Durban climate talks continue as Ministers arrive

Title Negotiators and NGOs alike are preparing for the Ministers taking over the negotiations when the High Level Segment kicks off tomorrow. All in all we have 12 Heads of State and 130 Ministers arriving here in Durban, indeed some are already here and starting informal negotiations. For us NGOs this means preparing briefings for Ministers on the crucial issues they will be discussing, writing articles in the NGO newsletter calling on Ministers to take the right decisions, and of course meeting them! I met the Swedish Minister yesterday and will meet the UK one today as well as Connie Hedegaard, the EU?s Climate Commissioner. Also making sure I get our messages and briefings via my colleagues to as many of the world?s Ministers as possible via my colleagues from BirdLife International and the NGO network ? Climate Action Network. Meanwhile, the negotiators have been racing against the clock trying to get draft text into a decent form so Ministers will be deciding on big political issues, not on all the little details. I?ve been tracking the land use and forestry negotiations, watching as they slowly but surely take brackets out of the text. Once language comes out of brackets that means everyone agrees on it and Ministers don?t have to consider it. Nothing stops text going back into brackets, though, and whole new text proposals coming forward at this session have thrown a bit of a spanner in the works at this late stage. A handy spanner from my perspective though ? the new proposals will result in a better outcome for the environment, if they get support. Negotiators are struggling to get agreement on some of the issues on the table and as they struggle, so the meeting structure at the COP gets more bizarre. So the way it works is this... There are formal meetings ? on the formal agenda and open to all. Then there are informal meetings, also on the formal agenda but sometimes closed to observers which includes us NGOs. This applies to the area I?m following which is very contentious and many of the negotiations take place behind closed doors. Now for the ridiculous... Informal-informals are not on the formal agenda but on an informal agenda that only negotiators have access to. And, wait for it, informal-informal-informals (I?m not joking) which are not on any agenda but can have as many as 70 negotiators in a room. So now you know. I have been tracking all this behind-the-scenes activity and lobbying hard for the options we want, but it will be the Ministers who really call the shots. The next few days will be key.