

UNFCCC working group to focus on developing draft texts for decision

Panama City, 2 October (Meena Raman) – The last meeting of the Ad-hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) kicked off in Panama City, Panama, on October 1 with Parties agreeing to focus work on developing draft decision texts for consideration at the 17th meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP) to be held in Durban, South Africa in late November this year.

The Panama City meeting of the working group is scheduled for 7 days, ending on 7th October.

AWG-LCA Chair, Mr. Daniel Reifsnyder of the United States said that the Panama meeting was the last meeting of the working group and that it was important to concentrate work in the preparation of draft decision texts on elements of the outcome, which would be ready for adoption at the 17th meeting of the COP.

While there was agreement among Parties to focus work on draft texts in the working group, developing countries expressed strong views that progress under the AWG-LCA was not possible without success in the Kyoto Protocol working group (AWG-KP) on agreement by Annex 1 Parties to commit to a second commitment period of targets for emissions reductions following the expiry of the first commitment period in 2012.

Several developing countries led by Venezuela also stressed that Parties should not abdicate from their obligations under the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol and legalize a bad deal that does not solve climate change or preserve the planet. Developing countries also expressed opposition to a re-negotiation of the Convention and its principles. They also called for an increase in the level of ambition in emission reductions by Annex 1 Parties,

consistent with the science, equity and their historical responsibility.

(Many developing countries are concerned that the existing legally-binding climate change regime on mitigation under the Kyoto Protocol may be replaced by a future regime which is based on a voluntary pledge and review system under the UNFCCC and in which the distinction between the mitigation commitments of developed countries and actions of developing countries are blurred, contrary to the principle of ‘common-but-differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities’).

Ambassador Jorge Arguello of **Argentina**, speaking for the **G77 and China** expressed the Group’s readiness for focused negotiations, working on concrete texts, in order to achieve the implementation of the Cancun decision and work for a successful, balanced and comprehensive outcome for Durban.

He also said that the G77 and China expected submissions by all Parties to be dealt in their entirety, and that the basis for the texts to be worked on will be produced by Parties, in keeping with the open, party-driven, transparent and inclusive manner that that the negotiations are being conducted.

Arguello drew attention to the fact that the G77 and China had presented two draft decisions that needed to be addressed: one, on the role and functions of the Standing Committee of the Financial Mechanism and the other on the Technology Mechanism.

Arguello also said that that technical and political issues could not be delinked, and progress in the one will not be possible without progress in the other, referring to the of mitigation in which even progress under the two negotiating tracks was essential.

He also stressed the need for Annex I Parties increase their level of ambition to overcome the wide gap between the pledges put forward and what is required

by science, equity and historical responsibility.

He said that the Group's Ministers emphasized only a few days ago that the mandate of the AWG-LCA is to enable the full, effective and sustained implementation of the Convention through long-term cooperative action now, up to and beyond 2012 as per the Bali Action Plan (BAP). The full and prompt implementation of Cancun, as well as finding appropriate solutions to issues not addressed at Cancun would be vital to fulfilling the mandate of the BAP, he added.

The Group reiterated that all issues under the AWG-LCA agenda are relevant and must be addressed meaningfully in Durban. In this regard, the Group appreciated the assurances of the Chair that the list of subjects listed in his scenario note was not exhaustive, and that Parties will continue to be guided by the full agenda, as adopted in Bangkok (in April this year).

The Group reiterated the necessity of Palestine's active participation in the UNFCCC process and for every effort to be made to grant Palestine access to funding from different climate change sources.

Venezuela, speaking on behalf of the group countries in the Bolivarian Alternative for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA-TCP), said that Cancun was a meeting that resulted in a text that reflected a lack of political will by developed countries to take steps to save this planet and humanity. It said that intentions to "legalize those disabilities" was unacceptable and that the goal of Parties should be to implement the BAP and the Bali Roadmap without further delay and with no more excuses and conditionalities. These were legal obligations were non-negotiable.

Venezuela said that this exercise by developed countries of placing infinite conditions before they meet their legal obligations must end in Panama. It wanted to advance in the negotiations but would not do so at any price that will destroy the existing climate change regime to meet the "political disabilities" of some developed countries. It urged Parties not abdicate their obligations under the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol and to legalize a bad deal that does not solve climate change and or preserve the planet.

Referring to the Green Climate Fund, it stressed the need for this fund to have legal personality and to act under the guidance and authority of the COP. Venezuela expressed regret that developed countries say they have no resources to meet the limited promises that their Heads of State and senior officials made in (Copenhagen) in 2009 and they now

emphasize the need for money to come from private sources and even propose that developing countries themselves should now fund the promises developed countries had made.

Venezuela said that it was appalling to hear the words of a U.S. Congressman that the war in Libya cost US\$500 million during the first week alone. Instead of spending money on this war, it said thousands of lives in the entire Horn of Africa who suffer from hunger could have been saved. Venezuela noted that there were no resources for climate change and life, but there was money for war and death.

