

CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Ninth session

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Agenda item 10

**ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSIONS AMONG MINISTERS
AND OTHER HEADS OF DELEGATION**

Summary by the President of the Conference of the Parties at its ninth session

1. This text has been prepared under the responsibility of the President of the Conference of the Parties at its ninth session (COP 9). It summarizes the views expressed by Parties during the round-table discussions, held on 10–11 December 2003.

Introduction

2. The Subsidiary Body for Implementation, at its eighteenth session, recommended that round-table discussions serve as the vehicle for ministers and other heads of delegations to exchange views at COP 9. On the basis of the recommendations from the Bureau, the Conference of the Parties, at its ninth session, agreed that there should be three round-table discussions, with the following themes:

(a) Climate change, adaptation, mitigation and sustainable development, on Wednesday, 10 December from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.;

(b) Technology, including technology use and development and transfer of technologies, on Thursday, 11 December from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.;

(c) Assessment of progress at the national, regional and international levels to fulfil the promise and objective enshrined in the climate change agreements, including the scientific, information, policy and financial aspects, on Thursday, 11 December from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

3. In addition to the central themes of the round-table discussions, capacity-building, synergy and possible future steps, as well as the need to increase awareness of vulnerability and adaptation would be cross-cutting issues for all three round-table discussions.

4. Ministers from Annex I and non-Annex I Parties were invited by the President to assist in co-chairing the round-table discussions. The first discussion was co-chaired by Ms. Yuriko Koike, Minister of the Environment of Japan, and Mr. Tadashi Lomoto, Minister and Assistant to the President of Marshall Islands. The second discussion was co-chaired by Ms. Paula Dobriansky, Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs, United States of America, and Mr. Mohammed Valli Moosa, Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism of South Africa. The third discussion was co-chaired by Mr. Fernando Tudela Abad, Sub-Secretary of Environment of Mexico, and Mr. Jürgen Trittin, Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety of Germany.

5. The President thanked the co-chairs for having agreed to take on the additional responsibility of co-chairing the round-table discussions. He informed Parties that, on the basis of a survey circulated to Parties during the Conference, they had received a letter from him informing them of the round-table discussion in which their contribution would be guaranteed. The President further explained that a number of Annex I and non-Annex I Parties had been invited to serve as lead-off speakers during each round-table discussion. The President recalled that his aim was to ensure an atmosphere of constructive, open and interactive dialogue.

6. During the discussions, Ministers or other heads of delegations from more than 90 Parties made interventions, as did the representatives of two Observer States, and the representatives of three non-governmental organizations. The President thanked Parties for a fruitful and rich dialogue.

Round-table discussion 1: Climate change, adaptation, mitigation and sustainable development

7. Many Parties highlighted that climate change remains the most important global challenge for humanity. In meeting this challenge, the international community is confronted with a clear choice between collective irresponsibility or maturity. The results of the Third Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change provide a sound scientific basis for action. Furthermore, adverse effects of climate change are a reality in all parts of the world. Urgent and coordinated action is needed by all nations, taking into account their special circumstances, and common but differentiated responsibilities. The very existence of long-standing cultures and ecosystems is at stake.

8. It was recalled that 11 December 2003 was the sixth anniversary of the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol, and strong support was expressed for its immediate entry into force. Most Parties saw it as providing the right architecture and framework to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and limit the adverse effects of climate change, and noted that it is already changing the way we think about climate, energy and investment. Parties referred to the Kyoto Protocol as a significant first step towards the ultimate objective of the Convention. Many Parties added that every effort should be made to implement its provisions, even though it is not yet legally in force.

9. The implementation of mitigation and adaptation measures, in the context of national policies for sustainable development, involves the realization of synergy and complementarity between economic growth, equity, poverty alleviation, and environmental protection.

10. Many Parties shared their experiences of national and regional mitigation and adaptation activities. The importance of the clean development mechanism as an instrument for capacity-building and a means to forge partnerships for the future was highlighted. Prompt implementation of the clean development mechanism was called for by many Parties.

11. Parties noted that a coherent mitigation strategy over time will require measures to improve energy efficiency, diffuse renewable energy technology and develop new technologies for the next decades.

12. Parties noted the increasing demand for adaptation measures. The importance of increasing the capacity of local communities to deal with the adverse effects of climate change was reiterated. It was noted that many developing countries are implementing adaptation and mitigation measures, but that scarcity of resources hampers their capacity to address climate change adequately. Debt and urgent national social and economic demands and pressures were mentioned as limiting factors for developing countries. The special needs and circumstances of least developed countries and small island developing states were highlighted, as was the need for more funding from developed country Parties to support mitigation and adaptation initiatives in non-Annex I Parties. Such support is vital for developing appropriate capacities and incentives to successfully implement the Convention and its Protocol. Many Parties called for the removal of barriers to financial assistance, technology transfer and funding for

adaptation activities in developing countries. In this regard, the need for a prompt operationalization of the Special Climate Change Fund, and the next stage of the Least Developed Countries Fund, with priority on adaptation, was frequently mentioned.

Round-table discussion 2: Technology, including technology use and development and the transfer of technologies

13. The question of how to make best use of existing technology while at the same time facilitating technology innovation, development and diffusion for mitigation and adaptation in the context of sustainable development was at the core of the dialogue among Parties. There was agreement that an appropriate combination of near-term and long-term actions was critical. Some Parties highlighted the need for sustainable economic growth to alleviate poverty and promote social development.

