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**Report on the Outcome of the 16th Conference of the Parties to the  
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate  
Change and its Implications for Africa**



## **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The 16<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP-16) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Sixth Session of the Meeting of the Parties (CMP-6) to the Kyoto Protocol (KP) took place in Cancún, Mexico, between 29 November and 11 December 2010. The Cancún climate talks concluded with a package dubbed the ‘Cancún Agreements’, consisting of a set of decisions anchoring national mitigation pledges and taking some important steps to strengthen finance and transparency in emissions reporting by all countries, among other elements of the multilateral climate framework. The Agreements were instrumental in rehabilitating the UNFCCC process and solidified its role in moving international climate policy and cooperation forward.

2. Moreover, the Cancún Agreements built directly on the Copenhagen Accord, by importing the essential components of the Accord into the UNFCCC and thereby giving it legitimacy and greater possibility for effective implementation of some of the elements in the Accord. This paper provides context on the negotiating process and a summary of the Cancún Agreements with a focus on the implications for Africa. It also offers some insight into the coming year and point out relevant areas for Africa in the lead up to COP-17 to be held in Durban, South Africa.

## **II. THE ROAD TO CANCÚN**

3. The current round of negotiations was launched in Montreal in 2005, following the entry into force of the KP. In Montreal, Parties established an Ad Hoc Working Group (AWG-KP) to negotiate new emissions-reduction goals for the developed countries in advance of the end of the first commitment period in 2012. Furthermore, in view of the fact that the United States was not party to the KP, it was deemed necessary to establish a parallel framework that would involve some corresponding commitment from the USA and the emerging economies. To this end, the Parties adopted the Bali Action Plan (BAP) in 2007, launching the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA) under UNFCCC auspices to fully implement the Convention’s objectives.

4. Countries agreed on a list of key themes to be addressed around the five BAP ‘building blocks’, namely, shared vision, mitigation, adaptation, finance and technology transfer. The Bali Conference clearly established that the global climate talks would be maintained under the two tracks of the Kyoto Protocol and the Long-term Cooperative Action with a view to reaching an agreement involving all countries by the time the 15<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP-15) was convened at Copenhagen, 7-18 December 2009. The Bali Conference also made progress on a number of key issues relating to halting deforestation, through the United Nations Collaborative Programme for Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD), technology transfer, the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and funds for adaptation.

5. By the time Parties met at COP-15 in Copenhagen, an intense two-year negotiation had taken place under the AWG-LCA and AWG-KP tracks. However, neither of these formal tracks produced outcomes in Copenhagen. In the end, the Parties adopted parallel decisions under UNFCCC and KP that took ‘note’ of the Accord and opened the way for governments to voluntarily submit their mitigation pledges. This meant that the Accord itself had no formal standing in UNFCCC since it was not formally adopted by COP-15. Still, since December 2009, 140 countries have associated

themselves with the Copenhagen Accord, and over 80 countries have entered specific mitigation pledges. Negotiations continued through 2010 and reached a binding agreement in late 2010 when the COP met at Cancún.

6. On close examination, the Accord speaks to all of the core BAP elements, namely, a long-term goal, adaptation, mitigation, finance, technology, forests, and measurement, reporting and verification (MRV). Some of the specific elements of the Copenhagen Accord include the declaration to limit global temperature increase to 2 degrees Celsius and to strengthen the long-term goal', in relation to temperature rises of 1.5 degrees Celsius; developed countries (annex-I) to 'commit to economy-wide emissions targets for 2020' and developing countries (non-annex-I) to implement nationally-appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs) to be submitted by 31 January 2010; mitigation actions taken by non-annex-I Parties to be subject to domestic MRV and reported every two years; a collective commitment by developed countries for US\$30 billion in "new and additional" resources in 2010-2012 with 'balanced allocation between mitigation and adaptation' and a goal of mobilizing US\$100 billion a year 'from a wide variety of sources' by 2020 to address developing country needs, preserve forests through REDD, and adapt to climate change to 'reduce vulnerability and build resilience in developing countries'.

7. The Accord also calls for establishment of a Copenhagen Green Climate Fund and of a High Level Panel to examine ways of meeting the 2020 finance goal, as well as a Technology Mechanism 'to accelerate technology development and transfer, guided by a country-driven approach'. Finally, the Accord endorses continuation of the KP and advocates moving the negotiations forward under the two tracks, AWG-LCA and AWG-KP.

