

What's on the table at Bonn 2?

Greenpeace Briefing, June 2009

The second of a series of UN climate change negotiations to be held this year will begin in Bonn, Germany on 1 June. The negotiations will culminate in Copenhagen, Denmark in December, where governments must agree on a deal to save the climate. Getting the ambitious deal needed in Copenhagen hinges on progress made throughout the year.

The two working groups representing the different negotiating tracks (AWGKP-Kyoto commitments and AWGLCA – developing country action and USA) now each have draft documents designed to form the basis of an agreement in Copenhagen. However, these documents currently contain almost every option that has ever been suggested – some good, some extremely bad – and the June meeting will need to work extremely hard to reach agreement on what stays and what goes – to enhance the good and reject the bad.

While Bonn 2 is not formally a decision making meeting it is wholly possible – and desirable – for countries to reach agreement on some of the key elements if there is political will to do so.

By December these drafts must have evolved to a point where they contain all of the elements and legal language needed to form a strong, effective agreement that will put the world on the road to avoid catastrophic climate change.

1. Targets for industrialised countries

Discussions will continue on the scale of future reductions for industrialised countries (Annex 1).

To Date

Negotiations on future targets for Annex 1 were launched in Montreal 2005. Those on financial obligations to support developing country action were initiated in Bali 2007. We are now midway through 2009 and industrialised countries have still not agreed on their emission reduction targets, nor have they brought any money to the table. This gap between rhetoric and action is seriously stalling the progress of the negotiation and creating mistrust among developing countries.

Despite developing countries at Bonn 1 calling on industrialised countries as a group to cut emissions by at least 40 - 45% below 1990 levels by 2020, no overall mid-term target has yet been agreed. The USA has not put forward its own target in the context of the negotiations and many other industrialised countries are foot-dragging as a result. Pledges so far from the remaining industrialised countries are either non-existent or woefully inadequate, amounting to a cut of less than 15 % on 1990 levels.

Desired Outcome

Governments need to appreciate that, given the most recent scientific studies on climate change, they are now negotiating an emergency rescue plan for the climate and they have only six months in which to do it. The inadequacy of the targets currently being considered by the USA must be addressed and recalibrated according to what the science requires. In the meantime other industrialised countries, such as Australia, Japan, Canada, New Zealand and Russia should not use the USA's lack of ambition as a smokescreen for their own.

An overall target of -40% by 2020 (below 1990 levels) is the minimum required from industrialised countries as a group and this figure must be stated explicitly in both texts. This would make the overall target for the next 'commitment period' (2013-2017) -23% (below 1990 levels).

The period in which countries must achieve the target they have agreed to (i.e. the commitment period) should remain at five years (i.e. 2013-2017).

2. Other issues under the Kyoto Protocol

Disagreements between developing and industrialised countries on the extent to which the AWGKP is permitted to amend parts of the Kyoto Protocol, or whether they should only focus on amending the industrialised country targets (Annex B) are likely to surface again at Bonn 2.

To Date

Developing countries do not want the Kyoto Protocol opened for any other amendments apart from those stating new industrialised country targets (in numbers). Industrialised countries, however, also want to introduce some changes to the options available to them to meet those targets, such as offset mechanisms and the way emissions from land use and forestry are counted. They are unwilling to agree on targets before having clarity on what exactly will be their tools for meeting them.

From a legal point of view, both groups are right. The mandate of this negotiating group was to agree on new targets for industrialised countries but that cannot be done in isolation and some changes to other parts of the Protocol are needed as well.

This apparently technical, but in practise highly political and tactical, issue has slowed the progress of negotiations since last year and is beginning to look increasingly like a delaying tactic on the part of industrialised countries. It is unsurprising that developing countries aren't interested in talking about new flexibilities for reaching the targets when industrialised countries are still refusing to agree on overall targets after three-and-a-half years of negotiations. This will be a contentious issue again in Bonn 2.

Desired Outcome

It is time for the endless mandate discussion to come to an end. There is no real reason why industrialised countries should not put forward targets first and then ensure that they have the tools they need before agreeing the final deal. Any attempt to resist doing that should be seen as the time-wasting tactic it is. The Kyoto Protocol will need to be more widely amended anyway, so developing countries are not helping the negotiations either by sticking to very narrow interpretation of the mandate.

With only six short months left to negotiate an agreement, ALL countries should be acting in concert, with the goal of keeping global temperature increase as far below 2°C as possible as their highest priority.

The Bonn 2 talks must make progress in negotiating the Annex I targets. Other amendments to the Kyoto Protocol must avoid the creation of new loopholes that undermine domestic action. Flexible mechanisms must be improved to ensure real, additional emission reductions and sustainable development. Additionally, forest credits as well as nuclear power and CCS must be kept out of market mechanisms

3. The legal form of the Copenhagen agreement

There are various options for and opinions of what the final Copenhagen Agreement will look like. The overall outcome could contain an amendment to the Kyoto Protocol, a new Copenhagen Protocol, a set of decisions made by the Conference of the Parties (COP - the supreme body of the Convention), or a combination of some or all of those. In the case of an amended Kyoto or a new protocol, there is a legal requirement to notify the Parties at least six months before the meeting at which it is proposed to be adopted – in this case, 17 June and 6 June respectively.

To Date

The Chairs of the KP and LCA have both produced draft documents that could be circulated to meet this notification requirement but they need the go-ahead from the negotiators to do so. For the reasons stated above this might turn out to be trickier than it appears.

Desired Outcome

Governments in Bonn must agree to begin negotiating texts in earnest. That will require agreeing on one document (for each track) to form the basis of negotiations.

In Greenpeace's view, the final Copenhagen Agreement should consist of an amendment to the Kyoto Protocol and a new Copenhagen Protocol. The Copenhagen Protocol and amended Kyoto should be viewed as a package setting out the international community's response to avoiding dangerous climate change.

COP or CMP decisions will also be needed to lay the groundwork for the action needed up to 2012.

Although there will be no final decisions made on the structure of the Copenhagen agreement in Bonn, failure to circulate notification, either of amendments to the Kyoto Protocol or a new protocol, means those options will be very difficult to get back onto the Copenhagen Agenda.

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Greenpeace demands for Copenhagen Climate summit:

<http://www.greenpeace.org/international/press/reports/climate-demands-short>