resources for the implementation of the Convention.

It welcomed the conclusions of the Poznan strategy programme on technology transfer and on the long-term programme on technology transfer. It is pleased with the spirit of compromise demonstrated by Parties and the outcome of the discussion on national communications and inventories for both Annex I and non-Annex I Parties.

It is further pleased to see the progress made with regards to ways for enhancing the participation of observer organisations in the UNFCCC process during the coming year and welcomes the workshop to be held in 2011.

Despite these positive results, the EU regretted that once again there is lack of progress on the completion of the 2nd comprehensive review of the capacity-building framework.

It stressed that work to support the implementation is key to any climate change policy and Parties have to assure that even when negotiating a future regime, due attention is given to advance implementation.

In the intervention on increasing observation organisations participation, **Mexico** said the move should also include the idea of creating a new government constituency for parliament and legislative assemblies.

Tebtebba, representing the indigenous peoples' caucus called on Parties to support and strengthen indigenous peoples' participation in the UNFCCC process. It said in other UN conventions, these same Parties had recognised indigenous peoples' contribution and it looks forward for these examples to be replicated in the UNFCCC.

On capacity-building under the Convention, co – chair Marie Jaudet of France reported that the contact group made limited progress as Parties' views differ considerably. Therefore, they will deliberate on the issue again at the next SBI session and hope to conclude the work by COP 17 (next year in South Africa). She said Parties expressed their disappointment for not concluding the agenda item on the second comprehensive review of the Capacity-building framework.

She also reported that another agenda item – capacity-building under the Kyoto Protocol – failed to produce an agreement. Due to time constraint Parties decided to continue at the 34th SBI session, based on the draft text from the 32nd session of the SBI with the view to recommend a draft decision for adoption at COP 17.

On the agenda item dealing with NCs and greenhouse gas inventory data from Annex I Parties, **Bolivia** pointed out that not only that developed countries are historically responsible for climate change, it is also clear that the emissions level from various Annex I Parties which are not Economies-In-Transition continue with a growing trend of emissions, some even doubling their emissions from 1990 level.

As such, it said the FCCC/SBI/2009/12 report that registered emission of Annex I Parties for the period 1990-2007 must be taken seriously by the SBI as that constitutes the main source of information for the implementation of the Convention.

While it had approved the draft conclusion and decision, Bolivia said it is frustrated and wanted to express concerns that Parties can't reach consensus on the need to highlight the failure of specific Annex I Parties in the draft texts.

The draft decision, however, request Parties included in Annex I with increased trends of GHG emissions for the period 1990-2007, to adopt national policies and take corresponding measures on the mitigation of climate change, by limiting and effectively reducing its anthropogenic emissions of GHG and protecting and enhancing its GHG sinks and reservoirs in compliance with their commitments.

The draft decision also invites Parties and admitted observer organisations to submit to the secretariat, by 28 April 2011, their views on possible ways to address the fact that some Annex I Parties are not fulfilling their commitments of reducing their GHG emissions, established under the Convention.

Bolivia had stressed throughout the three-day Contact Group meetings on this matter that it isn't enough that Parties 'take note' of those reports. It also preferred to have the draft conclusion make specific reference to the national GHG inventory data for the period 1990-2007 instead of the report that captured data for the period 1990-2008 (FCCC/SBI/2010/18) as the latter was an 'incomplete' report given that the review process was still on-going.

Between 1990 and 2007, total aggregate GHG emissions for Annex I non-economies in transition, excluding LULUCF (Land-use, Land-use change and Forestry) increased by 11.2% and GHG emissions including LULUCF increased by 12.8%.

The review for the period 1990-2008, meanwhile, showed that for Annex I non-EIT Parties, GHG emissions excluding LULUCF increased by 7.9% and GHG emissions including LULUCF increased by 8.3%.