8. Four negotiating sessions of the AWG-LCA and AWG-KP were held in 2010. Three sessions took place in Bonn, Germany in April, May-June and August 2010, and one in Tianjin, China in October 2010. The aim of these four sessions was to advance the work in the lead up to COP-16 and COP /MOP-6 held in Cancún, Mexico from 29 November to 10 December 2010. Under the AWG-LCA, Parties attempted to develop a negotiating text that encompassed all the main BAP elements including mitigation, adaptation, technology, financing, REDD+ and MRV. By the end of the Tianjin meeting, documents had been developed under both the AWG-KP and AWG-LCA, although these contained many options and much text that had not been agreed by all Parties. Under the AWG-KP, the Parties focused on the scale of emission reductions by annex-I Parties' under the Protocol, beyond 2012. They also discussed flexibility mechanisms and methodological issues, among others.

### **III. KEY OUTCOMES OF COP-16 AT CANCÚN**

9. The shared long-term vision of the Cancún Agreements included a goal to limit the average global temperature to below 2°C compared to pre-industrial levels. It further recognized the need to consider strengthening the long-term goal on a scientific basis in the first review and a 1.5°C goal at a future date. The Cancún Agreements established the process for reviewing the adequacy of maintaining the long-term goal at below 2°C. The review process, which is due to commence in 2013 (and concluded by 2015) will be guided by the upcoming Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fifth Assessment Report and other observed impacts of climate change. The next COP session will define the scope of the review process. Given the importance of the 1.5°C goal for Africa, it will be important to have robust scientific and political representation from the region at this session.

10. The Cancún Agreements included decisions by the Parties under both KP and UNFCCC, but achieving a political balance meant that negotiations across the two tracks were necessary. This was the case particularly with the key issue of ‘anchoring’ mitigation pledges into future binding outcomes. For this reason, it made sense for the decisions to be viewed together. This paper uses a classification based on the key negotiation areas outlined by the Conference of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC). These include: adaptation, mitigation, reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+), finance (fast-start and long-term), and technology transfer.

#### **IV. ADAPTATION**

11. The new Cancún Adaptation Framework established to enhance adaptation efforts by all countries, identified a broad set of priority areas for action. These included (a) a process to assist least developed countries (LDCs) to plan, prioritize and implement their adaptation actions; (b) improved climate-related research and systematic observation and information management systems; (c) strengthened institutions; (d) support to impact, vulnerability and adaptation assessments, including assessment of financial needs as well as evaluation of adaptation options; and (e) undertaking transfer of technologies, practices, processes and capacity-building for adaptation.

12. As part of the Framework, an Adaptation Committee was created to raise the importance of adaptation within the UNFCCC and to provide technical support to Parties to ensure a more coherent, action-oriented engagement with the issues. More specifically, the Committee was mandated to promote implementation of enhanced action through: technical support and guidance; information sharing on best practices; synergy and strengthened engagement of organizations, centres and networks; information on best practices in establishing incentives for adaptation, implementation and reduced vulnerability; and communications by Parties on monitoring and review of adaptation actions, aiming to recommend further actions.

13. Moreover, both ecological and socio-economic resilience were highlighted in the Framework in addition to calling on Parties to explicitly link adaptation to disaster risk reduction in alignment with the Hyogo Framework for Action<sup>1</sup>. The Framework also emphasized the importance of strategies for dealing with climate-induced displacement, migration and planned relocation.

#### *Implications for Africa*

14. The implications of the Cancún Adaptation Framework for Africa are significant, and African negotiators and parties will need to play an active role in ensuring that the continent’s interests are safeguarded as the details of the Framework are worked out further. Three areas need the following close attention:

(a) *First*, the representation of African interests in the Adaptation Committee will be crucial to ensuring that the specific adaptation needs, priorities and support to meet these requirements (i.e.

