

By Patrick Luganda and Gerald Tenywa  
In Copenhagen

African countries are in round the clock consultations to hammer out a common position to counter proposals circulated by the developing countries led by the host nation Denmark. The trouble causing clause in the Danish proposal leaked out this week, in essence proposes holding the global temperature rise at 2 degrees centigrade.

On the other hand a counter proposal by Tuvalu and other nations proposes a temperature target of 1.5 degrees centigrade. The African Countries, the Least Developed Countries as well as China and the G77 countries have united behind Tuvalu threatening to bring the talks to a stalemate.

Frantic efforts are underway by all major negotiating interest groups to save the talks from collapsing. There are concerns of the talks failing to reach a conclusive end given the limited time left before the high segment meetings of heads of state due next week. There are concerted behind the scenes activities by various delegations and interest groups to save the talks from collapse.

“The threshold of 2 degrees proposed by Denmark and the other developed countries is a near death sentence for African countries,” says Steven Magezi, head of the Meteorological Department.

Uganda has been holding marathon meetings all Thursday to arrive at a common position on the progress of the talks. A select committee of experts headed by the Permanent Secretary David Obong and including Dr. Aryamanya Mugisha head of the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) is drafting the Uganda position to the Africa group. There is widespread agreement among the African countries that unless there is a united position, Africa will lose out in these negotiations.

"Africa needs to be fearful of the trend in the negotiations so far. As has always been the case, political considerations are slowly taking over from science. The global average of 2 degrees will mean that in small and fragile places like the mountainous regions of western Uganda the rise could be 4-5 degrees. What would that mean to the local people and species?" Magezi said in an interview.

Aryamanya Mugisha says that there is need to agree on adaptation measures including financing for the less developed countries. Financing is causing hiccups in the negotiating process with Denmark and others proposing that it be concluded at a later date. In the seventh schedule of the Danish document dubbed the “Copenhagen Process.”

“Furthermore, the Parties, decide on a review of commitments and actions under the Convention to be started in 2014 and completed in 2015 with a view of enhancing commitments and actions on mitigation and adaptation, and climate finance to achieve the Convention’s ultimate objective,” reads part of the proposal.

Analysts believe that unless a binding agreement is arrived at in Copenhagen, the developed nations will have an open cheque to continue polluting the atmosphere increasing global warming.

“The proposal to delay the binding agreement to a future date is the worst case scenario as it will make the cost of both adaptation mitigation at a future date very costly. Africa will not afford it and will be forced to again depend on the polluting countries to seek help,” says Magezi.

Sealing a deal at this historic conference hangs in the balance as over 15000 participants from all over the world struggle to agree on a common position to reverse the global warming in the limited time still available.

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