

NACAA Background Report on COP-18
November 26, 2012

Over the next two weeks delegates from more than 190 countries and thousands of observers from public interest groups, academia, local governments, businesses and other groups will convene in Doha, Qatar, for international meetings on climate change. This report provides some background on the negotiations.

Background

The climate meeting in Doha, known as COP-18, is 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. The UNFCCC does not have binding GHG emission targets; the Kyoto Protocol obligates developed countries to reduce emissions to 5 percent below 1990 levels in 2008-2012.

Bali Action Plan

Five years ago, countries agreed to a roadmap (the Bali Action Plan) that would have culminated in a new agreement to be signed in Copenhagen, Denmark in 2009. These negotiations have proceeded on two official tracks:

- The first track is under the Kyoto Protocol. The United States does not participate in these negotiations because it is not a Party to the Kyoto Protocol, and has consistently opposed becoming a Party to the Kyoto Protocol.

- The second track proceeds directly under the UNFCCC and focuses on five primary elements:

1. a “shared vision” for reducing global GHG emissions by around 2050;
2. mitigation of GHG emissions by developed and developing countries;
3. adaptation to impacts of climate change;
4. financial assistance to low income countries; and
5. technology development and diffusion.

Copenhagen Accord

While the goal was to conclude a new treaty in Copenhagen in 2009, the Copenhagen negotiations did not produce such an agreement. Instead, President Barack Obama and several world leaders hammered out a political statement, known as the “Copenhagen Accord.”

In the Copenhagen Accord, countries agreed that the increase in global temperature should be limited to no more than 2 degrees Celsius (°C). Most countries,

developed and developing, believe that the temperature increase from global warming must be limited to no more than 2°C above pre-industrial levels, to prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system (the goal of the UNFCCC). In order to hold warming below 2°C, scientists estimate that global GHG emissions must be halved, compared with 1990 levels, by 2050. The UNFCCC did not adopt the Copenhagen Accord as an official UNFCCC agreement, but rather took note of it. Thus, the Accord has a tenuous standing in the UN world. On the other hand, it was signed by several heads of state and thus may carry more political weight. To date 141 countries have associated themselves with the Accord. (See <http://unfccc.int/home/items/5262.php>)

Cancun Agreements

COP-16, the 16th Conference of the Parties held in Cancun in 2010, concluded with agreement on a package of decisions – called the “Cancun Agreements” – that includes recognition of country emissions reduction targets and actions, agreements on financing and reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and provisions to provide transparency. The agreements set a goal of limiting the global rise in temperature to 2°C compared to pre-industrial levels. However, the agreements do not spell out how this goal will be met – GHG emissions reduction targets announced so far are insufficient to curb GHG emissions to the levels needed to limit the temperature increase to 2°C.

One of the U.S.’ primary goals for the meeting was to ensure that mitigation actions by large developing countries such as China were subject to monitoring, reporting and verification. The agreements provide that “internationally supported mitigation actions will be measured, reported and verified domestically and will be subject to international measurement, reporting and verification,” while mitigation actions that do not receive any international financial or technical assistance “will be measured, reported and verified domestically.” Developing countries are to submit reports every two years on their mitigation actions, and the agreements set up a process for international consultation and analysis on these reports. Other outcomes of note include 1) an agreement to accelerate action to curb emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries with technological and financial support; 2) a process to design a Green Climate Fund (GCF) to administer climate financing; 3) establishment of a Cancun Adaptation Framework to allow better planning and implementation of adaptation projects in developing countries through increased financial and technical support; and 4) establishment of a technology mechanism to increase technology cooperation. (See http://unfccc.int/meetings/cancun_nov_2010/meeting/6266.php)

Durban Agreements

COP-17 was held in Durban, South Africa in December 2011. The Durban outcomes cover a wide range of topics, notably the establishment of a second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol, a decision on long-term cooperative action

under the Convention and agreement on the operationalization of the GCF. Parties also agreed to launch the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP) with a mandate “to develop a protocol, another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force under the Convention applicable to all Parties.” The ADP is scheduled to complete negotiations by 2015. The outcome should enter into effect from 2020 onwards. See http://unfccc.int/meetings/durban_nov_2011/meeting/6245/php/view/decisions.php

Major Issues and Expectations in Doha

Given the continued division between developed and developing countries, expectations for Doha are fairly low. While developed countries continue to push for the extension of mandates to developing countries, a major issue continues to be the mobilization of promised funding for developing country adaptation.

Major issues that will be discussed in Doha include:

- **Second Commitment Period of the Kyoto Protocol.** The first compliance period under the Kyoto Protocol is set to expire in 2012, escalating the urgency of coming to an agreement regarding a second compliance period. A number of developed countries, including Canada, Japan, New Zealand, and Russia, have announced that they will not participate in a second Kyoto compliance period. That leaves only Australia and the European Union as the main developed countries interested in a second compliance period. However, the developing countries insist on the continuation of the Kyoto Protocol, in part because of their belief that developed countries should be required to reduce GHG emissions since they have contributed the most to date to the global warming problem. On the table at Doha are the conversion of reduction targets into “quantified emission limitation and reduction objectives” (QELRO), deciding whether countries that emitted less than their targets can carry these over to use in the second commitment period, and the amendments and duration of the second commitment period.
- **Adaptation Funding.** Another issue at play is securing funding for the “Green Climate Fund,” which was established under the Cancun Agreements to facilitate aid to developing countries for addressing and adapting to climate change. In Copenhagen, developed countries committed to provide \$30 billion in “fast-start” financing from 2010-2012 to aid developing countries in reducing emissions from deforestation, adapting to the impacts of climate change and deploying clean energy, with funding levels to ramp up to \$100 billion by 2020. According to a report from Oxfam and the International Institute for Environment and Development, only \$23.6 billion has been committed and much of that is not “new and additional” to existing aid, as was agreed. See <http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/oxfam-media-advisory-climate-fiscal-cliff-doha-25nov2012.pdf>. Developing countries will be looking for tangible evidence as to whether developed countries will live up to funding commitments.

- ***Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP)***. The Durban Platform was widely viewed as a success for developed countries, since it did not distinguish between developed and developing countries in terms of who should be covered by a new legal agreement. However, several developing countries have taken the position that the old “rules” about “common but differentiated responsibilities” still apply. Brazil, South Africa, India and China – the so called BASIC bloc – have stated that the ADP “is by no means a process to negotiate a new regime, nor to renegotiate, rewrite or reinterpret the convention and its principles and provisions.” Some of the key questions:
 - Assuming there is a differentiation in legal obligations among countries, what form would this take? The Kyoto Protocol lumps China, a major economy, and Tuvalu, a tiny Pacific island, in the same group – no reduction obligations for either. The U.S. believes all major emitters – including China, India and Brazil – should be required to reduce emissions.
 - What is the emission reduction level sought by the Durban Platform negotiations? Will the new regime be based on the absolute emissions of reduction targets like the Kyoto Protocol or does it intend to adopt a different approach towards emission reduction?
 - What is the work plan going forward for hammering out a new legal agreement by 2015?

You can follow the action at Doha here:
http://unfccc.int/meetings/doha_nov_2012/meeting/6815.php