

Developing countries united on ambitious Kyoto Protocol reduction targets

Tianjin, 5 October (Hilary Chiew) – The 14th session of the Ad hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP) opened on Monday with calls from developing countries to Annex I Parties to show leadership in combating climate change by raising their level of ambition in greenhouse gases emission reduction.

Non-Annex I developing countries placed strong emphasis on a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol as essential for the future of a climate change regime and denounced attempts by some Parties to undermine the prospect of a continuation of the Protocol. The first commitment period will end in 2012.

The AWG-KP has before it a draft proposal that was prepared by the group's Chair, Ambassador John Ashe of Antigua and Barbuda, at the last session in August in Bonn. It includes options for amendments according to Article 3.9 of the Kyoto Protocol, that provide for the emission reductions of Annex 1 Parties (developed countries) for their second and subsequent commitment periods after 2012.

Yemen, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, reiterated the Group's serious concern with the extremely slow progress of the AWG-KP in completing the essential tasks of its work programme the primary objective of which was to adopt conclusions on the scale of emissions reduction for Annex I Parties in aggregate and individual Annex I Party contribution to this overall aggregate scale.

It appealed to Annex I Parties to show the necessary political will and leadership in combating climate change and to move forward and accelerate the negotiations to set the scale of emission reduction in the light of historical responsibility and equity and in accordance with science.

The Group believed that ambitious quantified emission reductions are needed for the second Kyoto Protocol commitment and that the continuity of the Protocol is an essential element for any future of the climate change

regime. It stressed the need to avoid a gap between commitment periods and warned that any gap would have serious implications. For this reason, it said Parties must deliver their work in Cancun and as much agreement as possible at Tianjin is therefore needed.

In this regard, it stressed that the Group insists and would not compromise on the requirement of the second commitment period as well as on the basic principles of the climate change regime and on the interests of developing countries.

The Group believed that Parties should be able to reach agreement on a five-year commitment period with a single, legally binding base year of 1990. It further said that Parties must focus on the amendment of Annex B and the definition of Annex I Parties' commitment. It is now more urgent than ever that Parties progress as quickly as possible to quantified emission limitation and reduction commitments for Annex I Parties. Failure to do so would send a negative signal regarding the readiness of Annex I Parties to take forward their legal obligations under the Protocol and contribute to a strong climate change regime.

The insufficient level of ambition expressed in the current mitigation pledges of Annex I Parties is an obstacle parties must overcome for it is blocking significant progress in our negotiation as a whole both in the AWG-KP and AWG-LCA (Ad hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the UNFCCC), it added.

It appealed to all Parties, particularly Annex I Parties, to use the actual text of the AWG-KP Chair as the basis for negotiations in order to build a strong Kyoto Protocol.

The Democratic Republic of Congo, speaking on behalf of the African Group stressed that the AWG-KP must make progress on further commitments of Annex I Parties for an amendment to establish a second and subsequent commitment periods.

It said it witnessed attempts by some Parties to take the process backward and it is clearly evident that some Parties have no interest in securing a second commitment period.

On the other hand, the developed countries are asking Africa to take mitigation commitments and other undefined actions that they refer to as a balanced set of decisions, it said, adding that this is a clear sign that Annex I Parties are not fully committed to reaching an agreement under the AWG-KP.

It put on record that the most important decision that Africa will put forward for adoption in Cancun is an amendment of the Kyoto Protocol to effect the second commitment period. It is difficult to imagine any agreement on any set of decisions that does not include a decision to effect the second commitment period for Annex I Parties, it emphasised.

It said the Group concurred with the conclusion of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) that only ambitious reductions of greenhouse gas emissions by Annex I Parties can ensure that the impacts of climate change do not undermine African development and poverty eradication goals.

As such, it said, it required agreement on the continuation of the two-track approach, culminating in an amendment of the Protocol thereby establishing the second commitment period. This amendment of the Protocol must contain deep economy-wide quantified emission reduction and limitation targets for all developed countries for the period beyond 2012.

It further said the Group would like to conclude the discussion on Land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) rules and modalities for accounting of forests management.

To avoid a gap between the first and second commitment period, the meeting in Tianjin should focus on exploring all legal options so that Parties can adequately be prepared for all eventualities. Resolving these legal matters must be one of the core elements of this session, it said.

Grenada representing the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), said it is essential that the session in Tianjin deliver the results of its work at Cancun to avoid a gap between the first and second commitment periods.

It warned that failure to do so would have significant implications for the carbon market and related initiatives underway in many countries besides sending the wrong political signal regarding Kyoto Protocol Parties'

commitment to a multilateral approach to removing the global threat of climate change.

Recalling the findings of the workshop at the August session in Bonn, it said it's been confirmed that Annex I Parties' pledges would only achieve between 1 and 7% reduction in emissions below 1990 level, as a result of many loopholes in the Kyoto Protocol accounting system in the areas of LULUCF accounting and surplus AAUs (Assigned Amount Units). This was not acceptable to AOSIS.

It believed that with the requisite determination, the time in Tianjin would enable Parties to reach agreement on a five-year second commitment period with the baseline year of 1990, agree on LULUCF accounting rules by substantially narrowing down options, identify the most feasible ways to manage the difficult issue of surplus AAUs, agree on a transparent process to transform mitigation pledges to quantified emission reduction commitments that relate clearly to QELROs (quantified emission limitations and reduction objectives) for the first commitment period, and concrete demonstration from negotiating partners (referring to Annex I Parties) of their willingness to increase the level of ambition of their mitigation pledges.

It said without substantial scaling up of pledges from Annex I parties, it is impossible to come close to the more than 45% reduction that is essential to achieve a long term limitation of temperature increase to well below 1.5 degree Celcius or even the 25 to 40% reduction the IPCC associates with 2 to 2.4 degree increase in temperature.

