

NACAA Report #3 from COP-17
December 7, 2011

The NACAA Delegation (Larry Greene, Co-Chair Global Warming Committee and Misti Duvall, Staff Associate) began day 2 of COP-17 a bit less jet lagged, but no less amazed, by the alphabet soup of organizations. Only among the observer organizations you've got YOUNGOs (Youth Non-Government Organizations), BINGOs (Business Non-governmental Organizations), RINGOs (Research and Independent Non-governmental Organizations), and TUNGOs (Trade Union Non-governmental Organizations). Whew! Luckily we have lots of coffee to keep our brains going throughout the day. We'll start with the latest on the negotiations.

The high level segment of the negotiations began today, with several countries reiterating their positions and appearing no closer to agreement on the major issues, which include the future of the Kyoto Protocol and/or a successor agreement with legally-binding commitments for emissions reductions, as well as operationalization and funding of the Green Climate Fund to assist developing countries with adaptation. In the lead up to today's negotiations, the US reaffirmed its stance on a legally-binding agreement – that it must contain obligations and commitments with the same legal force for all major emitters – while the EU continued to support extension of the Kyoto Protocol and sought support for its proposal for commitment to negotiate a new legally-binding treaty by 2015. Japan and Russia said that they will not participate in a second commitment period. Canada, which according to reports intends to withdraw from the Protocol, also made clear that they will not participate in a second commitment period. Reports continued to indicate that China may be open to signing an agreement with legally-binding mandates, with conditions.

With the major players reaffirming their positions in anticipation of the final stretch of negotiations, parties continued to work on draft text that could form the basis of agreement on other issues, including long term finance, compliance, emission reduction goals, REDD+ (“Reduce Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation”), and adaptation planning. Negotiations were expected to continue into the night.

We started our day on Tuesday by attending a screening of a documentary video from the Youth Climate Report (YCR), a crowd-sourced media project by youth for youth. Its goal is to encourage science literacy among children and youth on the subject of climate change, and it is in its first year of a planned multi-year crowd-sourced multi-platform series. The project was developed by Neko Harbour Entertainment in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The contact for the project is John Kelly of YCR.

The video is a series of short interviews of scientists from around the world by youth. The interviews are posted on YouTube, and through Climate Report, and periodically collected into videos such as the one screened today. Interviews are ongoing and will be posted as they are completed. Students conduct the research on the topics, interview the scientists, and produce the video. Interviews included in today's video covered topics such as ecological foot-printing, climate, forest fires, preserving mountain and related downstream ecosystems, arctic biology, Greenland icepack changes, North Atlantic environmental changes, water resources, threats to coral, and abrupt climate change.

For further information, visit www.youthclimatereport.org.

Later that morning, we attended a panel event entitled “Building Low-Carbon, Climate Resilient Cities as an Essential Element of Global Efforts,” hosted by ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability. City officials from Brussels, Belgium; Copenhagen, Denmark; Ciombatore, Tamil Nadu; Johannesburg, South Africa; and Cape Town, South Africa shared their experiences with local engagement on climate change. Representatives from ICLEI also discussed specific international efforts involving localities and climate change, presenting the following examples.

David Cadman, Deputy Mayor of the City of Vancouver, Canada discussed the recently released 2011 Annual Report of the carbon Cities Climate Registry, which contained information covering 51 cities, 19 countries, 83 million inhabitants, 447 million tons per year of CO₂e, 90 GHG inventories, 107 commitments, and 555 actions on climate change. Martha Delgado Peralto, Minister of Environment of Mexico City, Mexico then reviewed the First Annual Report of the Global Cities Covenant on Climate. The Covenant has over 200 signatories in 51 countries. Participating cities have undertaken a number of actions in areas including solid waste, transport, reforestation, river restoration, conservation, etc.

James Nxumalo, Mayor of eThekweni Municipality, South Africa then presented results from the Durban Local Government Convention, held on December 2-4, where 114 mayors representing more than 950 governments in 28 countries signed a Durban Climate Change Adaptation Charter. By signing the charter, local governments committed to a number of actions for mitigating and adapting to climate change, including mainstreaming adaptation in local planning, conducting climate change impact and vulnerability assessments, preparing long term adaptation strategies, ensuring that the needs of vulnerable communities are met, and ensuring that functioning ecosystems are used to help local communities in adaptation.

Representatives from Nantes, France; UN-HABITAT; the World Bank; and Renmin University of China also discussed the importance of engaging cities and localities in addressing climate change.

For further information, visit www.iclei.org.

Larry attended an event Tuesday afternoon, entitled “Arctic - A Messenger for Global Change.” The side event was sponsored by Sweden and introduced by its State Secretary of the Environment. Sweden is chairman of the Arctic Council, which includes all the countries bordering the arctic, including the US. The Arctic Council is the oversight umbrella for six subgroups looking at various aspects of analyzing the arctic. There are 6 Arctic indigenous groups who take an active role in the effort and who sit at the table as formal members of the effort.

First, a short film, “Snow, Water, Ice and Permafrost in the Arctic (SWIPA),” was presented outlining the speed with which the arctic is warming. Copies of this film and two other videos were handed out to those who attended the event.

