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Durban Platform: Way forward on pre-2020 ambition

Penang, 2 Jan 2013 (Fauwaz Abdul Aziz and Meena Raman) – Discussions on ways to enhance the ambition of countries to undertake climate action under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in the pre-2020 time frame are expected to intensify in 2013 under the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP).

It will be interesting to see how these discussions will shape up under the ADP in the light of decisions from Doha on the outcomes and conclusion of work of the two previous ad hoc working groups under the Kyoto Protocol (KP) and the Bali Action Plan.

The work under the ADP encompasses two parts – one involves "…a process to develop a protocol, another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force under the Convention applicable to all Parties…" and the other to "launch a workplan on enhancing mitigation ambition to identify and to explore options for a range of actions that can close the ambition gap with a view to ensuring the highest possible mitigation efforts by all Parties". The latter aspect of the work involves the pre-2020 timeframe, while the former, the post-2020 agreement.

Discussions under the ADP in Doha on the 'pre-2020 ambition' are certain to provide a preview of the views which can be expected when the working group resumes its meeting sometime in April 2013.

In Doha, the ADP co-chairs, Mr. Jayant Mauskar (India) and Mr. Harald Dovland (Norway) organised roundtable discussions around two workstreams – worsktream 1 to deal with the post-2020 arrangements and workstream 2 on the pre-2020 "mitigation ambition". (See TWN Doha Update 27 on report of the roundtable discussions under workstream 1).

The roundtable discussions under workstream 2 were held on 29 November and 4th December.

For the workstream 2 roundtable, the ADP co-chairs had posed several questions for discussions which included the following: How to increase the ambition of existing pledges from Parties and encourage those who have not yet submitted their pledges to do so; how international and national actions that are additional …can be strengthened, encouraged, and supported by the Convention; the role of means of implementation in increasing ambition; how to catalyze actions and initiatives with the largest mitigation potential and how principles of the Convention will be applied in the context of enhancing ambition.

Many countries spoke during the roundtable discussions, with several developing countries stressing that having pledges alone for emission reductions was not sufficient but what is important is the meeting of commitments under the Convention and the KP. Some of the developing countries cautioned against a pledge and review system, saying that this would not be adequate to meet the targets required by science for emissions reduction. Some countries also stressed that the work plan on enhancing ambition must recognize the differentiation of the nature and level of obligations of Annex I and non-Annex I countries, in accordance with the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibility (CBDR) and with relevant provisions of the Convention

Many stressed the importance of ambition not only on mitigation, but also on adaptation and on the means of implementation for financial resources and technology transfer. On the issue of supplementary actions, several countries emphasised the importance of these actions being additional to the pledges of countries under the UNFCCC. Below are some highlights from the discussions.

India said that 'ambition' cannot only mean mitigation targets and goals. This should include pledges not only for mitigation goals but also the pledges for financing support expressed by Annex I countries from public sources in the mid-term till 2020 and the long term from 2020 onwards. Pledges for financing support of US$30 billion by

2012 and US$ 100 billion per year by 2020 were expressed by Annex I parties in Cancun, it added. The relevant institutions for this purpose have been created. But, they have largely remained an empty shell. Hence, the first exercise in raising global ambition should include getting a specific commitment on financial flows during the mid-term and the long term.

On the work on raising mitigation ambition, India said that this should take place in light of the work done on legally binding targets under the Kyoto Protocol (KP) and the comparable pledges and targets under the Ad-hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA). India said that this work is still incomplete, and planning the work on mitigation under the ADP will be ineffective and premature if Parties do not address the ambition question in the other two working groups satisfactorily. In fact, said India, Parties may end up locking in low ambition in the KP and LCA track.

(India made these remarks when negotiations were still on-going under the KP and LCA tracks. Since the conclusion of work under these two tracks and the adoption of the relevant decisions in Doha, various Parties and observers have viewed the outcomes has one of low-ambition, both in terms of especially emission reductions and finance.)

On the issue of actions at the national and international level that can close the ambition gap, India said that there are several ways in which this can be attempted. One is to drop the various conditions which Annex I countries have attached to their Cancun pledges. There should be no conditionality attached to the commitments of Annex I countries because these are mandated under the Convention. It will also introduce greater certainty in the pledges.