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<sup>1</sup> Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) is the key instrument for implementing disaster risk reduction, adopted by the member States of the United Nations. Its overarching goal is to build the resilience of nations and communities to disasters, by achieving substantive reduction of disaster losses by 2015 – in lives, and in the social, economic, and environmental assets of communities and countries. <<http://www.unisdr.org/eng/hfa/hfa.htm>>

technical, institutional and financial) are well recognized and acted upon. To this end, Parties (from Africa) will need to take an ‘African’ view on the composition of, and modalities and procedures for, the Adaptation Committee, and make a submission to the secretariat for consideration at the fourteenth session of the AWG-LCA under the Convention;

(b) *Second*, African country Parties and regional organizations need to capitalize on the momentum of interest and attention currently being given to the adaptation issue through the convention. It is interesting that the section in the Cancún Agreements on adaptation comes before the section on mitigation, thereby highlighting the growing importance of adaptation in framing the climate-resilient development agenda. However, the Africa-specific issues relating to vulnerability reduction and climate risk management need to be championed by Africans themselves, by taking a leading role in shaping the global adaptation agenda to also serve the continent’s interests. The AWG-LCA text stipulates that ‘Parties strengthen, and where necessary, establish regional centres and networks in developing countries with support from developed country Parties and relevant organizations’. This implies that resources to strengthen regional and country institutions for adaptation actions will be available, but leadership in mobilizing human, institutional and financial resources for the service of vulnerability reduction and climate-resilient development will be fundamental; and

(c) *Third*, the allocation of adaptation finance to various countries remains contentious, and the relationship of the Framework to new and old funds needs closer inspection. For example, the relationship between fast-start finance with long-term finance and the Green Climate Fund needs to be clarified in terms of which countries will be included in the various categories of ‘vulnerable developing countries’. African negotiators have to be fully engaged in this critical issue to negotiate alongside other vulnerable developing countries and influence the outcome of the recommendations for COP approval in Durban. The section on finance in this paper further discusses the specific challenges relating to climate-change finance and highlights the key areas of focus for African countries and institutions in moving the agenda forward.

## V. MITIGATION

15. The KP track used language that recognized the need for annex-I Parties as a group to reduce emissions by 25-40 per cent of 1990 levels by 2020. The Cancún text also took ‘note’ of the quantified economy-wide emissions reduction targets of annex-I countries that are Parties to the KP, thus ‘anchoring’ the pledges that developed countries gave under the Copenhagen Accord. Developed countries were ‘urged’ to increase the scope of their mitigation targets ‘to a level consistent with that recommended by the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)’. As part of the aim to meet ambitious economy-wide emissions-reduction targets, the convention track decision required developed countries to prepare low-carbon development strategies and plans, and encouraged developing countries to do so as well. The KP track remains and Parties meeting under its auspices agree to ‘continue negotiations with the aim of completing their work and ensuring that there is no gap between the first and second commitment periods of the treaty’.

16. The Cancún Agreements provided emission-mitigation targets and actions for approximately 80 countries, including all the major economies. This was a significant development that codified the pledges by the major emitters, including China, Brazil, India and South Africa, linked to various targets and actions for reducing emissions by 2020. Moreover, the decision specified that developing

country Parties should take nationally-appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs) in the context of sustainable development, supported and enabled by technology, financing, and capacity-building. Support for preparation and implementation of the NAMAs should come from developed country Parties, in accordance with Article 4, paragraph 3, of the Convention. Furthermore, internationally-supported mitigation actions should be measured, reported and verified domestically, and be subject to international MRV. The guidelines and many of the operational elements for such transparency in the climate regime should also be developed under the Convention.

### *Implications for Africa*

17. The Cancún Agreements relating to mitigation are complex. In many respects, the main stumbling block in climate-change talks has been lack of agreement on the levels of emissions-reduction commitments by annex-I countries and finding the appropriate modalities for non-annex-I countries to take mitigation actions under the Convention. In trying to maintain political balance to deliver a binding agreement, African policymakers and negotiators need to keep their eyes on a number of opportunity areas and potential pitfalls. Some of these areas are discussed below:

(a) The Cancún Agreements recognized that deep cuts in global emissions were required to hold the increase in global temperature below 2 degrees Celsius. The Emissions Gap Report from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), launched at the time of the Cancún meetings, warned that the Copenhagen Accord pledges (endorsed at Cancún) were inadequate to achieve the 2 degree temperature limits. If implemented, the report maintained, the world would be on track for a temperature rise of 2.5 to 5 degrees by the end of the century, depending on the strength of the interventions embarked on after 2020. This would be catastrophic for Africa, not only in terms of the magnitude of the impacts but also in terms of the ability of people on the continent to deal with the effects of such changes. It is therefore incumbent on the part of African negotiators to have a two-pronged outcome in mind: to ensure that the sum of future emission-reduction commitments is ambitious enough to meet the scientifically required mitigation levels, and to ensure that the size of adaptation resources is sufficient for building climate-resilient systems of livelihoods;

