

Policy pointers

- **The parties at this year's** climate negotiations must resolve all outstanding issues related to the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, adopting the highest possible ambition and taking the decisions needed to ensure a robust second commitment period.
- **The parties must** successfully conclude negotiations under the Bali Action Plan on long-term cooperative action — a huge but crucial task.
- **The 'Durban Platform'** negotiations in Doha must commit parties to a path of immediate and meaningful actions to raise pre-2020 mitigation ambition
- **As any post-2020** agreement must cover similar ground, it is fundamental that the negotiations draw on lessons and experience already accumulated. Without firm outcomes on the Kyoto Protocol and long-term cooperation, a post-2020 agreement cannot be successful.

Climate negotiation crossroads: future success rests on current lessons

This year's global climate negotiations in Doha are particularly challenging. Parties to the UNFCCC must step out on a new path leading beyond 2020. But to do that they must first resolve unfinished business from the Bali Road Map, including the work of the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol and the Bali Action Plan for long term cooperative action. Decisions for the post-2020 regime must be guided by climate change science and impacts, the Convention's principles and provisions and, most importantly, by the lessons learnt under the current regime. There is no need to reinvent the wheel.

The global climate crossroad

Over the two decades since the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) opened for signature in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the global climate change problem has slowly but steadily accumulated scientific and policy responses and political momentum. Parties to the UNFCCC and its 1997 Kyoto Protocol have encountered many crossroads and milestones — from Marrakesh to Bali, from Copenhagen to Durban and now on to Doha for the 18th session of the Conference of the parties to the UNFCCC, in November 2012. Despite the failure of Copenhagen, which was dramatically misaligned with high public and political expectations, most of these meetings have been remarkably successful.

This year's negotiations are particularly challenging in that they will terminate the well-known 'Bali Road Map'. Drawing the Bali Road Map to a successful close with robust outcomes will require the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP) to successfully complete negotiations for its second commitment period; and the Ad hoc Working Group on Long-Term Cooperative Actions (LCA) to agree an outcome to complete the Bali Action Plan.

Parties must also agree on actions to raise the pre-2020 mitigation ambition and the post-2020 climate change agreement, under the newly established Ad-Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (the Durban Platform). They must choose their path guided by climate change science and impacts, the Convention's principles and provisions, and most importantly by the lessons already learnt under the current regime.

Delay is deadly

There is sufficient scientific evidence to show that the Earth's climate system is warming unequally and that humans are the cause. The most recent UNEP 'Emissions Gap' report indicates a widening gap between projected global emissions in 2020 and the UNFCCC's accepted aim of keeping global warming below 2°C — let alone the 1.5°C target advocated by the vulnerable country groups such as the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and the Small Island Developing States. And there are already enough examples of what dangerous climate change looks like — from severe droughts in the Sahel, East Africa, the United States and Mexico, to catastrophic floods in Brazil and China, and heat waves in Europe and elsewhere.

Parties must be guided by lessons learnt under the current regime

According to the most recent DARA Climate Vulnerability Monitor, 250 million people face sea-level rise; 30 million are affected by extreme weather and 5 million by desertification.¹ In 2010 nearly five million lives were lost to the impacts of climate change. This is expected to be six million per year by 2030. The

report estimates that by 2030 90 per cent of these victims will be from developing countries — with the LDCs the hardest hit. However, Hurricane Sandy in the US has shown us that it is not just the world's poorest nations that must adapt to the risks that more extreme climatic events can pose. These events are becoming more frequent all around the world.

Kyoto is not a dead end

In Doha the parties must resolve all outstanding Kyoto Protocol issues, adopting the highest possible ambition — with quantifiable emission reduction targets — and take the decisions needed to ensure the second commitment period remains robust. The Kyoto Protocol is not a dead end — it is a prominent cornerstone of the global policymaking architecture. The Protocol is the only existing legally binding agreement for quantifiable emissions reductions. Developing countries are clear that the Kyoto Protocol is the highest priority for Doha and is central to an effective future regime.

The second commitment period

Last year's climate negotiations in Durban agreed to continue the Kyoto Protocol into a second commitment period, but put off setting the end date until this year's Doha meeting. The length of this second commitment period is still much debated. Some parties, such as the European Union, want an eight year commitment period to avoid any gap between its end and 2020. But there are compelling reasons why countries in the LDCs Group, the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and in Africa argue for keeping the second commitment period the same as the first — five years (2013–2017).

