

Outcomes of the international negotiations under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 17) and its' Kyoto Protocol (CMP 7) - The Durban platform to strengthen the international climate change regime – statement by Minister Edna Molewa

For the past 2 weeks the eyes of the world have been focussed on the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 17/CMP 7) being held in Durban where international community of nations were negotiating the next steps that need to be taken to ensure an effective global response to the global challenge of climate change. We must realise that an effective and truly global solution to the climate change crisis involves the negotiation of delicate balances between a wide range of extremely complex, highly political and sometimes conflicting set of social, economic and environmental development issues. The global climate change response is a sustainable development issue not a purely environmental issue and as such builds an foundational platform for the global Rio+20 summit on sustainable development to take place next year.

Due to the complex political nature of these negotiations, which took place against the back-drop of the prospect of a global economic melt-down with the looming Euro-zone debt crisis and the alarming slow-down in global economic growth, it is not surprising therefore, that the Durban climate change conference over ran by a day and a half and was only able to successfully conclude yesterday morning (Sunday) at about 7am.

When South Africa first agreed to host this global climate change and developmental conference we set ourselves the goal of helping the international community in their efforts to develop an inclusive, environmentally effective, balanced, equitable and binding agreement that actually reduces global emissions of greenhouse gasses (GHG) that takes into account the need to balance climate and developmental imperatives, while at the same time enabling and supporting developing countries to respond to the inevitable impacts of climate change. To achieve this goal SA, in its capacity of host and President of the Conference, endeavoured to ensure that the process throughout the year and at the Durban Conference was transparent, inclusive, Party driven and people oriented.

After a year of intensive negotiation the final outcome of Durban is historic and precedent setting, ranking with the 1997 conference where the Kyoto Protocol was adopted. In the dying hours of this watershed conference we were able to agree on a comprehensive deal.

This agreement not only significantly advances the global effort needed now to address the global climate change crisis; but also sets a new long-term pathway for the development of a fair, ambitious and legally binding future multi-lateral and rules-based global climate change system which can balance climate and development imperatives. It ensures the fair participation of all countries (both developed and developing) in the global effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, both now and in the future.

Overall this climate change conference has been characterised by a new willingness on the part of all parties to move beyond entrenched negotiating positions and unconstructive rhetoric and engage with the challenges of achieving economic development in an increasingly carbon constrained world. This represents a significant and hopeful step forward.

In order to address what needs to be done now, Durban ensured the preservation of the Kyoto Protocol through its decision on the adoption of the 2nd commitment period capturing legally binding commitments of developed countries beyond the expiration date of the 1st commitment period in 2012. Under the Convention we anchored emission reduction targets for developed countries that are not willing to be part of the Kyoto 2nd commitment period, as well as emission mitigation actions of developing countries and were able to elaborate the transparency and accountability framework for both developed and developing countries. We also fully operationalised a number of international mechanisms to enable and support mitigation and adaptation efforts in developing countries, particularly for adaptation efforts needed in least developed, African and Small Island countries that are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change but who have contributed least to the problem.

Crucially, we have been able to preserve the multilateral rules based system underpinning the mitigation regime by agreeing on a second commitment period under the Kyoto protocol, through agreement to amend the Protocol, setting up a five year 2nd commitment period from 2013 to 2018. The pledged economy-wide targets of developed countries are inscribed in the decision. These will be further converted into legally binding Quantified Emission Limitation and Reduction Objectives (QELRO's) at COP 18 / CMP8 in Qatar. However, that fact the USA has not joined the Kyoto Protocol and the fact that not all developed countries were willing to place their commitments under the Kyoto was recognised. To address this gap, we have established a process to increase the transparency of the mitigation efforts of both developed and developing countries.

In order to ensure the full participation of those developed countries that have indicated that they will not enter into a 2nd commitment period under Kyoto as well as large developing country emerging economies, these commitments under Kyoto are balanced with a mechanism to capture, under the Convention, the economy wide emission reduction targets of these developed countries and subject them to the International Assessment and Reporting transparency and accountability procedures while simultaneously capturing the commitments of developing countries to take action and subjecting these actions to a less stringent and necessarily different International Consultation and Analysis transparency procedure.

