



For use of the media only.

PRESS RELEASE

United Nations Climate Change Conference - Poznań, Poland Gets Underway with Calls for Urgent Need for Progress in Designing Copenhagen Deal

(Poznań, 1 December 2008) – The United Nations Climate Change Conference - Poznań, Poland kicked off Monday, 1 December. The two-week meeting, the fourteenth Conference of the 192 Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the fourth meeting of the 183 Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, is the half-way mark in the negotiations on an ambitious and effective international response to climate change. The deal is to be clinched in Copenhagen at the end of 2009 and will take effect in 2013, the year after the first phase of the Kyoto Protocol expires.

Close to eleven thousand participants, including government delegates from 186 Parties to the UNFCCC and representatives from business and industry, environmental organizations and research institutions, are attending the two-week gathering.

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, opening the meeting, pointed to the urgent need for progress at Poznań. "Scientists share the view that warming in excess of two degrees Celsius will result in irreversible changes to nearly all ecosystems and the human communities. We shoulder the responsibility to prevent changes that could lastingly disturb the symbiosis between humankind and nature," he said.

Professor Maciej Nowicki, Polish Minister of the Environment and President of the Conference, warned that the planet had reached the limits of its confined system and that a business as usual scenario was not an option. "Huge droughts and floods, cyclones with increasingly more destructive power, tropical disease pandemics, a dramatic decline of biodiversity – all these can cause social or even armed conflicts and migration of populations at an unprecedented scale," he warned.

In Poland, delegates – including Ministers – will discuss their vision for long-term cooperative action on climate change. Poznań is the first time that Ministers will discuss a "shared vision for long-term cooperative action". One of the key questions will be what kind of mechanisms need to be put in place to deliver on finance, technology and capacity building to help developing countries curb emissions, spur green growth and to cope with the inevitable impacts of climate change. During 2008, Parties submitted proposals and ideas for stronger climate change action. The more than 700 pages of proposals have been distilled into a single document of 82 pages, which governments can now refine further in light of what they want to negotiate in 2009.



"The fact that there is a text on the table offers governments the first real opportunity of moving beyond the phase of exchanging ideas into one where they will be expressing their position on specific proposals," said Luiz Figueiredo Machado, Chair of the Ad hoc Working Group on Long-Term Cooperative Action under the Convention. "I am looking forward to see how this text will be fine-tuned in the course of the meeting," he added.

Parties under the Kyoto Protocol have this year advanced their work on the tools and rules available to developed countries to set ambitious reduction targets beyond 2012. According to Harald Dovland, the Chair of Ad hoc working group on further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol, the focus at Poznań needs to turn to the ranges of greenhouse gas emission reductions for industrialized countries.

"Science has told us what is necessary and industrialized countries have committed to take the lead," said Harald Dovland. "My hope is that the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol can agree in Poznań on an ambitious emission reduction range that can form the basis for intensive negotiations next year."

In 2007, Parties agreed to consider a greenhouse gas emission reduction range of minus 25 to minus 40 per cent over 1990 levels, a range which could be confirmed at Poznan.

Addressing the delegates in Poznań, Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC, pointed towards the need to achieve progress on issues which are important in the short run - up to the end of 2012 - including adaptation, finance, technology and reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

"The conference needs to deliver on on-going issues, especially issues that are important to developing countries," he said. "And there is huge pressure on available time up to Copenhagen in 2009," he added. "So next to on-going work, the conference also needs to lay a solid foundation for an ambitious climate change deal at Copenhagen."

Alluding to the financial and economic crisis and the opportunities of green and sustainable economic growth, the UN's top climate change official called on delegates to "increasingly focus on how the climate change regime could become self-financing and to link climate change policies to economic recovery."

The issue of technology will be high on the agenda and the conference will deal in depth with the issue of risk management and risk reduction strategies, including insurance. In the context of adapting to the inevitable effects of climate change, Parties are expected to put the finishing touches to the Kyoto Protocol's Adaptation Fund so that it is ready to receive concrete projects as of 2009. The UN Climate Change Conference in Poznań will conduct a review of the Kyoto Protocol and assess to what extent the Protocol's clean development mechanism can be improved and its geographical reach extended.

The conference will take stock of progress achieved in 2008 and will set out the work programme for the final year of negotiations on the Copenhagen agreement in 2009. At least four major UNFCCC gatherings will take place next year, including the UN Climate Change Conference in Denmark at the end of the year.



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 183 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.

About the CDM

Under the CDM, projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions in developing countries and contribute to sustainable development can earn certified emission reduction (CER) credits. Countries with a commitment under the Kyoto Protocol buy CERs to cover a portion of their emission reduction commitments under the Treaty. There are currently more than 1240 registered CDM projects in 51 countries, and about another 3000 projects in the project registration pipeline. The CDM is expected to generate more than 2.9 billion CERs by the time the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol ends in 2012, each equivalent to one tonne of carbon dioxide.

Note to journalists

For further information, please contact:

Conference Spokesman
Eric Hall
Tel: +48 723 979 497
ehall(at)unfccc.int

Media Liaison
John Hay
Tel: +48 723 979 498
jhay(at)unfccc.int

UNFCCC Interview Requests (Executive Secretary)
Carrie Assheuer
Tel: +48 723 979 703
cassheuer(at)unfccc.int
See also <<http://unfccc.int>>