

Results of COP-18
December 11, 2012

On Saturday, December 8, 2012, the international climate negotiations – also known as COP-18¹ – in Doha, Qatar, concluded, with delegates adopting the package of “Doha Climate Gateway” decisions. Below is a summary of the results of the meeting.

Second Commitment Period of the Kyoto Protocol. Parties agreed to a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol that will run from 2013 to 2020 and agreed to take stock in 2014 of whether the emissions reduction targets pledged were sufficient. However, while the European Union and Australia will participate in the second commitment period, several nations, including Canada, Japan, Russia and New Zealand, declined to join them. Furthermore, because the Protocol excludes developing countries and the U.S. never ratified the Protocol, it only covers about 15 percent of the world’s greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Countries will be able to use carried-over units from the first commitment period to comply with their targets in the second commitment period and will be allowed to trade up to two percent of these. A number of countries - Australia, the EU, Japan, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Norway and Switzerland - have signed a declaration that they will not purchase these units.

Loss and Damage Fund. Developing countries pushed for the establishment of a “loss and damage” fund that would compensate them for the impact of extreme weather events. The United States resisted this idea, and in the end delegates called for “institutional arrangements, such as an international mechanism” to address the issue.

Financing. Parties agreed to extend the discussions on long-term finance to the end of 2013 “with the aim of informing developed country Parties in their efforts to identify pathways for mobilizing the scaling up of climate finance to USD 100 billion per year by 2020 from public, private and alternative sources.” Developing countries had pushed for setting mid-term financing targets of \$60 billion per year starting in 2013, but the decision made no reference to any mid-term financing targets, just a general pledge to “identify pathways for mobilizing the scaling up of climate finance.”.

Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action. The parties agreed on a framework for negotiating an agreement over the next three years, which will take effect in 2020. However, U.S. climate envoy Todd Stern highlighted one of the main challenges going forward when he said the U.S. could not accept a provision in the Doha deal that said the talks should be “guided” by principles laid down in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). That could be interpreted as a reference to the firewall between rich and poor countries as enshrined in the Kyoto Protocol, under which developing countries are not required to reduce emissions. In addition, while there had been hope that a detailed workplan would be negotiated at COP-18, the parties merely agreed that the group “will consider elements for a draft negotiating text no later than” COP-19 “with a view to making available a negotiating text before May 2015.”

¹ COP-18 marked the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It is also the 8th Conference/Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (COP/MOP-8), which was negotiated in 1997 in Kyoto, Japan, and which the U.S. has never ratified

Closing the “Ambition Gap.” Environmental groups and some countries had sought a concrete agreement on ratcheting up emissions reductions pledges in order to address the gap between pledges to date and those reductions needed to avoid warming the planet by more than 2 degrees Celsius by 2100. Instead, parties noted with “grave concern” the widening gap between what countries have promised to do to reduce emissions and the growing concentration of GHGs in the atmosphere. They declared it unlikely that on the current path the world would be able to keep global temperatures from rising more than 2 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial times, a central goal of the United Nations process. But the group left for future years any plan for addressing the mismatch between goals and reality, merely stating an intention to “identify and explore in 2013 options for a range of actions to close the pre-2020 ambition gap.”

Forestry. As reported last week, developing and developed countries did not reach agreement over how to verify carbon emissions from forests, punting the decision to the June 2013 meeting of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technical Advice, one of the two technical advisory groups supporting the climate convention. Norway, representing wealthy, donor countries, pushed to implement a rigorous, international verification process. Brazil, representing the Group of 77 developing nations, refused to agree to international verification given the lack of finance offered by wealthy countries. Delegates did, however, agree to a work program for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+). The work program will address options for financing REDD+ projects, including incentives for noncarbon benefits like increasing biodiversity.

Decisions adopted by the COP-18 and CMP18 are posted at <http://unfccc.int/2860.php#decisions>