DOHA CLIMATE TALKS: A BETTER WAY FORWARD

In late November 2012, world governments will meet in Doha, Qatar, for the UN Climate Change Conference, to firm up the outcomes of the Durban conference held in 2011.

Christian Aid believes Doha gives governments a vital opportunity to advance global cooperation in confronting the challenge of climate change. It believes it is possible to achieve an ambitious outcome from the conference that will deliver on all the elements of the package agreed in Durban.

The intentions of the Conference are to:

• finalise and adopt a meaningful and effective second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol
• address the outstanding issues under the Convention track, in accordance with the 2007 ‘Bali mandate’
• set the negotiations under the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP) on a firm footing, with a view to adopting a new legally-binding agreement by 2015.

Christian Aid sees 2012 as an important year in which to advance and complete the work of the last seven. It believes that the highest possible ambition is needed by participating countries in order to avoid dangerous climate change in the near-term, and that a scientifically-responsive, responsible, rules-based climate system must be preserved to build a strong foundation for the future new agreement.

The scientific imperative

Governments have agreed to:

• a global goal to limit the level of warming to below 2°C above pre-industrial levels by the year 2100
• review this target to ensure its adequacy by 2015
• help develop and support strategies to cope with the impacts of climate change that are already being experienced as the global temperature increases.

However, there is still a significant gap between the level of climate change mitigation required to stay below the 2°C level, come 2020, and the actuality of global emissions. Scientists warn that the mitigation pledges on the table set the world on a 2.5-5°C warming track above pre-industrial levels by 2100. All this is happening at a time when, after 0.74°C of warming already, the world is experiencing terrifying impacts of climate change, such as an increase in the frequency of droughts, falling crop productivity, water stress and rising sea levels – which are only predicted to worsen as the global average temperature increases.

Political context

There are three areas of negotiation in train for the Doha conference, each with distinct mandates and timeframes. The first of these, taken on from the Bali Road Map, addresses commitments and actions in the short-term. From the scientific evidence, these are of the utmost importance. These agreements were not concluded in Copenhagen,

Mohamed Adow, Senior Adviser, Global Advocacy and Alliances, Christian Aid
in 2009, and have been delayed every year since then.

- **Negotiation track 1**
  *The Kyoto Protocol – KP*: This is overseen by the Ad Hoc Working Group on further commitments for Annex 1 (industrialised) countries under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP)*. It focuses on the mitigation commitments for industrialised countries. The mandate of this group is to produce a second commitment period under the Protocol.

- **Negotiation track 2**
  *Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention – LCA*: This is overseen by the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA)*. Its remit is “to enable the full, effective and enhanced implementation of the Convention through long-term cooperative action”*. It covers shared vision; enhanced actions on mitigation; adaptation; capacity building; technology development and transfer; and the provision of financial resources to support developing countries actions on mitigation, adaptation and technology cooperation.

- **Negotiation track 3**
  *Durban Platform for Enhanced Action – ADP*: This new negotiation track, looking at the longer-term, was established in Durban last year*. It involves negotiations towards a new global agreement under the Convention, applicable to all parties, and the launching of a workplan to enhance mitigation ambition. The intention is to increase emissions cuts to the greatest possible levels.

### Sequencing negotiations

#### Short-term negotiations

Mitigation commitments for *industrialised countries under the Kyoto Protocol* – These negotiations began in 2005, and the delay in agreement is on the part of rich industrialised countries, combined with the bad faith of governments such as that of Canada, who have withdrawn from the talks entirely. This is a key impediment in international climate negotiations.

**Long-term cooperative action** (as outlined by the Bali Action Plan in 2007 and, therefore, now needing resolution) – After five years of negotiations, there is still a failure to agree on:

- a long-term global goal for emission reductions, under the shared vision negotiations, to achieve the objective of the Convention
- how to provide adequate scaled-up financing to support developing countries with adaptation, mitigation and technology cooperation
- what comparable efforts, in the form of economy-wide targets, the US and those other developed countries not joining the Kyoto second commitment period should take
- how to ensure that the mitigation actions of developing countries are given the financial, technological and capacity-building support they need for them to be implemented.

The group’s mandate is to continue its work and reach an agreed outcome through various decisions of the Conference of the Parties in Doha, after which time it will be terminated.
Longer-term negotiations

- A new global agreement under the Convention, applicable to all parties – The ADP is to complete its work no later than 2015, in order to adopt ‘a protocol, another legal instrument or agreed outcome with legal force under the Convention’ at COP21, which will only come into effect from 2020.

