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Climate change: EU welcomes agreement to launch formal negotiations on a global climate regime for post-2012

Commission President José Manuel Barroso: "There is only one planet. Together, developed and developing countries can reach success."

The European Union welcomes the agreement reached at the UN climate change conference in Bali to start formal negotiations on a climate regime for the post-2012 period and on a 'Bali Roadmap' that sets out an agenda for these negotiations. The conference set an end-2009 deadline for completing the negotiations to allow time for governments to ratify and implement the future climate agreement by the end of 2012, when the Kyoto Protocol's first commitment period ends. The decision explicitly acknowledges the findings of the recent scientific assessment by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and recognises that deep cuts in global emissions of greenhouse gases will be required to prevent global warming from reaching dangerous levels. The conference also took important decisions on several other issues, including launching demonstration projects to reduce deforestation, finalising arrangements for a fund to help developing countries adapt to the impacts of climate change, and scaling up financing for transfer of technology to developing countries.

President José Manuel Barroso welcomed this agreement: "We have worked hard to achieve this result. It is a very important step forward. Europe is determined to contribute all it can to move forward also in the future. I appeal to all our partners to take these commitments seriously and to act swiftly. Indeed there is only one planet. Together, developed and developing countries can reach success."

"The Bali conference has produced a breakthrough in the fight against climate change," said Francisco Nunes Correia, Portuguese Environment Minister and current EU Council president. "The way is now clear for the international community to start negotiations to reach a global climate agreement by the end of 2009. EU leadership has been key to securing this successful outcome and ensuring that the latest scientific recommendations from the IPCC will be taken into account in this process."

Stavros Dimas, European Commissioner for Environment, added: "These were tough negotiations but we have succeeded in agreeing on a roadmap for negotiations that meets the European Union's main demands. We have agreed to start negotiations that will not only discuss commitments for developed countries, including the United States, but also actions by developing countries. We have also agreed to work on a shared vision. Now the real hard work must begin. It is essential that the agreement to be worked out over the next two years is ambitious enough to prevent global warming from reaching dangerous levels."

The Bali Roadmap

The conference agreed to launch formal negotiations among the 192 parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on action up to and beyond 2012. These formal negotiations replace a process of informal dialogue that has taken place over the past two years. They will involve the United States, which is a Party to the UNFCCC but not the Kyoto Protocol.

The decision to launch negotiations sets out a 'roadmap' to guide them which includes the key building blocks of a future agreement. These are: enhanced mitigation of climate change by limiting or reducing emissions; adaptation to climate change; action on technology development and transfer; and scaling up of finance and investment to support mitigation and adaptation. Four negotiating sessions are scheduled in 2008, starting in March or April.

The decision explicitly acknowledges the findings of the IPCC's recent Fourth Assessment Report (AR4), emphasises the urgency of addressing climate change expressed in the report and recognises that deep cuts in global emissions will be required to reach the Convention's objective of preventing dangerous levels of climate change. At the EU's insistence it also makes reference to a section of the AR4 which demonstrates that emissions reductions for developed countries in the range of 25-40% below 1990 levels by 2020 are required to limit global warming to 2 degrees above pre-industrial levels.

Enhanced action to mitigate climate change will be a key focus of negotiations. The Roadmap envisages commitments or actions by developed countries which could include quantified objectives for limiting and reducing emissions. Developing countries will also take action, but in their case no reference is made to quantified emissions objectives.

In parallel with the negotiations under the climate change Convention, the 176 parties to the Kyoto Protocol will continue negotiations already under way on new post-2012 emissions targets for developed countries that are in the Protocol. For this negotiating 'track' the Bali conference agreed on an intensive work schedule for 2008 to accelerate progress.

A review of the Protocol at the next UN climate conference, in December 2008, will help to inform these negotiations on future commitments by developed countries. The EU sees the review as an important opportunity to strengthen the Protocol's effectiveness in readiness for the post-2012 period.

The negotiations under both 'tracks' – Convention and Protocol - will be completed at the UN climate change conference to be held at the end of 2009 in Copenhagen. The EU and many other Parties insisted on this simultaneous deadline to ensure a coherent result.

Other issues

The conference also reached decisions on a number of other issues of particular importance to developing countries. Most notably:

- It finalised governance arrangements for the Kyoto Protocol's Adaptation Fund for developing countries, many of which are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The agreement clears the way for the Fund to become operational and begin financing adaptation programmes and projects in developing countries. It will be financed mainly through a levy on the value of emission credits generated by clean energy projects undertaken under the Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism and Joint Implementation instrument.

- An important step was taken towards reducing emissions from deforestation – the source of around 20% of global CO₂ emissions – with an agreement to launch a framework for demonstration activities. This will allow different approaches to reducing deforestation and forest degradation to be tested over the next two years in preparation for covering these issues in a post-2012 agreement. The demonstration activities will be supported by the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, also launched in Bali.

- An agreement was reached which paves the way for the elaboration of a strategic programme to scale up investment in the transfer of clean technologies to developing countries. Technology transfer is a central building block of a post-2012 agreement. The planned strategic programme under the Global Environment Facility will help developing countries both to adapt to climate change and to limit their emissions of greenhouse gases