

## **BANGKOK CLIMATE TALKS FAIL TO MAKE PROGRESS ON SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES; COMES UP WITH AN AGENDA**

### **Report**

**9<sup>th</sup> April 2011**

The first round of inter-sessional climate talks in 2011 ended on 8<sup>th</sup> late evening with parties approving the formal agenda for the next meeting at the end of the year Conference of Parties (COP) at Durban. The agenda was adopted after three days of intense discussions and negotiations, which reflected sharp division between the developed and developing countries. Ms. Christina Figueres, Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC said "this evening in Bangkok parties to the UN climate convention agreed on an agenda to work towards a comprehensive and balanced outcome at the UN climate change conference in Durban at the end of the year. The participating governments agreed that this outcome would both address the implementation of the Cancun agreements and issues that had not been solved at Cancun but which were part of the comprehensive Bali Action Plan in 2007", she added.

173 countries and more than 2000 scientists, climate activists and civil society organizations participated in five day Bangkok climate change talks at UNESCAP building beginning 3<sup>rd</sup> April and was the first since Cancun climate conference. Sharp differences emerged between developed and developing countries over the issue of future of the Kyoto protocol, which expires at the end of 2012. Reportedly most of the developed countries are not in favour of a binding second commitment period after the KP expires at the end of the next year and want AWG KP and AWG LCA merged with the focus on long term cooperative action and shared vision rather than binding commitments. Japan and Russia have led the opposition against a second commitment period while G 77 and China and other leading groups from the developing countries not only favour a second commitment period but enhanced levels of ambition but has also demanded that there should be no gap between the first and second commitment periods. China said "a compromise was reached at Cancun which should be the basis of moving forward and the compromise is clear on the second commitment period of Kyoto."

However, it was rather unfortunate the most of time was lost due to the debate on the agenda and there was not much headway on the substantive issues. Following a submission of the agenda by G77 and China for consideration of the parties in place of the agenda prepared by the Chair, developed and developing countries were pitted against each other. G 77 and China emphasized that the proposed agenda was structured to be inclusive the Bali Action Plan building blocks and was carefully balanced to address the concern of the Group, and allowed parties to move forward on the decisions taken at Cancun as well as issues under the Bali Action Plan." US and Russia viewed the proposal as going backwards to include issues under Bali Action Plan and as reflected a questioning of the Cancun decisions. There was also severe criticism of an alternative agenda proposed by the chair, with developing countries alleging that it was beyond the mandate of the Chair to prepare the agenda and parties should be allowed to merge their differences by themselves.

Developing countries felt that a lot of precious time was wasted on procedural matters when the world was running short of time in achieving at a just and fair deal to stabilize climate crisis. "We have regrettably spent the entire week negotiating the agenda," said Dessima Williams from the Caribbean island of Grenada. "This is unacceptable, and especially so for small islands who are running out of time if we are to avoid damage from rising sea levels and other climate change impacts. We cannot go on

negotiating forever." Ambassador Pablo Solon of Bolivia, which was the only country which voiced its opposition to the modest agreement in Cancun likened the climate talks to "throwing a bucket of water to prevent the forest fire."

The talks did not witness much progress on the fate of Kyoto Protocol. Japan and Russia reiterated that they would agree to a "second commitment period" under Kyoto, although both countries said they would be willing to consider participating in a wider global deal involving major developing countries, such as China and India. "We are not prepared to go forward with the binding obligation for ourselves which would not apply to the other major economies," the chief U.S. delegate Jonathan Pershing told a news conference. Chief EU negotiator Artur Runge-Metzger said Europe could not deal with climate change on its own. "Ideally, we would like a single legal framework, but it looks as if that's impossible. So we want other countries to do something, whether under Kyoto or some other way."

In a simultaneous event, Mr. Todd Stern chief US climate envoy in a conference at New York last week said that the US is opposed to a climate deal that does not bring aboard both wealthy and developing countries as feuding over nations' commitments dominated UN-led talks in Bangkok. He added that developing countries fixation with binding commitment was unworkable and prevented countries from doing what they are offering. He also said that the countries do not need a binding treaty to reduce their emissions and they can do it without a treaty.

The observer organizations and civil society groups attending the talks feel that talks have not risen to the occasion. Mr. Sharad Joshi from CECOEDCON, Rajasthan said that the opportunity to move forward on the Cancun decision is being wasted and there have been very little debate on the substantive issues. Mr. Ajay K Jha, from another observer organization Pairvi said that while Cancun represented a compromise in favour of the developed countries, they are trying further to regress from their stance and commitments. The most important issue for the talks is progress on the future of the Kyoto Protocol and developed countries being against second commitment period means that there would be only national voluntary pledges to reduce emission, which will be very disastrous for climate stabilization. Professor Sanjai Bhatt representing Beyond Copenhagen said that the efforts of developing countries like India, China, Brazil, South Africa and other smaller countries are not being matched by developed countries which are trying to circumvent the Kyoto Protocol provisions.