

An Analysis of the UN Climate Change Conference in Bangkok, Thailand April 3-8, 2011

Jessica Boyle

The sixteenth session of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP) and the fourteenth session of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention (AWG-LCA), as well as workshops pursuant to the Cancun Agreements, took place from Sunday, April 3, through Friday, April 8, 2011 in Bangkok, Thailand. About 2,000 participants from 175 countries, including government delegates, representatives from business and industry, environmental organizations and research institutions, attended the Bangkok climate talks.

Going into this round, many Parties had hoped that the goodwill and constructive sentiments of Cancun would carry over into the first negotiations of 2011. But the tone in Bangkok signalled that the “honeymoon was over” in the eyes of many. Unfortunately, substantive formal negotiations under either the AWG-KP or AWG-LCA tracks did not take place over the week, as circular discussions marred progress in the AWG-KP track, while disagreement over the meeting agenda hindered negotiations from even beginning in the AWG-LCA.

Progress in the negotiations was in some ways held hostage to a procedural ploy, whereby many developed countries wanted to begin working to fill out the Cancun Agreements and establish further work programmes therein, while many developing countries wanted an immediate decision on the fate of the Kyoto Protocol and its potential second commitment period (to begin in 2012) before participating in further discussions under either track. As such, under the AWG-LCA, much of the week was spent debating the main elements of the meeting’s agenda and whether it should include the building blocks from the Bali Action Plan that was agreed in 2007 or only what was agreed to in the Cancun Agreements, or both. One delegate with a long history in the negotiations observed that a negotiating session had not been “wasted like this” since the first meeting following Kyoto when Parties had to begin determining how to implement the Kyoto Protocol.

The Group of 77 (G77) and China presented an agenda that strongly reflected the Bali Action Plan, plus additional issues like the legal form of the agreement, a work programme for the year and a review of the adequacy of the long-term global goals. The United States expressed

that the agenda should only address what was agreed to in Cancun, while the European Union (EU) and Umbrella Group¹ stressed the importance of being flexible for the sake of moving forward.

Late in the evening on the final day of negotiations, a compromise agenda was finally agreed to under the AWG-LCA, reflecting both key elements of the Cancun Agreements, such as financing, nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs) and technology transfer, while also addressing key elements of the Bali Action Plan (and key priorities for developing countries) such as adaptation, capacity building and discussions of the legal form of a post-2012 agreement.

However, many Parties came out of the talks extremely discouraged by the lack of progress made over the week and the seeming loss of willingness to move forward using the Cancun Agreements as a framework to build upon for agreement in Durban. As the AWG-KP Chair stated in the closing plenary, there were a “significant number of people unemployed” at the negotiations in Bangkok—referring to the fact that many negotiators were unable to move forward on substantive issues with deadlock on the agenda. Negotiators remain hopeful that with the agenda (finally) agreed upon, Parties can get back to business at the next negotiating session in Bonn, Germany June 6–17, 2011.

Discussions under the AWG-KP

Given the agenda issues plaguing the AWG-LCA all week, the AWG-KP was the only group able to formally meet in Bangkok. In what discussions did go on, the big questions revolved around what is being referred to as the “numbers versus rules” debate. In this context, “numbers” refer to mitigation commitments by developed countries, whereas “rules” refer to the architecture, modalities and requirements that will characterize these commitments within a post-2012 agreement. In the case of AWG-KP discussions, this post-2012 agreement is intended to take the form of a second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol.

Essentially, the “numbers” debate is seen as a political discussion, while the “rules” are seen as more technical in nature. The key goal for many Parties within AWG-KP discussions moving forward is to avoid a gap between the current commitment period (referred to as CP1, which ends in December 2011) and a second commitment period (CP2) from January 2012 onwards. Developing countries want assurance that there is not going to be what they view as a “vacuum” after the end of the first commitment period, and to these Parties a second commitment period is the only possible framework for moving forward given the uncertainty around the form and nature of an agreement under the AWG-LCA.

However, the nature of the discussions on “numbers versus rules” has led to something of a chicken and egg scenario, and very circular negotiations. Non-Annex Parties I (i.e., developing country Parties) want Annex I Parties (i.e., developed country Parties) to bring forth their numbers (commitments) so that clarity may be achieved over the future of the Kyoto Protocol. Developing countries want insurance that there will be a scaled-up, or at the very least a maintained, level of ambition and commitments from Annex I countries. However, most Annex I countries are unwilling to do this before having a clear sense of the “rules” surrounding their commitments. The EU likened the request to “accepting a new job at a set salary without knowing the terms of reference of the position.” In Bangkok, developing countries wanted to discuss the necessary pre-conditions for countries to agree to a second commitment period, but most developed countries were unable to answer this question without understanding the potential outcomes under the AWG-LCA track.