Saudi Arabia, speaking for the **Arab Group** also stressed the need for the negotiations to ensure balanced and comprehensive results in all the elements of the agenda of the AWG-LCA. It said that there could not be a re-negotiation of the principles and obligations of Parties under the Convention. It said that the success of negotiations under the AWG-LCA was intrinsically linked to success in the AWG-KP for Annex 1 Parties to commit to a second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol for emissions reductions.

The Democratic Republic of Congo, speaking for the **African Group** stressed the need to ensure an outcome in Durban is a balanced one, based on science, that implements both the Convention and its Kyoto Protocol. It also expressed deep concern with the lack of attention given to the priority issues for Africa in the Chair's scenario note. It expected a comprehensive outcome on all issues, including, among others, the Cancun Adaptation Framework, sources and scale of finance, and comparable mitigation efforts for all Annex I Parties. The focus of adaptation must shift from the institutional arrangements to the implementation of adaptation programmes on the ground.

Grenada for the **Alliance of Small Island States** said that recent studies have shown that since 1990, global emissions of CO₂ have increased 45% and there was therefore need for increasing the mitigation ambition for stabilizing the temperature level at well below 1.5 degree C. The financing issue was one of priority with the GCF making progress but there was need also to ensure progress in discussing sources of long-term finance and transparency regarding fast-start finance, which ends in 2012. It also called for the outcome of the AWG-LCA to be captured in a legally-binding instrument.

El Salvador, speaking for the countries in the **Central American Integration System (SICA)**,

stressed the need for the GCF to have legal personality. It supported the G77 and China submission on the Standing Committee (on finance) and said there was need to identify the existing loopholes with other climate-change related funds and to address this.

Gambia for the **LDCs** said that there was need for an ambitious package for Durban that was substantively and politically balanced as per the BAP and the Cancun decision.

Poland, speaking for the **European Union** said that developing draft texts was key and that swift progress was needed towards establishing a comprehensive legally-binding framework, which would engage all Parties and especially major economies in taking on necessary commitments and actions. Legal certainty, predictability, reciprocity and comparability must be ensured and a top-down approach was essential. It called for the “ambition gap” to be addressed as well as the use of common accounting rules for understanding targets. It also wanted a robust transparent and rigorous measurement, reporting and verification framework (MRV). It also wanted to see progress on adaptation, technology, finance, capacity building, international aviation and maritime, agriculture, HFCs and new market based mechanisms. It said that the time had come to talk about the legal form, including the options for Durban.

Australia, for the **Umbrella Group**, said that the Cancun Agreement laid down much groundwork and Durban has to operationalise all parts of the decision. On mitigation, it stressed the need for ambitious action by all major emitters. In relation to mitigation, it said that Parties must leave Panama with draft texts on international consultation and analysis (ICA), international assessment and review (IAR) and biennial reports. It also stressed the importance of market approaches to mitigation for ensuring lowest costs and for mobilizing climate finance.

Mr. Daniel Reifsnyder, Chair of the AWG-LCA, in response to Parties, said that the issues that he listed in his scenario note were not prescriptive or exhaustive and that elements should be treated in a balanced and comprehensive manner as in the BAP.

He proposed the organization of work to proceed under one contact group with respective informal groups to cover all the substantive and sub-items of

the agenda. The contact group will also hold frequent informational “touch base” meetings to provide an overview of the work being undertaken in the informal groups. This proposal was agreed to by Parties.

The contact group held its first meeting later in the afternoon where Parties were informed about the various informal groups and the facilitators. The informal groups are shared vision; mitigation actions of developed countries; mitigation actions of developing countries; reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation in developing countries etc. (REDD-plus); cooperative sectoral approaches and sector specific actions; various approaches including opportunities for using markets; economic and social consequences of response measures; adaptation; finance; technology development and transfer; capacity-building; review; legal options and other matters relating to economies in transition.

It was also agreed that observers will be allowed to attend the first and last meetings of the informal groups sessions.

Earlier in the morning, a welcoming ceremony was held which was attended by Mr. Roberto Henriquez, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Panama and Ms. Christiana Figueres, the Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC.

Figueres said that under the Kyoto Protocol, negotiations are beginning to work against the clock. Durban needs to address both further commitments of developed countries under the Kyoto Protocol and the evolution of the mitigation framework under the Convention for developed and developing country Parties, in the context of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. This may require immediate interim arrangements that safeguard environmental integrity and ensure continuity of the regime. It should also begin to glimpse the evolution of the legal framework in the medium term, she added.

Mr. Henriquez, the Foreign Minister of Panama said that Parties could not take minimalist steps and was disturbed that there was no agreement yet on the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. He said that political will was needed to ensure a good outcome in Durban.