

Final day at Climate Change COP16 - so what's happening?

Title

Well with officially just over 24 hours to go until COP16 here in Cancún is scheduled to close ? how are the negotiations progressing? Are we getting closer to a fair, ambitious and legally binding global deal on climate change? The conference centre is alive and buzzing with corridor discussions and negotiators behind closed doors working painstakingly through elements of the text line by line. The Ministers have arrived and are talking bilaterally and in small groups thrashing out some of the significant deal making or breaking crunch issues. And there is certainly no lack of words! Multiple versions of texts have proliferated confusion with groups of countries wanting to work with different versions, preferring the text options they contain. We have worked on three complete versions of the text so far and a revised version - the so called ?CRP4? is promised for late this evening. But it?s very hard to tell still if there will be the much anticipated ?balanced package? emerging from Cancun and indeed how balanced and comprehensive it will be. Balanced clearly means different things to different Parties ? all pushing for their key asks and needs to be adequately reflected. Strong divergence of opinion remains with the future of the Kyoto Protocol. This runs until the end of 2012 ? it contains developed (Annex 1) legally binding emission reduction targets. In parallel is the Long-term Cooperative Action (LCA) track - this is mainly about developing country matters (such as adaptation, REDD, capacity building and technology transfer) but is also meant to include mitigation efforts by the US which is not a party to the KP. Beyond 2012 most countries (including the more than 120 countries of the G77 group plus China) want a two track approach with separate agreements on the KP and LCA. The G77 and China want to keep the KP because it contains a host of things that they want preserved, such as legally binding emission reduction targets for developed countries. During the course of the last year, many developed countries bailed out of the Protocol (including Japan, Russia and Canada) mainly because they want to be in an agreement with the US which has made it very clear that it will never join the Kyoto Protocol. Japan is taking the hardest line here (and is not changing it?s position despite heavy pressure from delegates in Cancun) and does not want a second commitment period of the KP. This is truly a crunch issue, since without this architecture agreed (even if the detail is not worked out) it will be virtually impossible/countries may refuse to agree anything on the building blocks which will make up these agreements. Regarding the emission reduction targets themselves no progress has been made ? what has been key is how to inscribe the pledges made to date in the Copenhagen Accord last year into the Cancun package in such a way that they are anchored as a bottom line and can be strengthened (to close the huge gap of what is pledged and what is needed) rather than weakened in the final agreement, hopefully next year. Two key areas for BirdLife, REDD+ and adaptation, do look closer to agreement. Most brackets have been removed and some key

options remain in each for Ministers to work through. The text on REDD+ is not looking too bad, although text on safeguards to ensure that REDD works to benefit biodiversity and people have been gradually weakened. Several text options remain and we are working hard to try and ensure the most robust of these is adopted. Much of the detail on methodology will clearly be kicked into the technical meetings text year. On adaptation much negotiating time has been spent on the definition of 'vulnerability'. Clearly many, particularly the world's poorest, are vulnerable to climate change. How vulnerable is defined in terms of geography, GNP, altitudinal risk is highly complex and political and will go Ministers. Similarly how adaptation will be funded and what governance structures are needed has been hotly debated. Thirdly the issue of loss and damage is key, with pressure for Cancun to agree a mandate for work towards enhanced understanding of loss and damage through establishing a work programme, including workshops, to develop the modalities of such a mechanism. An open stocktaking meeting is scheduled for this evening at 8pm with rumours that negotiators will work through the night, as the Fri 6pm deadline rapidly approaches. We eagerly await the next version of the text, will be busy on last minute lobbying and will then await the outcomes - will they be balanced? will they serve as a significant stepping stone to Durban? will they restore faith in the UNFCCC process and show the much needed spirit of compromise and consensus? .. we will know soon.