

ECO



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Why Are We Here, Again? Ah Yes 3-4°C!

After 2 days of negotiation and no plan forward, ECO wonders: are negotiators here to agree on a work plan towards a climate deal or here to fight over an agenda of items that were already agreed to in past negotiations? The continued bickering on the agenda helps no one. It wastes precious time that parties need to urgently start the actual work – implementing what was agreed in Cancun, and addressing the gaps (including those from the best available practices). ECO suggests serious attention be given to the next steps needed to get the world to a 1.5/2°C pathway. With the current gaping gigatonne gap of missing emission reductions, the world is heading for 3-4°C.

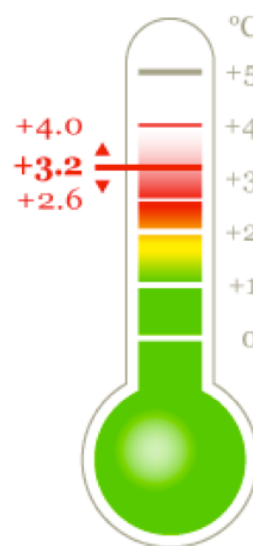
Countries acknowledged the existence though not size of gap and agreed in Cancun that their level of ambition is insufficient. Developed country parties who want to assess progress on their current emissions pledges should check the latest science based assessment of their pledges, which were published yesterday. The Climate Action Tracker that rates countries according to the adequacy of their mitigation pledges and actions has now updated its analysis, integrating new information from this week's mitigation workshops.

According to that research, the gap hasn't narrowed. The new information on assumptions makes some countries' ambition appear higher while others lower. Even if all the countries implemented the high-end of their pledges with the most stringent accounting rules, they would leave a gap of 8-12 Gt CO₂e. Even the higher pledges on the table condemn the world to climate havoc.

Countries must start exploring how they can increase mitigation commitments. Closing the gap requires that countries begin with what is possible and express what steps they are planning and willing to take to accomplish what is needed. A strong climate agreement is imperative, and a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol is a step toward achieving it – particularly considering that productive negotiations in this track will influence the track of negotiations that includes the United States.

All developed countries (perhaps with the exception of Norway) must significantly increase their pledges. The EU, for instance, must increase its inadequate 20% target. It's even lower than what ECO might call a "reference scenario" of 25% domestic cuts (if existing legislation and energy related targets are implemented). The new analysis published puts the US pathetic pledge to cut emissions 17% by 2020 (compared to 2005) at anywhere between +3 and -3% compared to 1990 levels. And what about the rest of the developed countries?

Developed countries should agree to common accounting rules and the closure of loopholes such as AAU banking and LULUCF accounting. While developed countries are much further away from their fair share to the global mitigation effort, developing countries can also do more to close the gap. As a first step on that front, developing countries should clarify the assumptions behind their business as usual projections, including information on key factors such as energy use and prices, economic development, population, etc. In order to increase their efforts, developing countries will require financial, technological and capacity building support. It is vital to clarify the nature and scale of support needed to match proposed developing country NAMAs. While parties think about increasing their pledges, they should address other sectors and gases, such as a swift phase out of HFCs (under the Montreal Protocol). They should finally begin to address the issue of black carbon seriously, and get international aviation and shipping sectors covered (there is even finance, for mitigation and adaptation in developing countries, to be raised from it, too!).



Agenda to Save the Planet

Yesterday ECO was hanging around the halls of the UN Convention Centre in Bangkok, feeling a little redundant. Because there was no agenda. Also because the term agenda means "what needs to be done", ECO thought: why not develop our own agenda? First, we have to spend some time thinking on the title. Inspired by the beautiful flowers in the ground floor café, a great title came to us: the Planet Agenda. We all know we are in a development and climate crisis (and that is the reason why we are all here in Bangkok).

Accidentally, ECO found a sheet on the floors which would fit this agenda. It mentioned something called the "Bali Action Plan" and the "Cancun Agreement." ECO found out that historical records show that both documents were agreed as decisions, with the "Cancun Agreements" putting concrete tasks forward to be solved by the next climate summit in Durban. So whoever drafted these papers had the simple but brilliant idea: "Let's make an Agenda to save the planet!" And by inserting some data which is lacking so far, like 100 billion \$ and 40%, our agenda looks as if it really could help in the global ambition to halt climate change.

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Stop the Melting Himalayas!



the nine largest river basins which are home to over 1.3 billion people in Asia are at risk. Research and studies show that some glaciers are disappearing whereas others expand and lead to glacial retreat increasing the threat of Glacier Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) catastrophic to local populations and to the environs. Current impacts have led to landslides, soil erosion, and flooding depositing silt which damages the downstream biologically diverse ecosystems, habitat and landscapes.

Moreover, the Himalayas is now a region witnessing a 0.06 degree Celsius per year warming trend. Snow decreases and permanent snowcapped mountains are becoming bleak and their landscape barren and rocky - indeed decreasing the charismatic beauty of our Himalayas.

No single organization and no single country can implement the measures needed to mitigate these regional impacts. Only international effort can put in place the mitigation and adaptation measures required for such a vulnerable and populous region. Its plight should be part of the consciousness awareness of the conference delegates in their ongoing deliberations.

Climate change is happening globally and its dramatic effects on the Himalayas have profound regional and international impacts. The Dalai Lama said Saturday that India should be “seriously concerned about the melting glaciers in the Tibetan plateau as millions of Indians use water that comes from there.” The Tibetan spiritual leader also quoted Chinese experts as saying that the Tibetan glaciers were retreating faster than elsewhere in the world. The glaciers are considered vital lifelines for Asian rivers including the Indus and the Ganges. Once they vanish, water supplies in those regions will be threatened.

Because of this on-going Himalayan crisis,

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So ECO shared this paper with some delegates to get their views. Since we were not allowed to attend the informal discussions on the agenda item “agenda”, there is only a limited understanding of what the reactions were. But ECO is disappointed that some countries – rumours mention China, Saudi Arabia, Philippines, Venezuela, Egypt, and the US – were not yet able to agree on moving forward on the basis of this planned agenda. ECO has difficulties in understanding this, since all of these diverse and beautiful countries are part of this planet. An “Agenda to Save the Planet” should also be in their interests. We strongly hope that this will be sorted out progressively to take the next steps to save our common future. In the absence of agreement here in Bangkok, how could we come home and tell the next generation that the “Agenda to Save the Planet”, their future, was not agreed?

Experts Learn From Community Adaptation Efforts

While the world warms and negotiators representing nearly 200 governments gather here in flood-stricken Thailand and continue to argue over what to do, some of the world's poorest communities are already developing practical ways to adapt to the impacts of global climate change.

Their experiences could go a long way towards reducing the impacts of climate change – but only if they can be validated scientifically and communicated effectively to other communities that also require adaptation. The good news is that there is a growing effort to make sure this very thing happens.

Last week, at the 5th International Conference on Community Based Adaptation to Climate Change, more than 300 international climate-change experts met in Bangladesh and travelling to different parts of the country to learn from people, government organisations, and NGOs about how communities are protecting themselves from drought, flood, temperature increase and rising sea levels.

When delegates returned to Dhaka after 3 days, it soon became clear that Bangladesh's vulnerable communities share difficulties with many others from around the world. With growing awareness among decision-makers that vulnerable communities have much to contribute to global efforts to tackle climate change, the next challenge is for us to get better at communicating evidence of what works so that lessons from practical steps being taken in one small village could benefit many others.

Can You Find a Fair Ambitious Binding Deal?

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