(b) The calls for low-carbon development strategies in the Cancún Agreements have been welcomed by most, especially their integration into sustainable development plans. However, the text establishes no process to further define the strategies and how they would be resourced. Here, there are opportunities for African countries to play the ‘early mover’ advantage by testing innovative low-carbon ideas and models, and creative financing mechanisms;

(c) The decision on the implementation of NAMAs calls for workshops to build awareness of the diversity of mitigation actions submitted, and the underlying assumptions and support needed for implementation of these actions. These have yet to be developed under the Convention, and the coming months leading up to COP-17 in Durban will be critical in making progress in these areas. Given the diversity of national circumstances and respective capabilities across Africa, the region could provide a rich platform for learning useful lessons, thereby enriching the process of NAMA reporting and implementation. This requires proactive engagement country-wide and at the level of regional institutions; and

(d) Strengthening MRV of mitigation actions is critical for transparency in the climate regime. Implementing these new obligations of reporting on mitigation actions requires people, skills and money, which are not readily available in Africa at the moment (perhaps excluding South Africa). African countries and institutions will need to carefully weigh the implications of these requirements to their limited human and technical capacities, and ensure that adequate resources and provisions are made available.

## **VI. REDUCING EMISSIONS FROM DEFORESTATION AND FOREST DEGRADATION (REDD+):**

18. BAP officially recognized the need to incorporate a REDD+ mechanism in the post-2012 climate regime. Four important criteria characterized the REDD+ mechanism: scope, reference scenario, scale and sources of finance. The Parties agreement in Cancún addressed a number of questions that had been prominent since the BAP in 2007. The Agreement affirmed that ‘adequate and predictable support to developing country Parties’ should be made available, and ‘Parties should collectively slow, halt and reverse forest cover and carbon loss’. In line with this, countries should support national strategies and action plans towards:

- (a) Reducing emissions from deforestation;
- (b) Reducing emissions from forest degradation;
- (c) Conservation of forest carbon stocks;
- (d) Sustainable management of forest; and
- (e) Enhancement of forest carbon sinks.

19. Using financial and technical support from developed countries, Parties would develop the following elements: (a) a national strategy or action plan; (b) development of national forest reference emission level; and (c) development of robust and transparent national forest monitoring systems.

### *Implications for Africa*

20. A number of key questions were discussed and answered in Cancún which advanced operationalizing of the REDD+ framework. However, there are still some concerns that need to be resolved if REDD+ is to make an impact across Africa and elsewhere in the developing world. Some of the questions are listed below:

- (a) How are some of the associated issues such as land tenure issues, forest governance issues, gender considerations and the safeguards incorporated in REDD+?
- (b) How can policy-makers and relevant institutions across Africa ensure the full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, such as indigenous peoples and local communities?



(c) What mechanisms can be put in place to protect the interests of people in the forest areas and integrate their concerns into governance as structured under REDD+?

(d) How will reference emission levels be set, and what will be the relationship between REDD+ and NAMAs? and

(e) What types of financing options models can be used for REDD+?

21. These are some of the key questions that should occupy African stakeholders, i.e. policymakers, negotiators, civil society organizations and community-based organizations. The input and active participation of these stakeholders to advancing REDD+ discussions in the lead up to the next climate talks in Durban will be critical. African stakeholders have recognized the potential value of REDD+ projects for forest protection and halting carbon loss, but much of the global initiative so far has been confined to Brazil and Indonesia, which may have different forest activities, governance and ownership structures. It is vital that some prototype initiatives be tested in Africa with a view to scaling up REDD+ initiatives, using African models.

## VII. FINANCE

22. COP-16 at Cancún formalized the finance goals set in Copenhagen to mobilize *fast-start* and *long-term* climate finance. A collective commitment was made by developed countries ‘to provide new and additional resources through international institutions, approaching US\$30 billion in fast-start finance for the period 2010-2012’. Funding for adaptation was prioritized for the most vulnerable developing countries, which included LDCs, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and countries in Africa. In order to enhance transparency, developed country Parties agreed to submit information to the secretariat on the resources provided, as part of annual reporting, by May 2011, 2012 and 2013.

23. Developed countries committed to mobilize US\$100 billion a year in public and private finance by 2020 to meet the mitigation and adaptation needs of developing countries particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change’. The funds were to come from a variety of sources, including public and private, bilateral and multilateral, and alternative sources. The decision was also taken in Cancún to establish a ‘Green Climate Fund’ to manage a portion of the long-term finance. A 24-member board would govern the fund, comprising an equal number of members from developed and developing countries. The World Bank was to serve as the interim trustee of the Fund, subject to review three years after the Fund became operational.

