

ACT Alliance Introductory Package COP17

1. Background

Conferences of the Parties (COPs) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) take place every year. They are ministerial conferences of governments that are party to the framework convention, and therefore the highest decision making authority in the UN climate talks. The 17th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 17) will be held from November 28 to December 9, 2011, in Durban, South Africa.

The first week of the COP is held with technical negotiators, the second week a high-level segment with ministers or heads of state present.

There are two main tracks under which UNFCCC negotiation take place: the Ad hoc Working Group on further commitments under Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP) and the Ad hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA) under the convention.

2. The negotiation blocs/groupings

G77 and China: Developing countries generally work through the Group of 77 to establish common negotiating positions. However, because the G77 and China is a diverse group with differing interests on climate change issues, individual developing countries also intervene in debates, as do groups within the G77, such as the African Group, the Alliance of Small Island States and the group of Least Developed Countries.

Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS): A coalition of 43 low-lying and small island countries, most of which are members of the G77 that are particularly vulnerable to sea-level rise. AOSIS countries are united by the threat that climate change poses to their survival and frequently adopt a common stance in negotiations.

The Africa Group: The group has 54 members and is thus the largest regional group by number of member states. It is the only regional group that has a territory that coincides with the traditional continent of which its name originates.

Least Developed Countries: The 50 countries defined as LDCs by the UN regularly work together in the wider UN system. They have become increasingly active in the climate

change process, often working together to defend their particular interests, for example with regard to vulnerability and adaptation to climate change.

The European Union: The 27 members of the EU have a common negotiation mandate and agree on common negotiating strategies. The country that holds the EU Presidency - a position that rotates every six months - then speaks for the European Union and its member states.

The Umbrella Group: A loose coalition of non-EU developed countries formed following the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol. Although there is no formal list, the group is usually made up of Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the US.

The Environmental Integrity Group: Formed in 2000, it comprises Mexico, the Republic of Korea and Switzerland.

Several other groups also work together in the climate change process, including countries from the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), a group of countries of Central Asia, Caucasus, Albania and Moldova (CACAM), and countries that are members of organizations such as the League of Arab States and the Agence intergouvernementale de la francophonie.

3. Expectations for Durban

After a failure in Copenhagen (COP15 in 2009) and relatively good progress in Cancún COP16 in 2010, the COP17 in Durban will have to deal with potentially high expectations – in particular in Africa – and the low ambitions of many country delegations.

The negotiations in Durban are expected to make some progress on the following issues and thematic areas:

- The work packages which were agreed on in Cancún should be implemented by the COP17.
- The survival of the Kyoto Protocol – and in particular of its key elements – is a crucial issue to be decided upon.
- The final approval for the Green Climate Fund and further clarification on how to mobilise new means needed in order to fulfil the commitment made on long term financing.
- A considerably higher recognition of the urgent need to foster resilience towards adverse impact of climate change, especially the need to address “loss and damage” through climate change.

4. Key messages of ACT Alliance

ACT is focusing the climate change advocacy work on three themes: adaptation, climate finance and low carbon development.

Key messages to Durban can be summarised as follows:

1. Support the poorest to adapt to climate change
2. Provide adequate finance for adaptation and mitigation
3. Embrace low carbon development

Detailed information on these can be found in the ACT policy briefs, and also on ACT Alliance's website: www.actalliance.org

ACT Alliance supports and is a part of the Time for Climate Justice and the We Have Faith – Act now for Climate Justice campaigns of the ecumenical movement for Durban. The messages of the campaigns and ACT key messages vary but complement each other, as defined in ACT's climate advocacy strategy. ACT seeks to bring a focused added value in developing positions and coordination around the above mentioned three issues.

5. Situation after Panama intersessional in October 2011

To facilitate advocacy dialogue on the three focus areas of ACT, a number of strategic considerations in relation to the three themes are elaborated below.

Adaptation

In the Panama intersessional in October 2011, adaptation was reaffirmed as a challenge for all parties. It was agreed that enhanced action and international cooperation was urgently required to support it. Reduction of vulnerability and building of resilience were both mentioned as priorities.

