Dear delegates, ECO welcomes you back to work with a recap of two Cancun decisions important for today's mitigation workshop.

Firstly, you promised the world to aim to limit temperature increases to below 2°C, and to review from 2013-2015 whether this aim needed strengthening to 1.5°C. That promise represented progress of sorts for many of you. Though we should note that the EU has argued for setting the 2°C threshold for many years.

That Cancun decision clearly did not reflect the most up-to-date scientific assessments of climate sensitivity that show that a temperature rise of more than 2 degrees – even one above 1.5 degrees – has a high probability of catastrophic climate impacts.

Secondly, in the Kyoto Protocol track you endorsed the IPCC Fourth Assessment that says that in order to keep warming to below 2 degrees, Annex 1 countries should reduce their emissions by 25-40% compared to 1990 levels by 2020. In order to do so, you asked yourselves to increase ambition in line with the IPCC's assessment, as the current pledges are no where near the 25-40% range.

Yet, we fear that the pledges we will hear about today do not even come close to these agreed levels of ambition.

Disturbing figures presented by AOSIS in the AWG-KP last year demonstrated that the actual reduction in aggregate Annex I emissions pledged in Copenhagen ranged from a feeble -1 to -7%. The UNEP Emissions Gap report underscored this lack of ambition and transparency by finding that weak rules, bad LULUCF accounting, and the potential carry-over of emissions credits could add 1-2 Gt CO2e to the already sizeable Gigatonne Gap. Double counting of CDM credits would increase the gap further; by up to 1.3 Gt CO2e.

Bare it all! Don't be shy. In today's workshop, ECO calls on Parties to explain the assumptions behind their pledges. To be completely honest and transparent about the loopholes they intend to use to meet their pledges. This would mark the start of an honest conversation on closing the loopholes and ultimately the gigatonne gap, thus living up to the decisions from Cancun to avoiding dangerous warming and meeting the Convention's requirement of developed country leadership.

An Honest Conversation
Earth to EU: The Case for 30% is Clear

Before today's presentations of the pledges get underway, ECO decided to offer some of its own "clarifications" about the EU mitigation pledge. And it's mostly good news.

The emissions cuts made by the EU in 2009 were already 17.3% below 1990 levels, so the 20% target by 2020 is almost already met. ECO isn't the first to point out that less effort is required of the EU than some may think. The European Commission's 2050 Low Carbon Roadmap published in March 2011, notes that implementing the EU's existing renewable energy and energy efficiency targets would lead to 25% domestic emissions cuts in the EU. So there's really no excuse for the EU not to commit to do more — moving to at least the 30% target they have long promised, and beyond to the 40% target that science demands. And there are many reasons why they should.

First, the Commission's 2050 Roadmap showed how hitting only the 20% target by 2020 would put the EU off-course to achieve the 2050 target of 80-95% that they know is needed. Failing to try a bit harder now will mean much more work in the long-run.

Second, moving to 30% would bring the EU Emissions Trading Scheme back to life. ECO has long complained of the problems of over-allocation of emissions allowances in the period 2008-12, which does nothing but offer staggering windfall profits to the dirtiest industries in Europe.

Decreasing the number of allowances by increasing the target would turn a policy by which the polluter gets paid, into one that incentivizes clean, green fighting industries of the future in Europe. The business voices that want to realize that vision in Europe have had enough of the uncertainty of a conditional target. Planning big investments requires predictability. Europe needs both.

Third, those investments will bring new jobs to Europe. The European Commission shows how "action geared towards reaching the climate and energy targets of the Europe 2020 strategy has some of the greatest potential for future jobs." Many will fall in the construction industry — a sector particularly hard hit in the European economic downturn.

ECO hopes this helps to provide all the clarity the EU needs to finally move to its higher target. A report commissioned for the German Environment Ministry sums it up nicely. A 30% target would help boost European investments from 18% to 22% of GDP, lead to a GDP increase of up to €620bn, create up to 6 million additional jobs, and help European industry to maintain and enhance its competitiveness. Europe, ECO thinks the case for 30% is clear as day.

The proposed reference level approach simply does not reflect the ambition needed to address climate change, nor does it secure a positive contribution toward the emission cuts required. Forests and other land uses must be a major part of the solution, and yet the proposed rules move things in the opposite direction. ECO remains no less than astonished that while all other sectors are expected to reduce emissions, the forest sector gets a free pass, since Parties could set their reference levels allowing increased emissions with no effect on their overall targets.

Even worse is the fact that the bulk of emissions from bioenergy, a sector poised for exponential growth, will go completely unaccounted for. Moreover, while the favoured forest fiddle is relatively well defined, Parties have yet to fully elaborate the rules for other land uses such as cropland and grazing land management, as well as rewetting and drainage. Yet, in aggregate, these are nearly as significant as forest emissions. Finally, Parties have fallen short of moving towards full mandatory accounting whilst resolving any data issues that stand in the way.

The reference level approach to forest management may be appealing in a narrow political sense, but in fact it undermines ambition in the forest and land sectors and significantly weakens overall mitigation. It is not just the proposed forest management reference levels that need to be scrutinized, but the overall political direction of the LULUCF negotiations, which in turn are sapping the momentum of the overall Annex I "numbers" discussions.

It's time for delegation leaders here and now to focus attention, face up to the LULUCF loophole, turn around the momentum and starting closing the gigatonne gap. Durban is not far off at all, and to capture real ambition then means starting now in Bangkok. Could this be the year of our last LULUCF article? The ECO Ed Board (and perhaps you kind readers) can only hope. You can help us achieve that goal, esteemed delegation leaders.