It is Christian Aid’s view that the parties in Doha should first address negotiation tracks 1 and 2 (the AWG-KP and AWG-LCA), to ensure that there are strong and effective institutions and rules that can deliver a pathway to a safer climate now – in the immediate and short term. These rules and institutions can then serve as a basis for longer-term agreements. After the work of those bodies has been concluded, parties can start the work on the ADP on a firm footing, building on the success of the past. Attempts to link the past with the future have the potential to unravel the whole international rules-based system and the work of the last seven years, including the Kyoto Protocol (which is the only international, legally binding regime and includes vital architectural elements required for the future regime). Any such unravelling, leading to a world without strong and effective climate controls and provision of financial support, would be a disaster for the climate and for the world’s most vulnerable people.

Christian Aid calls on the parties to ensure that the work of the ADP does not duplicate or prejudice the negotiations already under the Kyoto Protocol and Long-term Cooperative Action, nor distract attention from the science-, rules-based, top-down system that exists under the Convention and its Kyoto Protocol.

Parties must also avoid any situation that could allow those countries that are hanging back, have left, or that want to dismantle the existing climate regime, to set the terms of the climate debate. Those advocating business as usual will not solve the climate crisis. Truly ambitious parties must build the strongest system they can, as the peoples of the world demand and expect their leaders to deliver, to tackle climate change.

Financing gap

There remains a gaping hole on sources of finance for the 2013-2019 period. Without adequate, scaled-up financing, and firm commitments after 2012 when the ‘fast start finance’ period ends, it’s hard to see how developing countries will adapt and contribute to the global mitigation efforts. The need for climate finance is far greater than the US$100bn that developed countries have pledged to mobilise by 2020. Given that the extreme weather and climate events already happening are causing billions of dollars in economic losses, and are predicted to worsen, it’s important for rich countries to realise that the less we do now, the more we pay later. Christian Aid calls on rich countries to commit to at least double the ‘fast start’ financing levels intended from 2013, and commit to the initial capitalisation of the Green Climate Fund, with agreed criteria for this and additional finance.

A business as usual outcome versus protecting the multilateral rules-based system

Over the years, the divide between rich and poor nations in the climate negotiations has been increasing. This has been exacerbated by a number of developed countries, which were supposed to lead in tackling climate change, backing away from their legal commitments. The USA has not only refused to join the Kyoto Protocol but has also taken a wrecking ball to the

The need for climate finance is far greater than the US$100bn that developed countries have pledged to mobilise by 2020.
rules-based, legally-binding target system by proposing a ‘pledge and review’, or do-as-you-like system, and convincing many other developed countries to join it. Canada has withdrawn from the Kyoto Protocol, and Japan and Russia have communicated their intention not to join the second commitment period. Australia and New Zealand are unclear on where they stand. At the same time, these and other developed countries have put forward weak targets that could be further undermined by the existence of significant accounting loopholes. It is possible that, in a real sense, developed countries’ emissions will actually increase by 2020, in clear contravention of what the Convention requires and what we need for a safe climate.

These countries prefer a voluntary, pledge-based approach, which enables governments to take on commitments on a unilateral basis. They have systematically opposed the top-down, rules-based approach including aggregate targets, common accounting rules and the compliance system for developed countries, while seeking to move to a global agreement with weaker obligations for them and stronger ones for developing countries. This lacks any principles of equity, or common but differentiated responsibilities and commitments, regarding the means to implement commitments for developing countries – thereby moving away from the fundamental principles of the Climate Convention.

To achieve this, these countries are seeking to close the Kyoto Protocol and Long-term Cooperative Action tracks without reaching sufficiently ambitious, meaningful and effective outcomes for the pre-2020 period – thereby, in effect, dismantling the existing climate architecture.

They aim to terminate the Kyoto Protocol after reaching a soft ‘second commitment period’ that avoids multilateral agreement based on sound carbon accounting rules, while keeping carbon markets operating and available to all countries, including those who ‘jump ship’ from the Kyoto Protocol, and extending the end-date to 2020, risking ‘lock-in’ to dangerously low targets.

