

What's on the table in Bonn?

Greenpeace briefing March 2009

The first of a series of climate change negotiations this year will begin in Bonn, Germany on 29 March. The year's negotiations will culminate at the Climate Summit in Copenhagen, Denmark, in December, where governments must agree a deal to save the climate. Getting the ambitious deal needed in Copenhagen hinges on progress made throughout the year.

The March/April Bonn session must narrow down the options, and start to identify areas of convergence between countries, so as to provide negotiating text by mid year. First and foremost, countries will have to conclude on the aggregate emission reduction target for developed countries, which Greenpeace believes should be at least 40 % by 2020.

1. Developed country targets

Countries will discuss the scale of future reductions in Developed countries (Annex 1) and should adopt conclusions on an aggregate target.

To date

The indicative range of 25 – 40% greenhouse gas emissions reductions by 2020 for Annex 1 countries which was agreed in Vienna in 2007, was reaffirmed in Bali and Poznan. However, in Poznan governments also added language referring to 'a spread of values,' which could in effect widen the range of individual targets and ultimately water down the ambition of the overall effort.

Desired outcome

Developed countries must show real leadership and move forward to agreeing an aggregate target that is guided by the precautionary principle, and apply it to the most recent information on the science of climate change. Greenpeace is calling for developed countries to commit to a minimum of 40% emission reductions from 1990 levels by 2020. It is crucial to agree an overall target in Bonn to allow time this year to determine individual targets and agree the level of technology and financial support for developing country action. All of these need to serve the overall goal of staying below dangerous levels of warming. Setting targets must be based on what the science demands – not on political popularity in the polls.

2. Agree on a process for developing negotiating texts

In order to finalise a deal in Copenhagen, legal negotiating texts must be circulated by 17 June 2009.

To date

Governments are doing everything they can to avoid getting starting a conversation on real negotiations – by having endless discussion on process. Negotiations are currently running on two tracks (AWGKP – Annex 1 reductions and AWGLCA – enhanced action by developing countries, and a target for the US comparable with other industrialised countries), each of which is expected to produce a negotiating text, to eventually reach a deal in Copenhagen.

Desired outcome

Divisions must be overcome so that real negotiations can begin. For the AWGKP this means reaching a conclusion on proposed amendments to the Kyoto Protocol, and agreeing to another round of submissions from countries on these proposals before the next session (1-12 June, Bonn), followed by another round of consultations during the session. They also need to formally ask the Chair to pull together proposed amendments on other issues, such as flexible mechanisms, and land use change and forestry.

The AWGLCA will discuss a text that the Chair has put together outlining areas of agreement and how to deal with areas of disagreement, identifying gaps that need to be filled. This group must narrow down the options outlined during 2008. This could involve being specific about what a 'shared vision' means; ruling in or out some of the proposals on finance; making decisions on principles related to a mechanism to prevent forest destruction, and finding common ground with some of the proposals on technology.

3. Negotiations on flexible mechanisms and land use and forestry to begin in earnest

Real negotiations must begin on issues around the Clean Development Mechanism, Joint Implementation, Emissions Trading, possible new crediting mechanisms and Land Use and Forestry in order to pull proposed amendments together and circulate them before the June session

To date

Flexible Mechanisms

The future of the flexible mechanisms has been under discussion during the last few sessions, but no decisions have been made and conclusions have invariably been postponed.

LULUCF

Almost without exception, Annex 1 countries support the maximum possible counting of emissions reduction from Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) for the next commitment period. This could lead to substantially less effort to reduce domestic industrial and fossil fuel emissions.

Many countries, citing national circumstances, have proposed new activities and adjustments in the way emissions are accounted for and there is little hope for consensus. There are four options on the table representing collated proposals and ranging from incremental changes (option 1) to radically altering the rules (option 4). Some countries have also recently submitted new rule changes which will require additional discussion.

Desired outcome

Flexible Mechanisms

Clear progress is needed on the future of the CDM and on paving the way for new and better sectoral market mechanisms. Greenpeace believes the CDM in its current project-based form should be limited to Least Developed Countries and other countries with insufficient capacity to act on a sectoral level. Unsustainable technologies like Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) and nuclear power are inappropriate for inclusion in the CDM and should be ruled out of any proposed reform or restructure.

LULUCF

The elements and proposals in the LULUCF 'options' need to be narrowed down, accepting that an increase in climate variability is inevitable and therefore the uncertainties surrounding accounting for emissions from LULUCF activities must temper the addition of further LULUCF offsets in the next commitment period. The accuracy and precision of accounting must be improved, and current perversities removed. Greenpeace is calling for Land Based Accounting (option 4) to be removed from the discussions and is seeking to introduce further limitations on the extent a country can rely on overall LULUCF offsets in meeting its Kyoto target.

4. Other issues

Issues such as the length of future commitment periods, the base year and appointment of the AWGKP Chair are likely to be discussed as well.

Greenpeace supports keeping the current UNFCCC base year (1990), as well as future commitment periods of 5 years, which allows targets and decisions to be revisited in light of emerging science.

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