

UN Climate Negotiations, Doha, Qatar - 26 November to 7 December

November 2012

Summary and recommendations

The international climate negotiations continue at the 17th Conference of the Parties (COP) in Doha, Qatar. This COP is not expected to deliver a global climate change treaty; it was agreed last year in Durban that 2015 should be the date for achieving a new treaty or protocol covering all countries. The Doha COP, however, needs to build momentum towards a treaty with progress across the four main tracks of negotiations. This requires political will, trust, and international leadership. The second period of the Kyoto Protocol begins next year, and the EU along with other countries must now offer emissions reductions sufficient to tackle climate change.

To take a leading role at the COP, WWF recommends the UK Government should:

- support ways to close the gap between the current low level of global ambition and the level of action needed to keep global average temperature rise below 2°C. This gap is referred to as the 'Gigatonne Gap'. In particular continue to advocate a stronger EU target of at least 30% reduction by 2020 solely through domestically-achieved decarbonisation;
- agree a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol (KP) as soon as possible, and continue to encourage other KP Parties to commit, including New Zealand, Japan, Russia and Canada who have publicly resisted a continuation of KP;
- work with the EU and others to ensure that emissions credits (known as AAUs) are now retired and do not undermine progress towards staying within an effective global carbon budget;
- secure agreement on the operations of the Green Climate Fund; make progress on innovative sources of climate finance, including from the aviation and shipping sectors. In particular heed the recommendation of the UK Climate Change Committee and endorse a global levy or other carbon tax on shipping bunker fuels through the IMO;
- insist on common accounting rules so that those developed countries who are not party to the Kyoto Protocol, such as the US, fulfil the agreed obligations to comparability of effort in reducing carbon emissions. In particular support the G77's proposal addressing developed country mitigation.

Recent history

Last year in the Durban, all Parties agreed that by 2015 they would create a new “protocol, another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force under the Convention applicable to all Parties” which would commence in 2020. Over the last year they have set up a new track of negotiations under the Durban Platform to accelerate climate action in the short term in order to close the gap between the emissions reductions already pledged and the far greater reductions needed to keep global warming below 2°C. Discussions of the Green Climate Fund have been contentious. The changing geopolitical landscape is reshaping old UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) alliances.

COP18 in Doha

Progress over the last year has been slow and fractious. Governments must start working constructively under the Durban Platform at COP18 to build momentum towards the 2015 agreement. Without concerted action at Doha the path towards global warming of 3° - 4°C will continue. The opportunity for significant progress may well come from the recent changes in government in the US and China.

Countries need to move towards a level of climate ambition that matches the best available science, which suggests that global emissions peak by 2015 and then start to decline, with an emissions reduction goal globally of at least 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. This will require developed countries to plan for almost complete decarbonisation by 2050. Over the next three years, the IPCC 5th Assessment Report and the 2013-2015 science review agreed in Cancún will provide the best-available scientific analysis, so Doha should agree a periodic review of emission goals in light of new scientific evidence. These reports should provide the factual basis for negotiating new targets and actions for the 2015 Protocol.

The major challenges for the Doha COP will be to:

- Adopt amendments to the Kyoto Protocol (KP) so that the second commitment period can begin in 2013. The agreement needs to ensure that the KP has environmental integrity, that emissions credits from the first period are cancelled, and that there is a mandate to review the targets half way through the commitment period;
- Adopt decisions on emissions reductions from those developed countries currently outside the KP but which increase ambition, require common accounting, and define the carbon budgets for these countries to 2020;
- Adopt decisions on developing country emissions reductions, including securing pledges for action from those developing countries which have not yet done so and ensuring they have the support they need to mitigate and adapt to climate impacts;
- Complete the rest of the negotiations under the Convention track, fulfilling the Bali Action Plan mandate for “an agreed outcome” and passing any remaining issues into existing negotiating tracks;
- Progress the urgent issue of increasing short term (pre-2020) ambition on emissions reductions, finance, adaptation and reducing emissions from deforestation;
- Lay a solid foundation for negotiations towards a fair, ambitious and binding global Protocol to be adopted by 2015. This should include a programme of work and of decisions needed to achieve the Protocol;
- Agree that countries should develop low-carbon development strategies, to plan how they will reduce emissions in an environmentally and socially sustainable way, and help developing countries adapt to climate change. The UK Climate Change Act is leading example of domestic action and a model for others to follow.

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