Making Progress in Durban

The United Nations Climate Change Conference in Durban is an opportunity to strengthen the international climate framework. The top priority should be implementing the Cancún Agreements with steps to: 1) improve the transparency of countries’ efforts, and 2) strengthen support for developing countries, including a new Green Climate Fund. If established, a second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol should be transitional in nature. Looking ahead, parties should set the longer-term aim of working toward a comprehensive binding agreement.

Key Operational Decisions

Strengthening the UNFCCC architecture can promote stronger action in the near term, build parties’ confidence, and create a foundation for a future binding outcome. The Cancún Agreements established the basic parameters of new mechanisms on finance, transparency, adaptation, technology and forestry. Decisions are needed in Durban to begin operationalizing them. Priorities include:

Improving Transparency. The Cancún Agreements called for a series of measures to strengthen and expand the UNFCCC’s system for the measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) of countries’ actions. In Durban, parties should begin implementing these measures by:

• Adopting guidelines and an initial deadline for new biennial reports from countries on progress in implementing their pledged targets and actions and, for developing countries, on greenhouse gas inventories. (Developed countries already submit annual greenhouse gas inventories.)

• Adopting procedures for International Assessment and Review (IAR) and International Consultations and Analysis (ICA), two new processes to periodically assess the national mitigation efforts of developed and developing countries, respectively, and support from developed countries. Both processes should include technical analysis of countries’ reports; open sessions where parties present and take questions on
their implementation efforts; public release of inputs and proceedings; and “facilitative” consequences (assistance to improve implementation).

Mobilizing Finance. The Cancún Agreements set finance goals for 2010-2012 and for 2020, and called for a new Green Climate Fund and a new Standing Committee on finance. In Durban, parties should:

- Establish the **Green Climate Fund** by adopting the governing instrument negotiated by the Transitional Committee, which provides for: a 24-member board, with equal representation from developed and developing countries, operating “under the guidance” of the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP); an independent secretariat; funding windows for mitigation and adaptation; and a facility to finance private sector activities.

- Establish the **Standing Committee** to promote coordination among climate funding mechanisms, monitor financial flows, and advise the COP on finance needs and effectiveness.

- Provide assurances of continued finance between the “fast-start” period (2010-12) and 2020, and launch a process to explore potential long-term sources of finance.

**KYOTO SECOND COMMITMENT PERIOD**

Without binding commitments by the United States and the major emerging economies, most other developed countries are unwilling to assume new binding emission targets under the Kyoto Protocol. However, the European Union and some others are prepared to enter into a second commitment period established by a decision of the parties (rather than a legally binding amendment to the Protocol) – provided parties launch a process in Durban to negotiate a comprehensive binding agreement for the post-2020 period. Such a “political” second commitment period would ensure Kyoto’s survival on a transitional basis as parties work toward a successor agreement. Kyoto mechanisms such as the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) remain operational even without binding emission targets.

**FUTURE OF THE CLIMATE FRAMEWORK**

In Cancún, parties agreed to a review in 2013-2015 of the adequacy of the 2-degree goal and of “overall progress towards achieving it.” The Cancún Agreements side-stepped the question of future commitments, saying that “nothing in this decision shall prejudice prospects for, or the content of, a legally binding outcome in the future.” While most parties voice support for the goal of binding commitments, they remain far apart on the specific form or timing. In Durban, parties should:

- Agree that the **2013-2015 review** will consider not only the adequacy of the long-term goal and existing commitments, but also the broader structure of the UNFCCC.

- Affirmatively declare their intent to **work toward a comprehensive binding agreement**, while leaving open all options on specific legal form.

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**Other C2ES Resources:**


**Multilateral Climate Efforts Beyond the UNFCCC**, November 2011.

**Common Metrics: Comparing Countries’ Climate Pledges**, September 2011.