In the case of developed countries we will review and assess their economy wide emission reduction targets and commitments. In the case of developing countries we will increase the transparency of their nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs) of developing countries.

At this COP/CMP we have also succeeded in bringing into operation the outcomes that were successfully negotiated in Cancun last year. On finance, there is agreement on the detailed design of the Green Climate Fund, which Minister Trevor Manuel successfully steered through a year of difficult negotiations. The design of the fund includes innovative mechanisms for bringing private sector and market mechanisms into play, so as to increase the potential flow of funding into climate change responses.

In holding this COP on African soil we were able to put Africa's priority of adapting to the impacts of climate change firmly on the global agenda. We have significantly strengthened the international adaptation agenda by consolidating adaptation programs under the

Adaptation Framework and operationalising the Adaptation Committee that will spearhead global work on adaptation.

We have also operationalised the Climate Technology Centre and Network, launched a selection process for the host of the Climate Technology Centre and fine-tuned the procedures and modalities for the TEC. This will substantially strengthen the UNFCCC's operational arm on technology and will assist developing countries in the negotiation of technology partnerships and transfer agreements, and in adapting these technologies to country purposes. It will also assist with license negotiations, and the establishment of national innovation systems for a low carbon and climate resilient future

In addressing the question of what needs to be done in future, this COP has reaffirmed a common vision for global cooperation on climate change to hold the increase in global average temperature below 2 degrees or 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to review progress towards achieving it, in accordance with the objectives and principles of the Convention. We recognise that the ambition and scope of current commitments are inadequate. Even if the most ambitious current emissions targets are met, emissions will exceed what science requires by an estimated 5 gigaton (Gt) of CO₂ equivalent emissions, according to the UN Environment Programme's Emissions Gap Report. The question that we face is how best to address this gap recognising that it is more than just an 'ambition gap'; it is also an 'implementation gap'; a 'financial and technology gap'; a 'capacity gap' and a 'legal gap'. We realised in Durban that given the current social, developmental, economic and political context, trying to force countries to do more than they are willing and able to contribute is a recipe for the complete failure of the international effort to genuinely address the climate crisis and would have resulted in a 'no deal' in Durban; not only killing the Kyoto Protocol but possibly even the UN Convention on climate change itself. The solution is to build a system that gradually transitions to a low carbon future that at the same time creates jobs, reduces poverty and improve the quality of life for all. This is a true sustainable development solution to the climate change crisis.

Therefore, under the Convention, agreement was reached on the Durban platform, which initiates negotiations next year, leading to a legal instrument, protocol or agreed outcome with legal force applicable to all countries, that will be adopted by 2015 and be fully operational no later than 2020.

We must recognise that this outstanding success was achieved through the efforts of TEAM SOUTH AFRICA, which involved herculean efforts of not only national, provincial and local governments but dedicated efforts of our civil society, labour and business sectors who not only mobilised their international counterparts but demonstrated the warm welcoming spirit and culture of our wonderful country. To name but a few, these outstanding contributions ranged from the climate rally organised by the faith community on the first Sunday to the contributions by all to the Climate Change Response EXPO and intellectual debates in the side line event. An additional spin off from the COP has been the unprecedented level of domestic mobilisation around climate issues. Team South Africa has succeeded in bringing NGOs, labour, business and civil society closer to the negotiations process. Last Saturday saw a day of action by civil society, with a multitude of communities and NGOs marching under the banner of climate action. The Durban Mayor's Summit brought over 100 Mayors from cities around the world together to adopt the Durban

Adaptation Charter. The business community held the largest number of side events and activities ever associated with a COP, and it is encouraging to see the extent to which investment in new green technologies and jobs is paving the path to a low carbon economy. These actions by civil society groups outside of the negotiations have helped put the importance of an ambitious climate regime firmly on the agenda, and have increased pressure on negotiators for a binding legal agreement. The challenge is to maintain the momentum of Team South Africa, to take advantage of the benefits that our victory in Durban can bring with international support for real and job creating adaptation and mitigation programmes at community level.

In all, South Africa can be extremely proud of our collective efforts to host this COP. We have produced a world standard event that has been complemented by visitors and negotiators from across the spectrum, and successfully steered a complex negotiations process towards a successful conclusion. The outcome of Durban is a historical achievement and will substantially advance the global climate agenda.

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