¹ Although there is no formal list, the Umbrella Group is usually made up of Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the United States.

Many developing country Parties did not want to continue with any form of “technical” talks on the rules without resolving the political issue of commitments under CP2, while the inverse was true for developed countries. The Alliance of Small Islands States (AOSIS) called for a ministerial meeting to be held before Bonn to determine political will and the mitigation targets under CP2 before moving forward with any further negotiations. The tone in the negotiations and insistence on clarifying CP2 is not constructive in working towards the goal of a broader international agreement covering all major emitters, as is being discussed within the AWG-LCA track. There is also the danger that developing countries’ insistence that developed countries come forward with their targets could result in the withdrawal of developed country support for CP2 altogether. It has also led to a deadlock in the negotiations and very circular discussions over the week in Bangkok.

While there is no country that is fundamentally opposed to a second commitment period in theory, whether they will individually participate is another issue. Discussions *did* help clarify the positions of some key countries in this regard. Japan and Russia have both signalled that they will *not* join a second round of commitments under the Kyoto Protocol. Russia has made it clear it prefers a pledge-and-review system outcome covering all major emitters, under the AWG-LCA. Japan’s reasoning for distancing itself from CP2 is multifaceted, but is largely a result of the recent natural disasters that struck the country. Japan expressed its commitment in the immediate term to rebuilding their economy, and is thus unable to commit the necessary capacity to implementing emission reduction policies. Even more critical is the fact that Japan is unwilling to commit given the potential impacts of the disaster on their emission levels and energy portfolio. In the immediate term, nuclear shutdowns will lead to increased use of other (and more carbon-intensive) energy sources like coal and fossil fuels, but may also have a longer-term impact if safety concerns over the use of nuclear energy lead to a more permanent shift away from that energy source.

Two fundamental issues remain when considering the future of the Kyoto Protocol. First, the United States is not and will never be covered under the agreement. Second, given the structure of the Kyoto Protocol, non-Annex I emerging economies (i.e., Brazil, South Africa, India and China—the BASIC countries) are not required to take on binding emissions reductions targets. This is of course one of the reasons why these countries support the continuation of the Kyoto Protocol, and the main reason why the United States wants to see a broader agreement reached, covering all major emitters. For both of these reasons, it is clear that a second commitment period would likely not lead to the levels of emissions reductions necessary to adequately address climate change, according to the science. Nevertheless, to many least-developed countries, the Kyoto Protocol remains the only option for moving forward. Given the persistent divergence of views amongst Parties, it is certain that discussions on the key themes of numbers and rules will continue to take place, and hopefully see progress, in Bonn this June.

On the Issues...

Resolution of the Two-Track Negotiations

Inherently connected to the discussion of “numbers versus rules” under the Kyoto Protocol track is the broader discussion of the potential resolution of the two negotiating tracks. Though numerous developing countries insist that there be no overlap or connection between discussions under the two “separate” tracks, it remains the case that for many developed countries the outcomes are very closely connected and very much depend on one another. The EU and Umbrella Group countries (including Canada and Australia) were very vocal in Bangkok about the need to have discussions between the two tracks and about the fact that outcomes in each are by no means mutually exclusive.

Given the tone in Bangkok, it is very clear that the potential for bridging the gap between the two negotiating tracks is as unlikely as ever. One of the key reasons why the Cancun Agreements avoided a complete breakdown in the negotiations was that a decision on the fate of both the AWG-KP and the AWG-LCA was ostensibly put off until COP 17 in Durban. However, Durban marks the end of the road for the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. This fact is becoming increasingly evident, in that there are more and more references to the AWG-KP in the AWG-LCA track, and vice-versa. The G77 and China remain vehemently opposed to any discussion between the two tracks, for many of the reasons explained above. The United States remains clear that they will only be willing to join a legal agreement if it provides for “symmetrical” requirements between developed and major emerging economies. In this way, the architecture of the Kyoto Protocol (i.e., no binding reductions required from non-Annex I countries) is not, and never will be, an acceptable framework for a post-2012 agreement.

Perhaps one of the most significant developments in terms of the post-2012 regime took place outside of the negotiations. Last week, United States Climate Envoy Todd Stern (while in New York, not Bangkok) gave a speech in which he remarked that reaching an international, legally binding climate agreement was “unrealistic” and “not doable.”² While the actual text of Stern’s speech was less severe than portrayed in original reporting, the remarks certainly did not go over well in Bangkok. The speech was seen by many as akin to “pouring salt on the wound” for developing countries concerned about a potential vacuum after 2012, and was not constructive for hopes of a legally binding outcome under the AWG-LCA, as it only served to reinvigorate support for a second commitment period under Kyoto Protocol.

