

AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON LONG-TERM COOPERATIVE ACTION UNDER THE CONVENTION

Fifteenth session

Bonn, 15-24 May 2012

INFORMAL SUMMARY OF THE AWG-LCA WORKSHOP

In-session workshop on equitable access to sustainable development

Summary by the chair of the workshop

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I. Introduction

1. The Conference of the Parties (COP), by decision 2/CP.17, paragraph 4, requested the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention (AWG-LCA) to consider the issue of equitable access to sustainable development (EASD), as contained in decision 1/CP.16, through a workshop at its next session; the AWG-LCA shall report on the workshop to the COP as part of its work.
2. The workshop was held at the Maritim Hotel, Bonn, Germany, on 16 May 2012 and was open to all registered participants at the fifteenth session of the AWG-LCA. It was chaired by the Chair of the AWG-LCA, Mr. Aysar Ahmed Al Tayeb.
3. The workshop commenced with opening remarks by the Chair of the AWG-LCA and by the Executive Secretary. Four substantive sessions followed: one session on introductory presentations, and three sessions on presentations by representatives of 12 Parties and two by representatives of civil society. An information note, the workshop agenda, the presentations, as well as some background documents are available on the UNFCCC website.¹
4. This note by the Chair of the AWG-LCA summarizes the presentations, exchanges of views and discussions, as well as the main points raised at this workshop. The AWG-LCA may wish to take note of the information contained in this note in the conduct of its work on a shared vision for long-term cooperative action.

II. Workshop proceedings

A. Introductory presentations (session I)

5. A presenter from the Stockholm Environment Institute highlighted the key components of EASD as well as the requirements for ensuring EASD in the context of the global and national peaking of emissions. Another presenter, from the Energy and Resources Institute, introduced an approach to equity in climate change, highlighting the requirement for formal justification of any equity norm, and proposed a validation methodology.

B. Presentations by Parties and civil society (sessions II - IV)

6. **At session II**, a representative of Nauru, speaking on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, discussed the special circumstances of small island developing States, and noted the need for fairness in adaptation and mitigation actions and in the provision of the means of implementation (e.g. finance, technology, capacity-building). A representative of Bolivia (Plurinational State of) noted that equity is key to solving the climate change crisis and that the rights and obligations of Parties should be linked. He underlined the need for sharing the

¹ <http://unfccc.int/meetings/bonn_may_2012/workshop/6658.php>.

remaining carbon space and proposed establishing a work programme on equity. A representative of India underlined that equity is a key enabler of action and called for a discussion on this issue under the AWG-LCA and the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP). A representative of Switzerland explained that equity is reflected in differentiated forms of mitigation, adaptation and support, and elaborated on various equity principles, including a focus on the ability to pay and the polluter-pays principle. A representative of the South Centre emphasized that equity is a gateway to ambition and that the negotiations on finance and technology are important as gateways to equity.

7. **At session II**, a representative of Bangladesh, speaking on behalf of the least developed countries, indicated that development does not have to be at the expense of the environment, and highlighted intra-generational and intergenerational equity. A representative of China stressed the inconsistency between the response to climate change and to socio-economic development and poverty eradication, and explained that developed countries have over-occupied most of the existing atmospheric space, transferring responsibility for emission reduction to developing countries. He requested the establishment of a work programme on equity to further define EASD in the context of a shared vision and broader negotiations. A representative of Singapore identified challenges to defining equity, given different national circumstances, and noted that his country is energy-disadvantaged. He stated that he does not support a formulaic approach to equity based on criteria, such as per capita indicators. A representative of the Climate Action Network suggested a three-phase process on equity, comprising a dialogue to understand the positions of Parties and agreement on key principles, followed by the application of those principles to the key issues.
8. **At session III**, a representative of Egypt called for a discussion on the different facets of vulnerability as a cornerstone of future actions. He observed that climate change mitigation efforts are costly and entail severe constraints, primarily on the fiscal budgets of developing countries, and questioned the extent to which it is fair and equitable to impose strong mitigation demands on developing countries. He requested that the outcome of the workshop be transmitted to the other subsidiary bodies and that a work programme on equity be established. A representative of the European Union said that the future climate regime should enable all Parties to achieve sustainable development, poverty eradication and climate-resilient growth. He explained that the Convention's principles form a good basis but need to be interpreted in a way that reflects Parties' evolving common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. A representative of the United States of America said that EASD should focus on development opportunities and that a formulaic approach will not work in the real world. A representative of Brazil stressed that historical responsibility is the application of equity, it is quantifiable and reflecting levels of development and capability, and elaborated on EASD as reflected in the shared vision and review. A representative of Australia emphasized that questions concerning equity cannot be answered with one formula.
9. **In the final discussion**, a representative of New Zealand noted that equity has been applied constantly under the Convention and emphasized the need to ensure that all countries participate in mitigation efforts in accordance with their capabilities, taking into account national circumstances. A representative of South Africa called for further work to take place to operationalize the equity principles and a representative of the Philippines underlined the need to decouple emissions from development. On the way forward, a representative of the European Union indicated that a stand-alone debate on equity would not be productive and called for a focus on mitigation and adaptation.

