

UNFCCC COP begins in Lima with outline of expectations

Lima, 2 Dec. (Indrajit Bose) – The twentieth session of the Conference of Parties (COP 20) and the tenth session of the Conference of Parties serving as the meeting of Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP10) opened in Lima. At the opening ceremony, Marcin Korolec, the Polish President of COP19, handed over the gavel to his successor, Peru's Environment Minister Manuel Pulgar-Vidal.

The opening ceremony was followed by the first plenary of COP 20 and CMP 10, where groups of countries presented their statements, outlining their expectations of the next two weeks in Lima as well as the road ahead to Paris.

While handing over the role of COP presidency to Vidal, Korolec stressed the importance of maintaining trust, transparency and inclusivity in the process. He also emphasized the need for education and said that with better understanding of science, the world will be in a position to build adequate policies.

Vidal added that the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) merits the world's attention and that is a strong message from science. He urged countries to build trust on the basis of concrete agreements and respond to science. "The world is waiting for us. It expects us not to fail," said Vidal.

Vidal also spoke of the significant events in the lead up to COP20 and said events such as the UN Secretary General's Summit in New York in September, the Green Climate Fund (GCF) pledging meeting in Berlin in November, the release of IPCC's AR5 and the US-China joint announcement had set the task ahead.

Speaking of his expectations out of COP 20, Vidal said it is important that it lays the

groundwork for a new global agreement in Paris in 2015. He also said that the world must agree on the kind of information to be submitted when they put forth their intended nationally determined contributions next year (INDCs). He also said that the COP must address the climate finance architecture and take a giant step forward on adaptation. He also pointed to the first process of international assessment and review, which will be initiated at COP 20. (The [review](#) aims to promote the comparability of efforts among developed countries of their quantified economy-wide emission limitation and reduction targets.) He also said that further work must be advanced on the Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage and on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in developing countries (REDD-plus). Vidal also stressed the importance of upholding transparency and inclusivity in the process, adding that "this process belongs to you. It is time to act. It is time to (get to) work."

The President of Peru, Ollanta Humala, in a video message, said that climate change is a reality and the result of human actions. It is time for corrective action and for the world to take action, he said.

Christiana Figueres, the Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC, in her opening remarks spoke of the importance of Parties to work on the draft of a universal climate agreement and in ensuring that adaptation is at the same level as mitigation, as this is vital for those most vulnerable. She urged Parties to broaden their scope of action and to move further and faster and said that if Parties are able to harvest an early result, it would facilitate work towards the 2015 agreement.

The opening session concluded with a warning by RK Pachauri, chair of the IPCC. Referring to AR5, Pachauri spoke of the dire warning by science and the threat of irreversible impacts of climate change. He said that if the 2 degree goal C has to be kept in mind, then the world will have to move away from business as usual and that emissions need to reach zero, or even go negative by the end of the century. Hoping that the Lima COP would deliberate on this, Pachauri added that limiting temperature rise to 2 degrees would require substantial emissions reductions to the tune of 40-70 per cent emissions reduction globally by 2050 and near 0 or below emissions in 2100. While substantial challenges lay ahead, it is possible to undertake ambitious mitigation.

“Delaying mitigation will increase the challenges. The longer we delay the more difficult and intractable and more expensive our actions will be of maintaining the 2 degree target,” he said. Pachauri also added that of the 2900 Gt CO₂ eq (Gigaton of carbon dioxide equivalent) of carbon budget in relation to the 2 degree C target, the world has already used up 1900 GT CO₂ eq. The remaining carbon space in the atmosphere is just 1000 GT CO₂. “Science is at your doorstep. We need an equitable, ethical and implementable set of targets. The choice is ours,” he said.

Countries, in their opening remarks also expressed their respective expectations for the Lima talks. (Further reports on this will follow).