Secondly, the Annex I countries that have not yet pledged or inscribed their targets should do so urgently on a comparable basis. This should be captured through update of the existing Subsidiary Body document in which targets of such countries, announced after Cancun, are inscribed. Also, if any of such Parties are willing to raise their ambition further under the Convention or its Protocol in the context of actions in other multilateral fora such as International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) or International Maritime Organisation (IMO), it must be ensured that such actions are in accordance with the principles of the Convention and should respect the national circumstances of member countries.

On the other hand, India said that the mitigation goals of non-Annex I Parties are in the nature of pledges and are contingent on the availability of relevant support as may be necessary. All developing countries have expressed their commitment to implement them by internationalizing these actions. These commitments have to be respected as they have been made in the context of huge social and developmental constraints which are often overriding.

India said that it should be noted that all pledges of developing countries are compiled in an INF (information) document under the LCA. So, if there are any such countries who want to make new pledges, such pledges should be anchored in the LCA through a supplementary INF document. This will clearly preserve the voluntary nature of such countries as distinguished from the mandated targets of developed countries. It will be useful to remind Parties again that developing country pledges are much higher in impact than the pledges of developed countries.

On how the Convention can strengthen, and encourage the international cooperative initiatives in areas that have potential, India said that such initiatives may be laudable but Parties should remember that they are already part of the voluntary actions that countries take to meet their domestic goals. Unless these supplementary or complementary actions are already contemplated in the national strategy, they will bring no additionality to the table and will have no practical utility for the mitigation work under the Convention. Since countries have expressed their domestic goals in terms of economy wide targets or numbers, the strategy of achieving such targets has to be governed by national choice. A sectoral strategy of achieving such targets through global initiatives is likely to compromise the flexibility of developing countries in devising their own strategy for achieving such targets. In several cases, such as that of black carbon, the science of such initiatives and its relationship with climate change is uncertain. It said that there are also extreme political sensitivities in India about agricultural methane which is related to the question of livelihood and food security. In view of such social and economic constraints, a sectoral strategy at the international level may be premature and may not yield the desired results. India also said that the work in both workstreams of the ADP should be built under the principles of the Convention and should have equal priority in planning the work for future.

China said that the context for enhancing mitigation ambition is provided by the KP's second commitment period and that those Parties who are not party to the KP or would not abide by that treaty also have a responsibility to ensure comparability of their targets and actions under the AWG-LCA. Ensuring the AWG-DP outcome results in strong mitigation ambition requires jumping off from a high base of commitments by developed countries that should be built up first under the AWG-KP and the AWG-LCA. Unfortunately, the signs are not encouraging, as the level of ambition is not what is expected.

China said that the design of the work plan on enhancing ambition must recognize the differentiation of the nature and level of obligations of developed and developing countries, and of Annex I and non-Annex I countries, in accordance with the principles of equity and CBDR and with relevant provisions of the Convention. It said that the organization of the work of the AWG-DP must therefore reflect this as well as the principles and provisions of the Convention, and that the voluntary mitigation efforts by developing countries are related to the extent of obtaining of finance, technology transfer and capacity building, what has been long recognized in the history of the Convention and remains valid and relevant.

Supplementary actions outside the Convention are not a substitute for actions under the Convention and the KP. There should be a cautious approach in considering actions outside the Convention. Any supplementary and complementary actions shall be in accordance with the principles and provisions of the Convention.

On the issue of catalysing actions with the largest mitigation potential, China said it needs to be clear to whose actions and initiatives are being referred to and how the 'potential' is defined. Under the Convention, developed countries have legal commitments under Article 4.2 and the KP to undertake emission reductions. Developing countries are supposed to be enabled and supported through finance, technology transfer and capacity building for their actions.

It asked if the mitigation potential is based on historical and current emissions or projected emissions. The definition of mitigation potential has to be clearly defined as to whether it is on the basis of capability to mitigate or is on the basis of projected emissions without taking into account the capability to mitigate. If it is the former, then the largest mitigation potential should be in developed countries with historical responsibility and commitments for emissions reductions due to their financial and technological capabilities. As such, they have the largest mitigation potential and therefore should take the lead in undertaking mitigation actions and initiatives. If the largest mitigation potential is to be based on projected emissions to 2020 relative to business as usual, then this would unfairly shift the burden on to developing countries and would be contrary to principles of equity and CBDR. In this regard, there is need enable and support mitigation actions through the provision of finance and technology transfer to developing countries so as not to have an inequitable outcome.

