

Very little progress, less hopes at Bangkok climate change talks 2011

Bangkok climate change talks which opened on 3rd April till now have shown very little progress with bickering between developed and developing countries over procedural issues and very little outcomes on the substantive issues. The talks feature of the AWG KP 16 and AWG LCA 1, besides a number of meetings of the smaller groups on variety of issues. The Bangkok talks are the first official congregation of the members of the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol after the Cancun Meeting in December 2010.

In her opening address at the UN Climate Change Conference in Bangkok, UNFCCC Executive Secretary Christiana Figueres said that this session offers Parties a first opportunity to take the practical issues agreed in Cancun forward in view of Durban, and expressed the hope that the atmosphere of cooperation and compromise that characterized Cancun would prevail yet again. The talks are being attended by representatives of 192 countries and more than 2500 scientists, climate activists and observer organizations of the UNFCCC.

The most important substantive issue for the talks in the AWG KP track is the future of the Protocol. 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. In the opening plenary of the AWG KP Tuvalu said that "there was a need for a political commitment to ensure that there is no gap in the commitment periods and once the political intent was established technical issues will fall in place." Bolivia said that "the reduction pledges of both the developed and developing countries are in the range of 6.6 to 8 GTCO₂, which will result in a 4DC rise, which will be catastrophic," 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."

In the AWG LCA plenary, following a submission of the agenda by G77 and China for consideration of the parties in place of the agenda prepared by the Chair, sharp differences emerged between the developed and developing country parties. In the opening plenary on the Tuesday, Argentina presented the submission of the Group and said that it 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.

In a simultaneous event, Mr. Todd Stern chief US climate envoy in a conference at New York 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.

A number of civil society groups attending the talks feel that talks have not risen to the occasion. Mr. Sharad Joshi from Cecoedecon, 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.
