

COP20 concludes with decision, after day of drama

Lima, 15 December (Indrajit Bose and Meena Raman) — A little past 1 a.m. on Sunday, 14 December, nearly 40 hours after its scheduled closure, the UNFCCC's twentieth session of the Conference of Parties (COP20) adopted the 'Lima Call for Climate Action' as the outcome of the two weeks of climate talks under the Ad Hoc Working Group on Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP), a feat that was felt impossible as the talks verged on collapse.

The ADP is the body dealing with the process to arrive at a new agreement to be concluded in Paris next year under the UNFCCC, which is to take effect in 2020.

The final decision did not come easy, and several iterations of the document had to be prepared before Parties could adopt it. Previous versions of the draft decision, prepared by the ADP co-chairs, did not reflect the views of several developing country Parties and there were issues on which Parties remained deeply divided (See TWN Update 8: [ADP: Crisis over method of work on draft decision text](#)).

With talks on the brink of failure, it took the COP20 President Manuel Pulgar Vidal, the Minister of Environment of Peru, to step in and assume charge.

On Friday, 12 December, ADP Co-chairs Artur Runge-Metzger (European Union) and Kishan Kumarsingh (Trinidad and Tobago), under the guidance of Vidal, had prepared a draft decision and distributed it to Parties late evening. Parties had sought more time to go through the decision and the ADP was suspended for the night (see TWN Update 23: *'ADP: Parties to negotiate new draft text on final day'*).

On Saturday, 13 December, when the ADP convened, most developing countries spoke in a loud and resounding voice rejecting the text prepared by the co-chairs, as they said it was imbalanced and did not reflect key issues such as differentiation between developed and developing countries and principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibility (CBDR).

Other major sticky issues were the lack of any financial contribution for the post 2020 period, disagreement over the scope of the intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs) in lieu of the 2015 agreement and a process for review of the INDCs next year, failure to include issue of 'loss and damage' and very weak pre-2020 climate action. (Separate article on this exchange to follow).

In rejecting the ADP Co-chairs' draft decision, the developing countries also appealed to the Peruvian Minister to intervene and to restore balance in the decision by reflecting the concerns of developing countries. Developed countries on the other hand wanted the Co-chairs' text to be approved immediately at the plenary.

Following the reactions from Parties, ADP co-chair Metzger announced that there was no consensus in the room and "under our own authority, my co-chair and I will transmit the text to the COP President so he may lead consultations to agree on a text".

Assuming charge, Vidal said, "I assume my responsibility with clarity and dedication to take this process forward. We will achieve it together, maintaining the spirit of trust and transparency." He added that he would meet with groups of countries through the afternoon and come up with a new version of the draft text that would be "balanced". He urged countries to come with solutions when they met with him.

With the talks in crisis, what followed were closed-door meetings and negotiations of groups of countries with the COP President for the next eight hours. In these meetings, the COP President attempted to find out what Parties could live with and what their red lines were.

Meanwhile, the weather outside had taken a turn and it had become chilly as observers and other attendees waited in nervous anticipation of what the next steps would be and how would difficult issues get resolved. Many delegates were on the way to the airport or had already left. Some just slept off on their chairs and beanbags, given that negotiations had gone on until 4 am the previous day.

The COP convened again around 11.30 pm on Saturday and the draft decision prepared under the charge of Minister Pulgar was handed out to Parties. After its distribution, Parties were given a little over an hour to go through the decision in detail. Following the break, the Parties met again.

With the words, "it is so decided", the COP President gavelled the decision—without any Parties raising any objection—thus adopting Lima Call for Climate Action. The decision now was viewed as having more balance, with language on CBDR, reference to 'loss and damage' and with the scope of INDCs not being mitigation centric. Language to the effect that the INDCs would not pre-judge the Paris agreement is also there.

There would also be no ex-ante review of the INDCs prior to Paris. (Separate article on analysis of the decision to follow).

Welcoming the decision, groups of Parties gave brief statements appreciating the manner in which COP President

had handled the work and how Lima had paved the way for the Paris agreement.

(More articles to follow).