Philippines said that pledges alone cannot be substitutes for real commitments under the Convention. It said that ambition requires a high jump off base (for emission reduction commitments) under the KP and comparable actions under the AWG-LCA. Scientific targets for emission reductions cannot be reached through pledge and review system. It also stressed the importance of means of implementation for developing countries. It asked how much finance and technological transfer developed countries are prepared to give to developing countries for their actions. It stressed the challenges developing countries face to support environmental, social and economic externalities. It also echoed China's comments regarding the issue of mitigation potential.

Bolivia said that while only 87 Parties have made pledges to reduce their emissions and 105 have not, it is important to note that developing countries had contributed significantly to the mitigation efforts, and to a large extent were surpassing developed countries in terms of offers of mitigation. A big part of these efforts have been made with the developing countries' own resources. Developing countries need to have the means of implementing mitigation programmes and policies, and that means having financial and technological support from developed countries.

Bolivia said the costs of mitigation are very high and is not simply an issue of making more efforts on top of what is already being done. Citing estimates from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Bolivia said mitigation would, by 2020, cost Euros 404 billion. By 2030, this would rise to Euros 864 billion, and this does not even count the costs of adaptation (loss and damage) that developing countries face. The World Bank, meanwhile, has calculated the cost of adaptation to be between US$24 to US$28 billion, and this will rise to almost $100 billion every year after 2030. Latin America, in particular, will be paying Euros 49 billion per year for mitigation action by 2030, whereas Africa is going to need Euros 34 billion per year by 2030 for mitigation action.

In response to various proposals by countries to consider 'other options' being used to increase actions of mitigation, Bolivia raised concerns over the implications of such actions relating to sub-national and sectoral processes. It asked if Parties were referring to "sub-national commitments". It was concerned about how such 'sub-national commitments" would impact the sovereignty of countries to define their own policies and said that such proposals might undermine the inter-governmental decision-making process.

Nauru, speaking for the **Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)** referred to the need for seeking the most cost-effective way to reduce emissions as quickly as possible by way of involving the energy, industry, transport, building, forestry, agriculture, and waste sectors. It suggested that the ADP consider opportunities for international actions outside the UNFCCC which can contribute to closing the mitigation ambition gap, including through the initiative of Parties and non-Party actors to provide information to the UNFCCC on such activities and projected outcomes, the quantification of action plans taken in terms of emission reductions and clarification of the extent to which such reductions are additional to those resulting from the implementation of existing actions.

Swaziland for the **African Group** reiterated that while all Parties want to do more, Parties are not at the same level of development and, therefore, have different challenges and priorities that immediately confront them. To a certain extent, developing countries want to take up mitigation action, but they do not see the means of implementation for nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs). While there may be funding for reporting of the updates, collecting and understanding these reports and so on, these do not contribute in real terms towards addressing the global problem of climate change.

On the principles of the Convention, Swaziland was of the view that all are agreed that they are not up for re-negotiation. The Convention does recognise that Parties are not at the same level of development and that for some to survive, they need assistance because they do not have the means. So it means the principle of CBDR still remains an important element on the way to 2020. Equity has been talked about extensively. There have been a number of workshops and meetings that are trying to further provide understanding of equity. It said that equity cannot be talked about without talking of historic responsibility. Referring to a remark from someone at a workshop that one cannot make the children liable for what their parents did, Swaziland in response asked if the children benefited or inherited development or property from their parents, can't the children be held liable?

It said that the African Group had long called for greater means of support, since developing countries cannot channel the funds that are not there to try and address the climate change when their people are hungry. Swaziland liked the idea of embracing low carbon development, but did not support the same type of development where the levels of consumption were high.

