



BRIEFING:
Climate Change Conference: Outcomes and next steps

Summary:

Pacific island countries and territories are disappointed by the outcomes of the Climate Change Conference of December 2009 in Copenhagen. The clear, legally binding deal on greenhouse gas emissions Pacific Island countries called for was not secured.

On the positive side, the conference highlighted the global concern about climate change and acceptance of the science of climate change, and there should be increasing funding to help island states respond. However, there will still be a need to continue to press for a global deal and stronger and clearer commitments to reduce emissions and support adaptation in our vulnerable island states.

SPREP will remain engaged in the negotiations throughout 2010 to support and advise its Members, as it did in Copenhagen.

The Pacific message

Pacific Island countries have consistently warned the international community that climate change caused by greenhouse gas emissions endangers our livelihoods and human security. If temperature rises are not controlled, the lives of Pacific Islanders in this century may be dramatically affected. Sea level rise, more extreme and frequent weather events, ocean acidification and coral bleaching are immediate threats.

Together with fellow members of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), Pacific island countries called for a binding deal to limit global average surface temperature increases well below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. To achieve this scientifically-based threshold for preventing dangerous climate change would require global emissions to peak by 2015 and decrease by at least 85% thereafter, so that by 2050 atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations may be stabilised at 350 parts per million.

A key interest for our region is adaptation measures: in the first instance to support the most vulnerable countries and communities to adapt to the consequences of climate change that cannot be avoided. The Pacific called for developed economies to recognise their historical responsibility and to treat the victims of future climate change fairly.

Other priorities in the UNFCCC / Kyoto Protocol negotiations included:

- A collective commitment from Annex I UNFCCC parties (developed economies) to reduce emissions by more than 45% below 1990 levels by 2020, and more than 95% below 1990 levels by 2050, given their historical responsibility.
- Financing through grants – on top of overseas development assistance – for adaptation to the increasing adverse effects of climate change, and for renewable energy and energy efficiency – with priority access for small island developing states and least developed states.



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- An insurance and rehabilitation/compensation mechanism for unavoidable loss and damage for climate change impacts that exceed adaptive capacity.
- Arrangements to enable technology transfer, capacity building and enhanced support for small island developing states and least developed states.

The Copenhagen Climate Change Conference

The Climate Change Conference of December 2009 was one of the largest ever UN meetings: 119 world leaders, 12,000+ delegates, 5,000+ media. Its scale underlined the global significance of climate change.

The conference was to be the culmination of two years of negotiations under the UNFCCC relating to the Bali Action Plan. It was to follow two tracks: on industrialised countries' commitments under the Kyoto Protocol, and long-term cooperative action, including by developing states, under the FCCC itself.

Eight Pacific heads of state and several government ministers attended. Delegations from Pacific Island countries were highly engaged in the negotiations. SPREP's team in Copenhagen provided technical guidance and advice to delegations from the region, and coordinated a team of Pacific journalists reporting to numerous media outlets.

The conference had been making progress towards consensus on texts, including on adaptation, which involved many AOSIS states. Less progress was being made on emissions reductions – the 'numbers' group. But in the final stages, an entirely new proposal was tabled: a 'Copenhagen Accord', which had been negotiated separately from the main conference by a smaller group of heads of delegations. This effectively prevented the work under various groups from being consolidated and refined, so as to get a finalised outcome from the working groups. The principal outcomes of the conference were:

- The Copenhagen Accord, which recognises the scientific need to limit global temperature rise below 2°C, and calls for industrialised countries to commit to economy-wide emission targets by 2020.
- The Copenhagen Green Climate Fund, to support immediate action on climate change. Commitments by developed countries should reach US\$30 billion in the next 3 years and the goal is to mobilise US\$100 billion per year by 2020 to support the most vulnerable countries.

The Copenhagen Accord

Does not:	But it does:
Have a clear legal status: it was a political declaration noted, not adopted.	Reflect the political will of major players to address climate change.
Clarify whether the Kyoto Protocol or its essential architecture will continue (its Adaptation Fund is essential to Pacific Island countries).	Refer (ambiguously) to strengthening Kyoto emission reductions.



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Does not:	But it does:
<p>Commit to aggregate limits on developed country emissions and the maximum 1.5°C temperature rise. In fact, estimates project the resulting increases at around 3.5°C.</p>	<p>Acknowledge the ‘scientific view’ that increases should be limited to ‘below’ 2°C and that ‘deep cuts’ in emissions are required.</p> <p>Allow for an assessment by 2015 that may consider the science of the 1.5°C target.</p> <p>Allow small island states to take voluntary mitigation actions, but with increased reporting requirements.</p>
<p>Establish a long-term mechanism to support adaptation in developing countries, or a grants scheme for assisting small island states in adaptation measures.</p> <p>Maintain the focus on adaptation to the adverse impacts of climate change, some of which are already felt: instead it also seeks to expand the definition of adaptation to also address the impacts of response measures.</p>	<p>Agree that developed countries shall aim to provide US\$30 billion for 2010-2012 for adaptation and mitigation – although this is likely to continue to go through the World Bank and GEF.</p> <p>Commit developed countries to ‘a goal’ of mobilising US\$100 billion a year by 2020 for mitigation by developing countries.</p>
<p>Set a timeframe on mobilising financial resources for incentives to reduce emissions from deforestation and degradation in developing countries with appropriate safeguards and monitoring systems.</p>	<p>Recognise the need for addressing deforestation through REDD-plus and via a new financial mechanism.</p>
<p>Establish an insurance and rehabilitation/compensation scheme.</p>	
<p>Set clear arrangements for technology transfer, capacity building and enhanced support.</p>	<p>Establish a ‘technology mechanism’ to accelerate technology development and transfer.</p>

Next steps

- Member countries are deciding whether to associate with the Copenhagen Accord: this is a political question, and therefore it is entirely a matter for Member countries.
- Ad Hoc Working Groups will continue their important work. Adaptation is a priority for the region, to maintain the momentum towards convergence on key issues, and resolve the questions of how to prioritise vulnerable countries, and how to establish an effective financial mechanism and framework for technical support (initial meetings are scheduled for 9-11 April in Bonn, Germany).
- Preparations for the sessions of the UNFCCC subsidiary bodies in May/June (SB 32, Bonn, Germany).
- Preparations for the next Conference of the Parties: COP 16 & CMP 6 in November/December (UNFCCC / Kyoto Protocol, Mexico).



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SPREP's role

SPREP's role on climate change responds to the needs and concerns of Pacific Island countries: through provision of preparatory analytical, technical and strategic advice and capacity support, rather than advice on political questions.

SPREP's advice reflects the positions agreed by Pacific Island countries through the AOSIS Heads of State Declaration. Therefore, SPREP supports the AOSIS recommended targets on atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations and temperature increases from a scientific and technical perspective.

To support Pacific countries in the 2009 negotiations, SPREP:

- √ trained journalists and negotiators
- √ supported delegations at preparatory meetings
- √ conducted the Pacific Climate Change Roundtable
- √ circulated regional briefing papers
- √ provided technical support, briefing materials and a media and outreach service for Pacific countries in Copenhagen.

SPREP also participated in AOSIS strategy meetings and briefed Pacific Island heads of state.

At the request of Pacific island countries, SPREP continues to prioritise its assistance to support Member countries involved in negotiations on adaptation and other technical and financial support measures under discussion. On the financial pledges, a key consideration for the region is to ensure that increased financial allocations are translated to tangible and practical actions on the ground that will assist Pacific Island countries. There must be effective coordination between donors to ensure that funding is addressing priority country needs. SPREP will continue to support Member countries to ensure these objectives are achieved.