III. Main points raised at the workshop

10. Based on presentations made by Parties and the general discussions that followed, the main discussion points can be grouped into the following categories listed below. These categories are not exhaustive and other categories might emerge in future discussions.

A. Context for equity and equitable access to sustainable development

11. Presentations and discussions clarified several aspects, such as the following:
 - (a) The centrality of the principle of equity;
 - (b) The fact that social and economic development is the overriding priority for developing countries and that no country can be asked not to develop;
 - (c) The essential role of low-carbon development for sustainable development and the need to decouple carbon and development growth.
12. With regard to the context for EASD, the workshop presentations underlined what was agreed in Cancun, Mexico, and in Durban, South Africa, at the United Nations Climate Change Conferences on this notion, namely that:
 - (a) The time frame for peaking will be longer in developing countries;
 - (b) Consideration of a global goal for substantially reducing global emissions by 2050 and the time frame for the global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions cannot be undertaken in the abstract and will necessarily involve matters related to the context for such considerations.

B. Definition of equity

13. Some presentations focused on defining equity. For example, equity: is an enabler to increase ambition; favours ambition through the link between support and actions; is not a constraint but rather a gateway to further enhanced actions; and is about fairness and a fair distribution of efforts.
14. Other presentations underlined what equity is not: not only an issue related to mitigation but also fundamental to adaptation, finance and technology transfer; and not a right to pollute but rather a responsibility that the activities of one country do not harm other countries.
15. Several presenters underlined what the definition of equity should include, including the following:
 - (a) Past and future contributions, including historical responsibilities;
 - (b) National circumstances and how they would be determined and recognized in a future regime;
 - (c) Capabilities to mitigate and adapt to climate change.
16. Presentations elaborated on a rights-based approach to equity and proposed ways to address the issue of allocation of the atmospheric space, including by resource or burden sharing. Some presentations highlighted equity principles, such as egalitarian, ability to pay, efficiency, polluter pays, basic needs and desert principle.
17. Two basic approaches to equity were suggested: a quantitative approach and an indicative approach. The quantitative approach will determine or apportion burden based on a formula. With regard to this approach, some presenters said that a metric could only have an informative role, through an iterative dialogue on emission pathways. Other presenters were of the view that no single formula will work, for example due to the centrality of national circumstances.
18. For some, historical responsibility was central to the discussions in a formulaic approach. For others, it was not seen as an adequate measure of equity because it is complex and includes a large number of variables. Furthermore, the world has changed and a Party's contributions are dynamic, not fixed as assumed by historical responsibility.
19. The indicative approach to equity was mentioned, but, to be used, its paradigm would need to be defined and understood.
20. Some presenters were of the view that a definition of equity would need to consider its dynamic and multidimensional nature. In this context, the need for transitional application of

equity might be considered and further work might be needed to understand and operationalize equity. This might include defining a framework for equity, including by indentifying relevant criteria and validating an equity norm. Other presenters were of the view that we should not seek to agree on a definition of equity but rather agree on how to apply this political concept to specific circumstances.

C. Application of the equity principle

21. Several views were expressed with regard to the aspects of the new agreement that should be specifically targeted in the context of the equity discussions. One view was that equity should apply to all aspects of the new agreement. Another view was that it should be applied to specific aspects, such as convergence by combining top-down and bottom-up perspectives that address common but differentiated responsibilities and engaging in a low-emission society. Yet another view was that equity should apply to the whole package and not to each individual component.
22. Some were of the view that equity aspects are already embedded in the decisions taken in Cancun and Durban, which should be implemented. Experience with the application of equity within regional climate policy was also presented.
23. The new regime will be judged as equitable and fair if it is acceptable to all Parties and their constituents, if it identifies where and how to apply the equity principle and if it is conducive to action now and will not result in further delay.

D. Possible next steps

24. Several Parties were of the view that this workshop on equity in Bonn should be taken forward. Under the AWG-LCA, equity should be further considered in the context of identifying a global peaking and global emission goal. Under the ADP, a work programme on equity is needed and a decision on this matter should be taken at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Doha, Qatar.
 25. Others were of the view that the workshop was successful in enhancing understanding on this matter and that equity should be discussed under relevant agenda items.
 26. The workshop provided a good opportunity for Parties to present and discuss ideas on equity and EASD. The following concrete proposals for the possible next steps were suggested:
 - (a) A work programme on equity to further define the matter in the context of the shared vision and in broader negotiations. Possible elements of this work programme included a dialogue to understand Parties positions, identification and agreement of key principles and criteria for their operationalization, and application of the principles to key issues;
 - (b) A follow-up workshop might be another option to continue the dialogue on this matter.
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