They also aim to terminate the working group on Long-term Cooperative Action without fulfilling its mandate; erase the distinction between developed and developing countries, removing the requirement that developed countries take ‘comparable’ commitments among themselves; and also end discussions on adaptation, finance, technology and capacity without honouring their commitments or agreeing to new ones.

In effect, the developed countries are proposing a ‘business as usual’ way forward that contains negligible targets and no new additional finance to fight climate change. They are proposing that the world in 2020 looks substantially the same as the world looks now, but with significantly more frequent and more serious climate impacts. Of course, these countries do not put it this way, but rather assert that this is what is politically realistic. They are continuing with their unilaterally declared pledges, made in the disputed Copenhagen Accord of 2009, which are insufficient – both in their substance, as effective curbs on emissions, and in their form, as non-legal proposals that do not bind governments to the common multilateral rules in any meaningful way. The ‘locking-in’ of this system in Doha would cement a shift away from the effective multilateral, science-, and rules-based system that is seen as vital for a single, global, legally-binding agreement under the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action.

It is possible that, in a real sense, developed countries’ emissions will actually increase by 2020, in clear contravention of what the Convention requires and what we need for a safe climate.
Christian Aid believes that the Doha outcome must prevent shifting of climate burdens onto developing countries, the weakening of developed countries’ commitments, limiting the means of implementation, and a tendency to shift to a weaker climate regime.

The outcome should rather preserve and strengthen the existing climate architecture of the Kyoto Protocol and Convention in order to effectively tackle climate change, while protecting the right to sustainable development.

Outcomes in Doha

Under the Kyoto Protocol, governments must adopt a ratifiable amendment that preserves the top-down, science-based, multilateral rules-based system. To ensure its continuity and full implementation, this should take effect and apply to the industrialised countries, with quantified emission commitments for the second commitment period, provisionally from 1 January 2013.

Current pledges put forward by the countries are too low to limit global warming to safe levels that do not threaten the planet and its people. And it is important that they should not lock-in these insufficient pledges for the full commitment period. Instead, in order to ensure that they meet the demands of the most vulnerable countries, and reduce their emissions by at least 40 per cent by 2020, parties must agree a process allowing countries to adjust and increase the level of their ambition in the course of the commitment period.

The EU should avoid locking-in its insufficient 20 per cent pledge, keeping in mind that if they implement their current domestic plans they will reduce their emissions by over 20 per cent.

And so, to move beyond their ‘business as usual’ level they should increase their 2020 pledge to 30 per cent (at minimum), and commit to work towards increasing it to more than 40 per cent in the course of the second commitment period.

To ensure the environmental integrity of the second commitment period, governments must close the ‘loopholes’ that threaten to negate any actions/targets they make, and agree to restrict any carrying over of Assigned Amount Units (AAUs) from the first commitment period as credit in the second commitment period.

The EU should avoid locking-in its insufficient 20 per cent pledge, keeping in mind that if they implement their current domestic plans they will reduce their emissions by over 20 per cent.

The Doha outcome must prevent shifting of climate burdens, the weakening of developed countries’ commitments and efforts to limit the means of implementation.

Under the Convention track, the AWG-LCA has delivered some new institutions, actions and results, which potentially strengthen the implementation of the Convention, but which still need effective application to ensure they are not ‘empty shells’. This is the core work of the LCA and, because there are political issues that need to be resolved, cannot be passed on to technical bodies to deal with. In addition, there are outstanding issues that must be resolved in Doha to ensure a comprehensive approach is agreed to the climate crisis at an international level. At a minimum, Doha must deliver:

• adoption by non-Kyoto developed countries of ambitious, legally-binding emissions-reduction commitments up to 2020 under the Convention, comparable in effort and transparency with Kyoto parties under the Kyoto Protocol and

• an agreement on long-term sources and scale of finance, starting in 2013.

But we also recognise some of the LCA issues might not be resolved by Doha – including the negotiations on long-term goals for emissions reductions.
Poverty is an outrage against humanity. It robs people of dignity, freedom and hope, of power over their own lives.

Christian Aid has a vision – an end to poverty – and we believe that vision can become a reality. We urge you to join us.

Christian Aid, 35 Lower Marsh, London SE1 7RL
t. 020 7620 4444  christianaid.org.uk

Poverty Over is a trademark of Christian Aid.

© Christian Aid November 2012  13-147-J730
Printed on 100 per cent recycled paper