

The seven hot issues for the Cancún climate talks

Title

After the disappointment of COP 15 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Copenhagen, which failed to finalise a binding agreement to tackle climate change, the planet Earth, its people and biodiversity, cannot afford any further delay. The need for urgent action, as governments gather for COP 16 in Cancun, Mexico, is greater than ever. In some places the average temperature has already risen by more than 2°C above pre-industrial, levels and we are seeing frequent and devastating climate-related events around the world. Science tells us that such temperature rises are almost certain to lead to catastrophic effects on nature, people and the global economy. There is a window between now and 2015 in which it may be possible to slow down or lower the expected increases in global temperatures. The Cancún meeting must deliver significant progress on a shared vision, post-2012 emission reduction targets, adaptation, reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD), capacity building and technology transfer, to set a solid foundation and clear process for reaching a full, fair, ambitious and binding deal in at COP-17 South Africa in 2011. "The Parties must act now to achieve the meaningful and long term global actions required to mitigate and adapt to climate change", said Melanie Heath, BirdLife's Senior Advisor on Climate Change. "The proceedings at Copenhagen were marred by backstage negotiations between governments in their own short-term interests, against a background of concerted attempts to misrepresent and discredit the science that tells us climate change is happening. "Governments must act together in the wider interest this time round", she added. "Anything less would betray their own children and grandchildren, forcing them to live on an impoverished planet subject to ever greater risk and uncertainty. For some of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people, that future has already arrived."

COP 16 at Cancun must:

1. Take decisions on important policy areas, establish a clear vision for COP 17, and agree a process for reaching a full fair, ambitious and binding deal at COP 17 in South Africa, 2011. COP decisions should bank the positive elements of what Governments have agreed so far, and build on them.
2. Cut global emissions by the amount needed to limit increases in global temperature to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Governments must act now to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases from fossil fuels, at sufficient speed and depth to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally, and prevent irreversible damage. This means setting and sticking to hard targets. Global emissions must peak and decline well before 2020 and go to 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. Developed countries should, for reasons of fairness and practicality, take the lead in cutting emissions, but the rapidly industrialising developing nations must act effectively too.
3. Establish a climate fund for developing countries to reduce emissions from deforestation, support low-

carbon development, and enable adaptation to climate change. COP 16 needs to conclude with sufficient short and long-term finance pledged, and the formation of a new climate fund within the UNFCCC to distribute the money. This fund should provide at least \$200 billion annually by 2020, including at least \$35 billion annually to reduce emissions from deforestation (REDD), and at least \$100 billion annually to enable developing countries to adapt to the inevitable impacts of climate change, and reduce the growth of their own industrial emissions.

4. Recognise that solutions to climate change need to be environmentally and socially sound. Biodiversity and ecosystems underpin effective mitigation and adaptation actions. The UNFCCC should seek and utilise the expertise of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in the design and implementation of climate mitigation and adaptation measures, and encourage Parties to ensure close cooperation between their CBD and UNFCCC experts at international and national levels.

5. Agree an overall goal for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) in developing countries, with the objective of stopping them completely by 2020. REDD must include provisions which ensure the conservation of biodiversity, because it is the plants and animals in natural forests that help create their carbon density. REDD must also respect, support and promote the rights of local and indigenous peoples. Conversion of natural forests to industrial forests or plantations must be specifically excluded.

6. Agree robust and transparent rules for accounting emissions from the land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) sector. Currently Parties are determining LULUCF rules in a way that encourages hiding emissions rather than taking responsibility for emissions in this sector. It is essential that emissions from LULUCF are accounted for in a way that reflects the actual emissions released into the atmosphere.

7. Recognise and support the vital importance of safeguarding biodiversity, ecosystems and the essential services they provide in climate change adaptation. Managing and protecting the natural environment must be a critical component of any strategy or approach to adapt to climate change and ensure sustainable development. This is particularly important in the poorest countries and places, where the most vulnerable people often rely on biodiversity and natural resources most directly for their livelihoods and well-being.