### *Implications for Africa*

24. In the Cancún Agreements on finance, there is a list of issues of potential concern for Africa that are worth flagging:

(a) How ‘additionality’ is defined in the Agreements when it promises ‘new and additional resources’ remains unclear. Following the Copenhagen Accord, a number of interpretations were used for ‘additionality’, often to indicate the relationship between climate finance and Official Development Assistance (ODA). African countries and other developing countries had assumed ‘additionality’ to mean complete separation between ODA and climate change finance, but different donors had their

own reading of the concept. The different definitions have specific technical and political implications for how climate change finance is raised, measured and channelled. African negotiators need to argue in favour of arriving at a working definition for 'additionality' in order to have clarity on the issue;

(b) African governments have insisted that most of the financing should be in the form of grants or payments and not loans, and should be sourced from the public sector rather than the private sector or markets. 'Alternative sources' is mentioned in the Cancún Agreements, which may imply loans, and African stakeholders need to have clarity on the proportion of resources coming from 'guaranteed', 'market-dependent' and 'repayable' sources;

(c) Priority access to *fast-start finance* is limited to a group of 'most vulnerable countries' within which LDCs, SIDS and Africa are specified. However, the long-term finance in the Green Fund prioritizes 'particularly vulnerable countries', which is not defined in the Cancún Agreements. African negotiators should query this classification, to ascertain how many countries in the region fall into this 'particularly vulnerable' classification;

(d) In the governance structure of the fund, it is stipulated that a 24-member board will govern the Fund, made up of equal representation between developed and developing countries. Clearly, this is a proposal from developed countries. With 80 per cent of the world's population in the developing countries, an 'equitable representation' would look somewhat different from the current 50/50 split. The implication of this arrangement for Africa needs to be closely monitored by the continent's policymakers with a view to ensuring that non-African members have an accurate understanding of the continent's concerns with regard to climate change. This implies a need for better networking and communications with the full membership of the board; and

(e) The Cancún Agreements also endorse a continuing role for the CDM and other market-based mechanisms for meeting annex-I targets. The Agreements also give explicit directives for channelling CDM 'investments' into 'environmentally-sound and sustainable emission reduction projects'. Policymakers in Africa are likely to support this new development in the CDM framework. In addition, carbon dioxide capture and storage (CCS) has been approved as an eligible project type under the CDM, offering special recognition of the situations of Central and Eastern European countries and Turkey. This could have negative implications for Africa given that coal technology is not widely used across the continent, with the exception of South Africa and a small number of other countries. CCS is not an African agenda but as it occupies a large portion of the carbon market, Africa could end up losing out on yet another round of CDM finance.

## **VIII. TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFER**

25. The Cancún Agreements confirmed the importance of promoting and enhancing national and international action on the development and transfer of environmentally-sound technologies to developing countries to support mitigation and adaptation actions. To this end, a new technology mechanism was established to elevate the importance of development and deployment of clean technologies under the UNFCCC. This new technology mechanism was composed of the Technology Executive Committee (TEC) and a Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN). The function of the TEC was to provide an overview of technology needs and analysis of policy and technical issues.

That of the CTCN was to facilitate a range of networks, organizations and initiatives with a view to engaging participants effectively, at the request of developing countries.

*Implications for Africa*

26. The following two areas of discussion are important issues in technology development and transfer:

(a) There are opportunities for Africa through the CTCN. There is already a similar entity to this in Africa. The African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC), which is the knowledge and policy hub of the ClimDev-Africa programme, is designed to address the need for greatly improved climate information for Africa and also to strengthen the use of such information (and analysis) for decision-making. Under the ClimDev-Africa programme, it may be possible to expand the scope of the service to include development, deployment and diffusion of environmentally-sound technologies and know-how in Africa; and

(b) There is no mention of intellectual property rights (IPRs) in the Cancún Agreements. Developing countries have argued that IPRs have an important influence over their ability (or inability) to have access to climate-friendly technologies. African policymakers and negotiators will need to carefully study and obtain a sense of how people in Africa will have access to new and improved technologies for adaptation and mitigation. It is important that this issue be informed by the evidence on the ground as to what level of access there is to technologies, and how this is impacted by the existing IPR regime. This may require a technology needs assessment carried out across the region, matching needs with available technologies outside of the IPR regime.