14. The use and transfer of existing technology and the promotion of new technologies should go hand-in-hand and are complementary. Many Parties stated that they were already using energy-efficient technologies and increasing their use of renewable sources of energy. However, it was also stated that Parties need to quicken the pace of their work and accelerate the uptake of existing technologies especially in developing countries, and the least developed countries and small islands developing states among them. The question of how to design and transfer technologies to the local level, and use local resources in accordance with national needs, was posed.

15. The critical role the Convention and its Kyoto Protocol and mechanisms (joint implementation, clean development mechanism, emissions trading) play in technology development, diffusion, investment and transfer was noted.

16. Among the factors contributing to technology use, development and transfer, a stable investment environment, infrastructure, good governance and opportunities for private sector investment were mentioned. Among the future promising technologies mentioned were hydrogen-related technologies, renewable energy sources, and carbon capture and storage technologies. The challenge posed by investments required for electricity generation in the next two decades was raised, as well as their significant implications for emissions.

17. Some Parties called for more practical information on technology transfer, and developed countries were asked to provide precise information on the technologies being transferred, so as to build an inventory of technologies that are being transferred from developed to developing countries. The importance of adaptation technologies and the need to focus on such areas as agriculture, water, coastal zones and public health in considering technology needs under the Convention were highlighted. One issue of concern to some Parties was the linkage between trade, market and commercial considerations and technology transfer, which can limit the potential to accelerate technology transfer.

18. The catalytic role governments play in promoting research and development and helping fund cutting-edge technologies was noted, as was their instrumental role in expanding markets for new technologies and promoting technology cooperation. The importance of the private sector was acknowledged, but it was noted that technology transfer, development and cooperation cannot be left only to the dynamics of the private sector.

19. The important work already accomplished by the Expert Group on Technology Transfer (EGTT), and TT:CLEAR was commended. However, it is only a start, and the EGTT needs to be actively involved in analysing successes and failures in technology transfer in order to replicate success stories.

20. One point made in relation to possible future technologies was that we should not back any one particular horse. In this regard, the need to coordinate with, and participate in, actions taken under other fora, including World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) partnerships, was mentioned.

Round-table discussion 3: Assessment of progress at the national, regional and international levels to fulfil the promise and objective enshrined in the climate change agreements, including the scientific, information, policy and financial aspects

21. During the discussion of lessons learned from implementation of local and national climate change measures, it was noted that many countries and regions are already taking action. There is progress; it is uneven, but real. Parties still need to proceed with the alignment of different policies and measures, capacity-building processes and the availability of funds. There were calls to stop reiterating political positions, and to move instead from words into concrete action. Much more needs to be done in order to stabilize atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. Achieving the desired overall emissions reductions and adapting to inescapable impacts will require a further strengthening of efforts by all countries. Some Parties mentioned that uncertainties in the legal and political field are now bigger than in science.

22. Many Parties noted that those industrialized countries that have ratified the Kyoto Protocol have already initiated action to implement their emission limitation and reduction commitments. However, some Parties expressed frustration about the lack of progress by Annex I Parties in showing real leadership in combating climate change and limiting their emissions of greenhouse gases. Annex I Parties were urged to continue to play a leading role in implementing all the provisions of the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol.

23. Many Parties also noted that meeting the targets of the Protocol is not only affordable, but can be done in a cost-efficient manner and can provide many co-benefits and opportunities for the economy. Also in this context, many Parties stated that the Kyoto Protocol is the best way forward and called on Parties who have not done so to ratify it. Technologies that effectively combat climate change already exist, for instance, renewable energy and energy conservation. The challenge is to design a framework to quickly introduce these technologies into the market.

24. Parties also noted that beyond this, steps taken towards a more rational use of energy and planning for adaptation measures provide a basis for enhancing related efforts in the future. There is a need to continue to strengthen climate observation and research. Many Parties mentioned that the Third Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change provides a clear compass; we need now to develop the road-map.

25. Parties noted the importance of institutional cooperation at the national level and the involvement of civil society. The importance of national policies and measures being put in place to mitigate climate change was emphasized. Examples include eco-taxes, energy taxes, phasing out of environmentally harmful subsidies, carbon sequestration, structural changes in sectoral policies, investment in new technologies, energy efficiency projects, and urban planning. Such policies and measures help to decouple economic growth and growth in emissions, in addition to achieving social and environmental benefits, in such areas as health, air pollution reduction, the protection of biodiversity and ecosystems, and water conservation.

26. Parties noted that the clean development mechanism has become operational, and the necessary infrastructure, capacity and conditions have been established to provide a basis for approving and implementing a growing number of projects in developing countries that can lead to tangible emissions reductions. The conditions for combating climate change and means of adaptation in developing countries has improved considerably in the framework of the preparation of national communications. However, it was noted that more financial assistance is required by developing countries to support their efforts.

27. In the discussion of progress and practical steps for future action, including cooperation and cross-sectoral partnerships, Parties noted that to be successful, cooperation must be based on clear rules

and responsibilities, in an atmosphere of willingness. Particularly, the importance of establishing such rules applicable to all countries was emphasized. Intensified North–South, South–South, South–North, and regional cooperation is vital, for example, in technology transfer, technology research, cleaner production, and through Joint Implementation and clean development mechanism projects. The link between regional action and regional financing schemes is an important element in supporting regional capacity-building.

28. It was noted that adaptation is one of the areas in which good progress has been made, but that there is still a huge gap between what is needed and what is available. Parties noted the need to improve knowledge about the vulnerability of societies, and the means of mainstreaming adaptation measures into existing development planning. The further mobilization of resources was highlighted as a key issue. Finally, a number of Parties requested that input be provided to the ongoing review of the Barbados Programme of Action.