A five year commitment period avoids 'locking in' low ambitions until 2020 and means mitigation commitments can respond to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's 5th assessment report, due in late 2014. If emission commitments are set until the end of 2020, then only the IPCC 6th assessment report, likely to be published in 2019, can inform the mitigation obligations.

In Durban, parties agreed that the second commitment period shall start on 1 January 2013. If this date is to be realistic, and in order to maintain the legal certainty of the commitments, parties must apply the second commitment period provisionally, until the formal ratification process completes.

Ambitious commitments are needed now

Getting stronger commitments by developed country parties to the Kyoto Protocol is also central to the Doha negotiations. Parties, in aggregate, need to reduce emissions to 25–45 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020, as outlined in the IPCC's 4th assessment report. There is an urgent need for them to move to the top of their range of pledges, and start 'second period' Kyoto commitments from the emissions levels committed to during the first period.

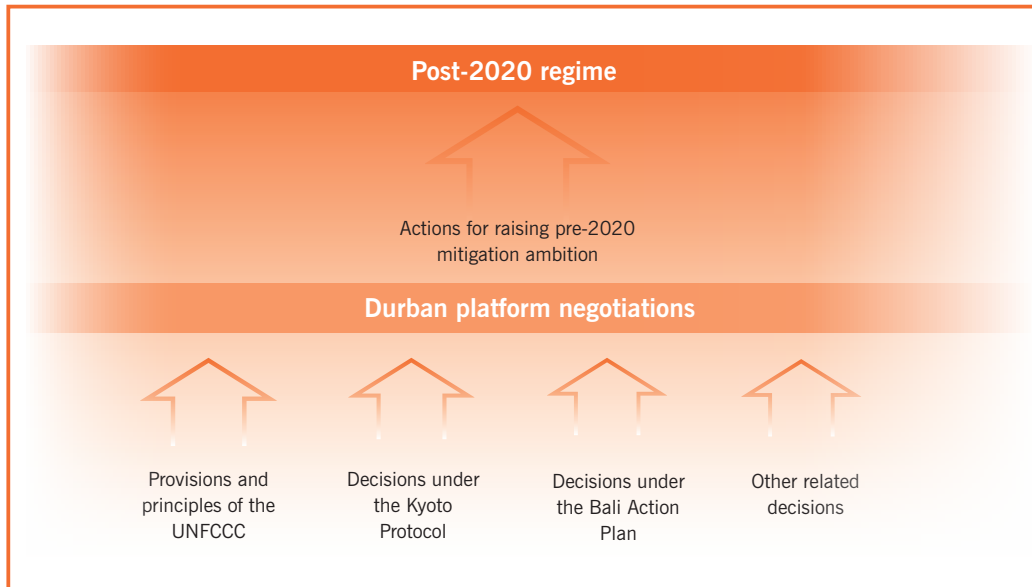
However, a number of parties have not yet proposed targets for the second commitment period, nor have they indicated any intention to do so. Such lack of commitment sends a worrying signal about a better future regime. It is incomprehensible that, rather than confirming their participation in the second commitment period, some developed countries want to continue with the 'flexible mechanisms' of the Kyoto Protocol (the clean development mechanism, joint implementation and emissions trading). The Kyoto Protocol introduced these flexible mechanisms to make developed countries' efforts to reach their targets more cost effective. Engaging in flexible mechanisms without setting greenhouse gas reduction targets would defeat this purpose.

Surplus carbon 'credits'

The issue of surplus Assigned Amount Units (AAUs) must also be resolved in Doha. AAUs are the greenhouse gas emissions allowed under the Kyoto Protocol (one AAU allows a country to emit one tonne of CO₂ equivalent). Kyoto Protocol rules allow countries to carry over unused emission allowances into the next commitment period. They were set at 1990 levels, and several countries, including Russia, Ukraine and Poland, have very large surplus AAUs because of de-industrialisation in the 1990s.

A recent UNEP report estimates that up to 13 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent could be carried over to the next commitment period — almost three times the total annual emissions of the EU. With the supply of AAUs much higher than current reduction commitments, carry-over would lead to no emission reductions by 2020, compared to business-as-usual emission projections.