Ethiopia, said that while mitigation is important, adaptation is more important. It needed to survive and eliminate poverty at the same time as tackling the climate challenge in order to contribute to its share of the collective responsibility to humanity. The emissions in 2010 in the country were around 115 million metric tons of CO_2 equivalent or on a per capita level, it was 1.8. If we continue with business as usual (BAU), it would rise to 400 by 2030 and per capita emissions would be 3 tons per year. It was committed to having its economy growing but also for emissions to keep reducing so that by 2025, it will become a middle-income country but also have zero-net emission.

Brazil said that Annex 1 Parties have to move to the higher end of their pledges. It did not expect developed countries to be so reluctant to lead and remarked that some developed countries are even expecting developing countries to lead. It said that some developed countries were joining the KP's second commitment period to do less, not more. It also said that processes used outside of the UN should be clearly aligned with the Convention and supported the idea of efforts to engage in sub-regions and cities, stressing that Parties cannot fight climate change as governments alone.

Uganda reflected that the ADP is not about mitigation alone, adding that "we must be alive in order to mitigate," and that the task of the ADP is to balance this with that of building developing countries' resilience. It stressed the importance of sustainable development and that the real key to emissions reduction is technology both for mitigation and adaptation.

Marshall Islands said that Parties are setting themselves up for a new agreement that addresses issues relevant to a very different world than the one we are living in now, stressing that unless Parties deal with the pre-2020 mitigation gap, it is difficult to contemplate the scale of obligations and commitments required for a future agreement. To address that, Marshall Islands stressed the need to use this workstream to look at mitigation options within the real world.

South Africa said that pledges alone are not enough and actions matter. Supplementary actions should be additional to what has been pledged and have to be in line with what Convention requires. Means of implementation is essential for encouraging Parties to do more. There is no contestation about the principles of the Convention, it added but this is giving content to the principles in moving forward.

Ghana said that there is need to define what supplementary actions are. It said that many years had been spent to learn about the Convention now it is for Parties to do is expected of them. It stressed the importance of means of implementation for African countries.

Micronesia said that during the financial crisis, developed countries could come out with billions of dollars to tackle it but they now say it is hard to get $100 billion over10 years for addressing the climate challenge. It added that supplementary actions should be additional to the current pledges. It said there is need for people making key decisions on important topics to get together more often. It said there is need to catalyse action on everything. It said there is also need to think through systems that work.

The **Dominican Republic** said that Parties cannot see the world only through the eyes of equity. We must also have action. The CBDR principle is not an excuse for inaction. Instead, it is a call for action to all countries. Failure to act collectively will make sustainable development for developing countries impossible.

Costa Rica, referring to calls by developing countries for developed countries to take the lead in emission reductions asked why developing countries could not take the lead too. It could not wait until 2020 for ambitious actions to be taken. It called for the building of a cycle of confidence and incentives for leadership in taking action.

Indonesia, referring to supplementary actions said that there needs to be a common accounting system to ensure that such actions will have the same effect (in reducing emissions). The Convention could play significant role in identifying and ensuring that actions taken outside it are comparable.

The **United States** said its eventual emission reductions turned out to be lower than what it had originally pledged. This was because of the US government's assumption at the time that it made the pledge was that it could engage in a domestic carbon trade programme that would enable it to participate in the global climate regime. It expected a significant part of its emission reduction to have come from domestic action following the introduction of a cap and trade law. Since that law did not pass, it did not have the option of purchasing the offsets, which resulted in twice the amount of emissions by 2009.

Norway said that closing the emissions gap pre-2020 is a major issue, and Parties cannot afford to be negative, adding that mitigation is not a separate sector for investment, but is about making different types of investments in existing sectors. Some options are actually profitable, Norway said, especially in regards to efficiency, with other benefits such as reduced air pollution and energy security. Parties needed to understand sectoral options better and address the barriers to them.

New Zealand said that suggesting nothing is possible without means of implementation leaves "respective capabilities" out of the question. On the flip side, it said that the key to ambition is confidence in the ability to act, and that everyone is doing their fair share.

Australia referred to the UNEP emissions gap report which it found sobering but the key message is that it is technically and economically feasible to bridge the gap. It said there is much to learn from one another.

Japan wanted a focus on supplemental initiatives, including those at national, sub-national, regional and international levels. It referred to bilateral mechanisms relating to the clean development mechanism (CDM).