The discussions focused on the composition and functions of the Adaptation Committee. While there still remains differences in opinions on the activities the committee would engage, it is quite possible that a decision can be reached in Durban. The Panama negotiations also decided that the Adaptation Committee would operate under the authority and guidance of, and be fully accountable to, the Conference of the Parties (COP). Issues related to food security and loss and damage may come up in the negotiations in Durban.

Adaptation is a priority for developing countries and the movement in negotiations has been influenced by them. There hasn't been much discordance on the constitution of the Adaptation Committee, in terms of representation of developing countries.

Climate finance

Negotiations about finance did move in Panama intersessional in October 2011. This was a positive development which can hopefully continue in Durban. The debate about sources of the finance is the key issue as many industrialised countries would prefer not to talk about where money should come from.

This issue is a difficult topic for the industrialised countries. The US government argued until Panama that talk about sources of finance was not included in the mandate from Cancun. But in Panama they agreed to talk about it. Canada, Australia and Japan came with a proposal about long term finance in the Panama meeting, which is a positive step as their engagement had been limited until then. Canada and Australia opened up even more towards the end of Panama where they agreed to discuss a compromise text proposed by the facilitator. The EU contributed to the positive developments in Panama. The EU has a mandate to negotiate and agree on text related to several issues related to climate finance.

Low Carbon Development

While the Cancún Agreements have – for the first time – adopted the 2 degrees target as a maximum acceptable level of for global average temperature increase (1/CP.16 para 4), they also recognised the need to consider, to maybe strengthening the long term global goal including the adoption of a 1,5 degrees target. This is a big change from the current reduction targets submitted by Parties, which will lead to an increase of 3-4 degrees and to the current trend of emissions leading to 5 degrees even by the end of this century.

Emission cuts are still a thorny issue after Panama. There is a stalemate on the second Commitment Period of Kyoto Protocol. Issues related to numbers in terms of emission cuts, mitigation actions from developing countries, and especially emerging economies, are bound to arise in Durban.

The intersessional in Panama discussed the possibilities of using both market and non-market mechanisms to finance enhanced mitigation actions. A number of countries opposed any decisions on market based mechanisms.

While the EU, Norway, Switzerland, many low emitting developing countries, as well as some emerging economies (e.g. Mexico) have so far pushed for or are showing an interest on a package on emissions, other countries such as the US, Canada, Brazil and India are either opposing such a package approach or at least flag major concerns. Japan, Russia and Canada have openly said in Panama that they will not sign on to a second commitment period of Kyoto Protocol.

Low emitting vulnerable countries call for an early peak year and the necessary action of all major emitters. Driving forces in this inter-regional group are Bangladesh, Nepal, the Maldives, Kiribati and a number of other Pacific Island states, and African countries like Malawi, Tanzania, and Kenya. Groups driven by relatively similar interests are the AOSIS group and the African Group.

Another important issue in Durban related to low carbon development is the negotiations about low/zero carbon development strategies. They are based on the Cancún Agreements, 1/CP.16 para 45 (developed countries) and para 65 (developing countries) and shall serve to come to nationally appropriate mitigation commitments or action. These strategies will be negotiated in the LCA track. Countries have made submissions on this issue, including a very progressive one by Lebanon recently.

6. ACT participation in Durban

The accredited ACT delegation will consist of 15 people, but there will be many more ACT members present in Durban with other accreditations. Hundreds of people from the wider global ecumenical family in Durban will be present, some with accreditation, and therefore, coordination and implementation of joint activities will be important. Several initiatives will be taken to support this.

Daily capacity building meetings – every morning at 9am, ACT will host a meeting for ecumenical delegates taking part in a UNFCCC meeting for the first time, or who want to discuss the programme of the day. These meetings will be based on a revision of the daily programme, but will also be an opportunity to discuss issues which have come up in previous days.

Joint email list – a joint email list will be created to facilitate coordination and information sharing during the days. It is important to share information continuously. At a COP, developments may change the negotiations quickly and it is important to stay updated to be able to react.

Daily strategy meetings: 1) Every morning, at 8am, the ACT climate change advocacy group will meet for a strategy discussion at the ICC. 2) Every evening, at 19.30, ACT climate change advocacy group will meet for a debriefing with APRODEV climate group (time to be confirmed) at the ICC.