It further said more than 100 countries had called for a limitation of temperature increases to below 1.5 degree Celcius above pre-industrial levels and a stabilisation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere at a concentration of well below 350 parts per million of carbon dioxide equivalent.

Belize representing the Central American Integration System, said pledges from Annex I Parties so far translate into emission reductions of 12 to 19% below 1990 levels that could lead to warming of between 2.9 and 3.9 degree Celcius by 2100 and must not be allowed.

It said the region is experiencing more frequent and severe natural hazards related to climate change, leaving it in a near state of perpetual reconstruction and threatening its development prospects while indecision remains the order of the day in the UNFCCC negotiations.

Clearly there is an unacceptable gap between what the science demands and the current pledges of Annex I Parties. As we resume our discussions, Annex I Parties must raise their level of ambition in their current mitigation pledges. Moreover, we must avoid a gap between the first and second commitment periods. In this regard, Annex I countries should take on ambitious quantified emission limitation and reduction commitments, it said.

Egypt speaking for the Arab group of 22 countries, said the group presented a united front due to urgency of the matter where some Parties attempt to do away with the Protocol at the end of the first commitment period. The continuation of the Protocol is a necessary condition for the success of the climate regime.

The group, it said, would not tolerate endless delay as CMP6 (6th meeting of the Kyoto Protocol Parties) closes in. Negotiation needs to be accelerated to implement the mandate in accordance with the first resolution of CMP1 to agree on a second commitment period for Annex I Parties in line with Article 3.9 of the Protocol. Reaching this goal is our top priority going to Cancun, it stressed.

To achieve that, it said, would require quick engagement in genuine negotiation where all Parties take responsibility to ensure require progress in Tianjin to pave the way for success in Cancun. It said that the draft proposal is a good basis for negotiation despite no agreement over all the contents, adding that there is a group of options that is very far from the mandate.

It also rebuked the comparison made between the Kyoto Protocol and the Copenhagen Accord as being inaccurate as there is not consistency between declared emission reductions with the necessary level of ambition to control increasing temperature.

Bolivia representing the ALBA group (The Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas) said it is not possible to speak of a balanced result without considering the impacts of climate change from an increase in temperature of between 3 and 4 degrees Celcius based on the percentage of reduction offered by developed countries.

We are deeply concerned that the reduction up until now could not grapple satisfactorily with climate change while some developed countries intend to eliminate Kyoto Protocol which is the only legally binding instrument, it said.

It said Parties should not be too preoccupied that there is a lack of compromise for a negotiation text and that

Parties should use the draft proposal from the Chair (of the AWG-LCA) as a basis for negotiation.

If developed countries don't adopt a second commitment period in Cancun, the Protocol will start a slow and agonising death which will certainly affect the principles of the UNFCCC and its objectives, the group said.

In reference to the United States, it said it's not possible to continue delaying a decision just to wait for the election of one country that is not even Party to the Kyoto Protocol while some countries continue to experience climate-exacerbated natural disasters. It is critical that Kyoto Protocol signatories take their international commitments seriously to save mankind and mother earth, it urged.

Belgium on behalf of the European Union reiterated the importance the bloc attaches to the Kyoto Protocol track in the overall negotiations. It said the EU is committed to make progress in both negotiating tracks towards a successful, balanced and concrete outcome at Cancun, as a constructive step towards a global, ambitious and comprehensive agreement in line with the 2 degree Celcius objective.

However, it also reiterated its preference for a single legally binding instrument that would include the essential elements of the Protocol, but remains flexible regarding the legal form as long as it is binding.

We are therefore open to consider a second commitment period under the Protocol, as part of a wider, more rigorous and ambitious agreement and provided that certain conditions, founded on the urgent need for environmental integrity and effectiveness of international action, are met, it added.

This, it stressed, would mean that Annex I countries that did not ratify the Protocol and other major emitters take on their fair share of the global emission reduction effort in the context of an ambitious, legally binding global agreement. It would also mean that the environmental integrity of the Protocol is addressed appropriately, in particular regarding LULUCF accounting and the carry over of AAUs and that progress is made on the reform of existing market mechanisms and on the establishment of new ones, adding that the EU already has binding legislation in place which is based on the Protocol architecture and provisions.

Within the Kyoto track, it said the challenge is to further streamline the present text and identify the political options on main outstanding issues and it is the EU's expectation to have a set of decisions that is balanced within and across both negotiation tracks.

The Cancun outcome in the Kyoto track should, in its view, include an appropriate solution for the surplus of AAUs, decisions on the starting point and the duration of a future commitment period, a basis for new market mechanisms as well as the continuation of and improvements to the existing mechanisms.

It further said that there's a need to discuss both the mitigation pledges within the Kyoto track and other countries' pledges whether made according to the Copenhagen Accord or otherwise in the context of UNFCCC to clarify how far Parties have advanced in achieving the 2 degree Celcius goal.

Australia, representing the Umbrella Group said it looks forward to a durable, fair and effective outcome with participation of all major economies. It said progress of work on forest matters has implications for the outcome and Parties must not operate in isolation and must think about practicality.

It said negotiations should focus on areas of possible progress such as in the LULUCF and market mechanisms. It also said there cannot be further clarity on numbers (reduction targets) until there is clarity on rules (on these issues).

It also praised the effectiveness of the Copenhagen Accord which has a broader participation of Parties compared to the Kyoto Protocol which represents only 28% of global emissions while the Accord represents the most substantial emission reduction ever put forward at 80%.

(The Accord is a controversial document that was "taken note of" but not adopted by UNFCCC Parties at the 15th meeting of the Conference of Parties in Copenhagen in 2009.)