Panelists then presented the results of a recent assessment through the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP). The past six years have been the hottest on record, which began in the mid-1800s. A key problem is that models are under-predicting the warming trend, meaning that former projections of the impact of arctic warming have underestimated the impacts, such as sea level rise. The Arctic group thinks the rise will be at least 1.6 meters, nearly 5 feet, by end of the century. Greenland has been a major focus of this effort. In the mid-1990s the Greenland ice sheet was not contributing to sea level rise. Currently it is providing ½ of the sea level rise due to vastly accelerating melting each year. This trend is clearly increasing.

With regard to the permafrost, two measurements are important. One is the thickness of the "active layer," which is how far the thawing goes into the soil, and the second is the depth of the permafrost. All areas are showing thawing trends, consequences of which include drying of ponds in some areas and new ponds in others, causing damage to ecosystems. There has been extensive damage to infrastructure such as roads and power lines. Further, spring is coming 3.4 days earlier each decade, measured 1972 to 2009. There are tremendous impacts on the ecosystem due to loss of snow cover, including the death of reindeer and musk ox, as well as the loss of lemmings and predators.

Perspectives from Greenland were presented by its Deputy Prime Minister. He outlined mitigation and adaptation efforts in Greenland, which is on the front line of the effects of climate change. Many elements of the economy are being integrated into their efforts, as 80% of the country's economy is related to fishing.

The assessment proposes that dealing with short-lived global warming substances, for example black carbon, is a key strategy for keeping warming under 2 degrees by the end of the century. Main areas that must be controlled include vehicle emissions, wood burning, agricultural and open burning, gas flaring, and shipping. All the arctic countries are working on these areas within their boundaries. The Swedish president will seek a binding treaty over the next two years between Arctic Council members, particularly to deal with black carbon.

For information on AMAP, visit <http://www.amap.no>.

Finally, panelists discussed the health impacts of global warming. Water quality is a key problem, as temperatures warm and microorganisms reproduce. There have already been increases in diseases related to new animal species that have moved north. These include Giardia, tick borne diseases, and West Nile Virus. The speaker referenced an article in the New England Journal of Medicine, entitled "Global Climate Change and Infectious Diseases."

Visit www.globalhealthaction.net for a cluster of papers on the health impacts of global warming.

Though space was limited, Misti was able to attend part of the Opening Plenary of the high level negotiating segment on Tuesday afternoon. The Plenary featured opening remarks from South African President Jacob Zuma; Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, COP-17 President; Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC; and Secretary General of

the United Nations Ban Ki-moon. While noting that agreement on the most difficult issues at play in Durban may be beyond reach, Mr. Ban called for implementation of the Cancun agreements and tangible progress on short term and long term financing, and urged consideration of a second compliance period under the Kyoto Protocol, as well as a future comprehensive legally-binding agreement.

For webcasts of the statements during the Opening Plenary, visit http://unfccc4.metafusion.com/kongresse/cop17/templ/ovw_live.php?id_kongressmain=201.

At the end of the day we attended the US Delegation briefing for environmental NGOs, where we were briefed on the status of the negotiations by Todd Stern, Special Envoy for Climate Change, and Jonathan Pershing, Deputy Special Envoy for Climate Change. At this point in the negotiations Mr. Stern reported that there are two main clusters of issues: 1) the fate of the Kyoto Protocol for Kyoto parties and what will happen with a future climate regime and 2) operationalizing the Cancun agreements. The most difficult issues at this point involve the first cluster. With regard to the Kyoto Protocol, he confirmed that the EU is the only major emitter still in play, as other countries have announced that they will not agree to a second compliance period under the Protocol (or, like the US, are not parties to the Protocol). Mr. Stern reviewed the current negotiating positions of the parties, and reported that most of the discussions about a future climate regime are focused on post 2020. The US position is that in order to have a legally-binding agreement, there must be legally-binding mandates on larger developing countries. The US delegation does not believe that major developing countries like China and Brazil are ready to agree to such a regime, nor that the Chinese position regarding a legally-binding agreement has changed, despite media reports to the contrary. With regard to the Cancun issues, the most salient in the negotiations are those surrounding the operationalization of the Green Climate Fund and the transparency regime that was called for under the Cancun Agreements. On this second issue, it is not clear where negotiations will go.

Whatever the final outcome of the negotiations, Mr. Stern reported that the likelihood that we will see countries making changes to their fundamental targets or proposed sets of action is not high. Finally, he clarified that the commitment that the US made in Copenhagen to mobilize \$100 million per year for aid for climate mitigation was made on the basis that the funding would come from all sources, including the private sector, and that there was no specification on what percent will come from which source.

Finally, we have been watching with interest the various environmental activists trying to influence the Durban negotiations. There was a very vocal demonstration by Greenpeace on Monday morning in South Durban, in front of the hotel complex where some key delegations are staying. It was also reported overnight that three activists who were attempting to place a large banner on one of the taller buildings were arrested and deported. Despite the arrests, all in all there has been little activity, certainly not on the order of the Copenhagen demonstrations.