

India unhappy with Bonn climate talks

By Joydeep Gupta

Bonn, June 11 (IANS) The preparatory talks here on a global deal to tackle climate change are in an "unsatisfactory state", Indian delegation leader Shyam Saran said Thursday on the penultimate day of the June 1-12 conclave.

"At this rate, we're unlikely to get an ambitious agreement in Copenhagen, one that will be able to tackle climate change adequately," Saran, the Prime Minister's Special Envoy on Climate Change, told the media here.

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) had convened this meeting to narrow down differences - mainly between industrialised and developing countries - on who would do what to combat climate change, which is already affecting farm output, making droughts, floods and storms more frequent and more severe and raising sea levels.

Instead, the differences between the 182 countries gathered here have become more consolidated.

Saran said: "As long as delegates stick to the UNFCCC and the Bali Action Plan, we can reach our objective - a comprehensive, balanced and equitable agreement."

He was strongly critical of attempts by some industrialised countries to ignore the existing Kyoto Protocol under which these countries have to reduce their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that are leading to climate change.

"We are not negotiating a new climate treaty but enhancing the existing UN convention, nor are we negotiating a new protocol," Saran said. "On the protocol, the current negotiations are for emission reduction commitments for the period beyond 2012... If we ignore the Kyoto Protocol because one or two countries find it inconvenient, what is the credibility of international legal instruments?"

India's chief climate negotiator said: "It is a matter of deep regret that most Annex I (industrialised) countries are unlikely to meet their current commitments under the protocol. It is a matter of even deeper concern that they are not yet committing to make the kind of deep emission reductions necessary" to combat climate change.

Saran was also critical of attempts by some industrialised countries to shift from 1990 the base year from which cuts had to be made, describing it as "inadmissible. This is an unsatisfactory state of affairs."

Asked if India wanted industrialised countries to cut their GHG emissions by 40 percent within 2020 compared to 1990 levels, Saran said: "Given what the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) scientists have been telling us, we believe it is necessary to meet the challenge that we are facing. We are being told that we are very close to the tipping point of the disastrous consequences of climate change."

Asked what major developing countries like India were willing to do to limit their own GHG emissions, Saran talked in detail of the National Action Plan on Climate Change

(NAPCC) and added: "With other major developing countries, we're prepared to have significant deviation from the business-as-usual scenario as long as the (incremental) activities are fully supported by financing and technology transfer" from industrialised countries.

"If we get a good agreement in Copenhagen, we can ramp up (India's mitigation efforts)," he said, "by matching the resources required and the actions to be taken". At the same time, Saran expressed unhappiness because talks on such financing had made little progress here.

He said the NAPCC, which would "significantly advance the ecological sustainability of India's growth", was in the public domain and so would be details of the eight national missions under it as soon as they were finalised by the Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change a few weeks from now.

"Climate change is among the key priorities of the government of India," Saran declared. But he dismissed the idea of any other organisation verifying the action taken by India to mitigate its GHG emissions. "We cannot have a supra-national agency. That's not something we're willing to accept."