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PRESS RELEASE

UN Climate Change Talks begins in Bangkok with warnings that little time remains for international community to negotiate 2009 Copenhagen agreement

(Bangkok, 31 March 2008) – The UN Bangkok Climate Change talks got underway on Monday, the first major United Nations-sponsored meeting on climate change after the UN Climate Change Conference in Bali last year in December. At Bali, Parties agreed to step up international efforts to combat climate change and to launch formal negotiations to come to a long-term international agreement in Copenhagen by the end of 2009. The Bangkok meeting is designed to both map out a work programme that will lead to that agreement and to advance work on the rules through which emission reduction targets of developed countries can be met.

The meeting opened with warnings that the clock is ticking down to prepare an agreement in time to enter into force when the first phase of the Kyoto Protocol expires in 2013. Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) pointed out that three months had already elapsed since the Bali conference and that a draft of a future agreement would need to be ready well before Copenhagen. "This leaves us with around one and a half years – a very short time-frame within which to complete negotiations on one of the most complex international agreements that history has ever seen," said the UN's top climate change official. "But I am confident that it can be done if the work is broken down into manageable, bite-sized chunks," he added.

Delegates from 163 countries are attending the Bangkok Climate Change Talks 2008, which has so far attracted a total of around 1200 participants, including government representatives, participants from business and industry, environmental organizations and research institutions.

At the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali last year, Parties to the UNFCCC decided on both the time-line and the main elements of a stronger climate change deal, including a shared long-term vision and enhanced action on mitigation, adaptation, technology and finance. A new Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-Term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA) was mandated in Bali to lead the work and is meeting for the first time in Bangkok. Its main task is to spell out the next steps needed to come to the envisaged agreement.

Parties meeting in Bangkok will need to decide which topics require separate workshops in the course of 2008 and possibly 2009, and which areas of work need input from the business



sector, international organisations or other stakeholders. Parties will furthermore need to establish and what support they require from the Bonn-based UN Climate Change Secretariat.

“Parties meeting in Bali issued a clear mandate for delegates to deliver a plan at this meeting” said Luiz Alberto Figueiredo Machado, Chairman of the group on long-term cooperative Action. “What we now need is a bottom-up approach on all the elements, taking all the concerns of the Parties into account.”

The second working group that is meeting at Bangkok is the already existing Ad Hoc Working Group on further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP). This group of rich countries will work on the analysis of possible tools available to these countries to reach emission reduction commitments. “There is already broad consensus among Parties on the importance of completing this work before political agreement is reached on a post-2012 deal in Copenhagen” said Harald Dovland, Chair of the group. ““Much of the technical work can be done before we meet in Denmark next year.”

The tools that the working group will analyse in Bangkok include emissions trading and the “project based mechanisms”. For example, the Kyoto Protocol’s Clean Development Mechanism already allows developed countries to meet part of their emission reduction commitments by investing in sustainable development projects in developing countries. Other tools are land use, land-use change and forestry; greenhouse gases, sectors and source categories to be covered, along with possible approaches targeting sectoral emissions, for example from the steel or cement sectors.

The next UN meeting involving negotiations under both working groups will take place in June in Bonn this year, followed by a third meeting in August and a fourth at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Poznan in December.

About the UNFCCC

With 192 Parties, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has near universal membership and is the parent treaty of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. The Kyoto Protocol has to date 178 member Parties. Under the Protocol, 37 States, consisting of highly industrialized countries and countries undergoing the process of transition to a market economy, have legally binding emission limitation and reduction commitments. The ultimate objective of both treaties is to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that will prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system.

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