Figure. The pathway for post-2020



Bali action plan: the paved way

The Bali Action Plan (BAP) on long-term cooperative action, part of the Bali Road Map agreed in 2007, put the UNFCCC's future on firm footings. The plan's negotiations covered important issues including shared vision, mitigation, adaptation, finance, technology transfer and capacity building. Decisions taken under the Bali Action Plan got around 85 countries to submit mitigation pledges, introduced a system for measuring, reporting and verifying commitments, created a stronger focus on adaptation, technology and finance, and introduced a set of institutions to strengthen implementation of global decisions.

These negotiations on cooperative action took far longer than the anticipated two years. In Durban last year, the parties decided that the negotiations must and shall be terminated within 2012. However, there are many issues still to be concluded, the most crucial being about mitigation and finance.

Mitigation

The Doha meeting must now rapidly agree details of a global goal for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, a long-term target for mitigation, the year in which emissions should peak (based on scientific analysis), the scope of a mid-term review to assess the global goal (and an appropriate body to conduct such a review), and mitigation actions from developing countries.

Doha must also agree comparability of efforts and targets for non-Kyoto parties. A ratifiable second commitment period for the Kyoto Protocol depends on

genuine commitment from non-Kyoto protocol parties (for example the USA) to adopt stringent emissions cuts.

Financial support

Ensuring financial assistance to developing countries is at the heart of any successful global climate agreement. Yet many financial support issues are yet to be agreed under the Bali Action Plan. For example, 'scaling up' financial support for both mitigation and adaptation beyond the current 'fast start' climate finance period; pledges to the Green Climate Fund; meaningful commitment to developing innovative sources of public financing; agreement on how to reassess the adequacy of financial pledges; and decisions on measuring, reporting and verifying financial support are all incomplete tasks. These are of paramount importance in concluding the Bali Action Plan's work.

Other ongoing negotiations include: how to fund National Adaptation Plans for developing countries; establishing an international mechanism to compensate for loss and damage associated with climate impacts; setting up a Standing Committee to oversee the Convention's financial mechanisms; and finalising arrangements for a Technology Executive Committee and a Climate Technology Centre and Network.

It may not be possible to complete all the remaining issues under the Bali Action Plan by the end of the Doha meeting. But firm commitment on mitigation and finance is essential if it is to have fair and effective implementation. Such commitment in Doha will signal that parties are serious about addressing

climate change. Firm commitments on mitigation and finance by developed countries will help to ensure in the process from developing countries, and their goodwill.

The Durban Platform: an access road

Despite its brevity and lack of detail, the 'Durban Platform' — the agreement to launch a process for a post-2020 climate regime — strengthened the current regime, recently beleaguered both by doubt over its ability to find fair and effective solutions, and uncertainty over the future of the UN process. The platform also injected some degree of certainty into years of acrimonious disagreement on what legal form the outcomes of current negotiations will take. Durban opened the door for further negotiations on a paradigm for a stronger future regime, as well as on how to enhance ambition within the commitments reflected in the Bali Roadmap.

As such, the Durban Platform offers an 'access road' for a wider and more ambitious approach to an effective post-2020 agreement and to a bridge for the pre-2020 'ambition gap'. However, to seize the opportunity, the parties must take decisive action in Doha.

Without waiting for 2020, parties must tackle mitigation with more ambitious short- and mid-term commitments on emission reductions. Failure to take immediate actions will have disastrous consequences for the most vulnerable countries and communities. The Durban

Platform negotiations in Doha must commit parties to immediate and meaningful actions, including a workplan with scheduled activities for 2013. The parties must also agree on a clear longer-term schedule to negotiate a fair, ambitious and binding agreement for the post-2020 regime.

The new agreement is expected to cover mitigation, adaptation, finance, technology transfer, capacity building and transparency of action — the very same areas that have been negotiated under the Kyoto Protocol and the Bali Action Plan over the years. Building and improving on the current regime is a far better approach than 'reinventing the wheel'. The Durban Platform's most important task is to apply the provisions and principles agreed and lessons already learnt in a practical way that addresses the current realities and circumstances.

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Notes

■ ¹ Produced by DARA, the Climate Vulnerability Monitor uses 34 climate and carbon economy indicators to compare and contrast 5 levels of vulnerability across 184 countries. <http://daraint.org/climate-vulnerability-monitor/>