

Background Briefing: U.N. Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen

December 1, 2009



A Two-Track Negotiation

- Kyoto Protocol track
 - Since 2005, negotiating new emission targets for developed countries (except United States)
- UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) track
 - Bali Action Plan calls for an “agreed outcome” on:
 - Mitigation commitments/actions of developed and developing countries
 - Adaptation, mitigation support for developing countries
 - Measurement, reporting and verification (MRV)
 - Includes the United States
- Outcome: a balanced package across the two

A Two-Step Outcome

- Two weeks ago in Singapore, President Obama and other leaders set new expectations:
 - A political agreement in Copenhagen as a prelude to a future legal agreement
- In proposing a provisional U.S. target, White House set aim in Copenhagen as:
 - “...a strong, operational agreement...as a stepping stone to a legally binding treaty”
- Lowering of expectations is in part a concession to U.S. domestic policy process, but many other countries are not ready for a final deal either

Likely Copenhagen Outcomes

- Major elements
 - Political commitments on:
 - Mitigation efforts (targets for developed countries; quantified actions for major developing countries)
 - “Prompt-start” finance for developing countries
 - Decisions to operationalize immediate action on adaptation, forestry, etc.
 - Whatever progress can be achieved on the architecture of a future legal agreement
- Form
 - Nonbinding decisions by UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) and Kyoto Meeting of the Parties (MOP)

Political Commitments

- Developed country targets
 - With provisional US target (17% below 2005), collective range is 13-19% below 1990 in 2020
- Developing country actions
 - Proposals from major emerging economies reduce their emissions an estimated 10-18% below business as usual (derived from www.climateactiontracker.org)
- “Prompt-start” finance
 - European Commission estimates the need at \$7.5-\$10.5 billion/year in 2010-2012
 - Obama budget seeks \$1.2 billion in FY10

'Operational' Decisions

- **REDD** (Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation)
 - Activities to “ready” tropical countries for action
 - Process to decide what actions qualify, and role of offsetting vs. other means of international support
- **Adaptation**
 - Assistance to develop national adaptation plans
 - Support for high-priority implementation in most vulnerable countries
- **Finance**
 - Arrangements to deliver “prompt-start” resources
- **Technology, capacity-building**

Future Architecture

- Major differences remain and it's unclear how much progress will be made
- Key issues
 - Form of final legal outcome
 - How countries' commitments or actions will be defined and enshrined
 - How countries' actions will be verified
 - How new finance will be raised and delivered

Legal Form

- A single, comprehensive agreement?
 - Favored by most developed countries
 - EU wants it to incorporate all the essential elements of Kyoto, but U.S. doesn't favor Kyoto-type accounting, compliance
- Linked outcomes under Kyoto and UNFCCC?
 - Developing countries rallying to retain Kyoto
 - Depending on form, UNFCCC elements might or might not be binding

Defining Commitments/Actions

- **Proposals**
 - Developed and major developing countries list commitments in common “schedule” (Australia) or “appendix” (US)
 - Developing countries propose and/or enshrine their actions in a “registry” (S. Korea, S. Africa)
- **Accounting rules for emission targets**
 - Kyoto sets common rules for counting offsets, land use, etc.
 - U.S. proposal (“in conformity with domestic law”) would allow countries to set their own rules

MRV

- Bali calls for “measurement, reporting and verification” of countries’ mitigation efforts and support for developing countries
 - GHG inventories
 - US proposing annual inventories for all major emitters
 - Verification
 - Developing countries say it applies only to “supported,” not “unilateral,” actions
 - US proposal doesn’t use the term “verification”
 - International “review” of implementation
 - US proposing; developing countries resisting
 - Compliance
 - Is there a determination of parties’ compliance with their obligations? Consequences for noncompliance?

Finance

- A new fund or funds? At the UN or an existing financial institution (i.e. World Bank)?
- How are any new funds governed?
- Are funds generated via an international mechanism (carbon levy, auction of international allowances, etc.) and/or via country contributions (raised nationally)?
- Large developing countries contribute too?
- Is there an agreed formula to determine who contributes what share?
- Are there firm funding commitments?
- US favors a new fund at an existing institution supported by pledges from developed and developing

For More Information



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