The hope for developed countries is that there is only one internationally agreed-upon outcome for 2012. However, many countries remain non-committal as to whether or not they see this taking the form of a second commitment period under the AWG-KP track, or a broader agreement under the AWG-LCA track. It is unlikely that developed countries would be willing to take on a second commitment period without the United States being covered in some way. Based on the discussions in Bangkok, it seems increasingly likely that the answer to the “two tracks” question will not come until the final hours of Durban, if at all.

Mitigation

On the perennially fundamental issue of mitigation, the Bangkok talks provided some further clarification on country positions and ambitions. Pre-session workshops on developed country emission reduction targets (or “*quantified economy-wide emission reduction targets*”) provided perspectives on developed country assumptions and conditions relating to the mitigation commitments made under the Cancun Agreements, in many cases carried over from the Copenhagen Accord.

Though the workshops were decidedly not negotiations, positions were closely reflected in the content and tone of many country presentations. In all, presentations were given by the EU, G77 and China, Norway, Australia, France, the United States, Switzerland, AOSIS, New Zealand, Germany, the Russian Federation, India, Sweden, Japan, Poland, Bolivia, the United Kingdom, Australia and Iceland.³

² See full story: Efstathiou, J. (2011, April 6). U.S. Cites Flaws in UN’s Climate Talks, Says Treaty Effort ‘Unworkable.’ Retrieved from: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-04-06/u-s-envoy-says-global-warming-treaty-not-needed-to-combat-climate-change.html>

³ All country presentations and further information can be retrieved from: <http://unfccc.int/meetings/awg/items/5928.php>

Developed country Parties including the EU, United States, Norway and Australia focused on the domestic emission reduction targets they have committed to, while the G77 and China presented their view on the assumptions and conditions they view as necessary to a future agreement, including that the Kyoto Protocol be the reference for comparability and ambition. AOSIS, Bolivia and other developing country Parties' presentations focused on the gap between current pledges and aggregate reductions required to keep average global temperature increase at or below 2°C. These Parties offered their criticism and analysis of current action (or lack thereof in many of their opinions), and raised significant concerns over the "gigatonne gap" between current pledges and what is needed to remain below 2°C. For developing countries, developed countries that submitted targets under Cancun Agreements are expected to live up to their commitments.

Amidst the criticism, the EU and Indonesia received praise for making clarifications on their pledges, which were seen as increasing their levels of ambition. The EU, for instance, is including international aviation emissions as part of its Emissions Trading Scheme from 2012 onwards.

But for many country pledges, there remain critical conditions, "pre-conditions," and assumptions that underlie the pledges and are a cause of scepticism amongst many developing country Parties. For example, numerous developed countries have agreed to commit to their respective targets, assuming a "legally binding international agreement" is in place. While this is certainly the hoped-for outcome for the post-2012 regime, it is unclear what becomes of these commitments if a "pledge-and-review" or bottom-up system is the path chosen in Durban.

Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs)

NAMAs have become the main vehicle for discussions of mitigation efforts in developing countries. NAMAs—actions to be taken in developing countries, often with the support of developed countries—have largely been a positive and constructive element in the negotiations, as there has been increasing momentum and a willingness on the part of many developing countries to take on policies, strategies and plans for mitigation and low-carbon development. Developed countries also support the development of NAMAs, as in many cases they can provide offset and financing opportunities in developing countries.

A pre-session workshop was held to help understand the diversity of mitigation actions submitted by Parties thus far, the underlying assumptions therein and any support needed for implementation of these actions. Presentations were given by Mexico, China, Ghana, India, Republic of Korea, Peru, AOSIS, Singapore, South Africa, Australia, Marshall Islands, Bangladesh and Brazil, along with a select number of observer organizations.⁴ The breadth and depth of potential NAMAs being considered across various sectors, including transportation, energy efficiency and agriculture, is encouraging and speaks to the substantial momentum behind the mechanisms.

The workshops were very useful in sensitizing other Parties (and observers) to the broad range of activities already taking place, and the potential actions moving forward. However, it is also evident that the concept is still in its very early stages, and a number of challenges remain. The very definition of NAMAs remains vague; to some countries NAMAs are simply mitigation targets, whereas to others they are particular policy actions, programs, approaches, and so forth. In this way, there are divergent views on the nature of such actions, insofar as there is a distinction made by several developing country Parties between *voluntary* unilateral actions taken and those requiring financial support from developed countries. In this distinction, there are some Parties calling for a NAMA registry to capture those

⁴ All country presentations and further information can be retrieved from: <http://unfccc.int/meetings/awg/items/5928.php>

actions requiring support (as also included in the Cancun Agreements), whereas unilateral/unsupported actions could be included in an Annex, similar to the way in which developed country mitigation targets are presented in the Cancun Agreements. There could be potential for over-complication and inefficiencies in the NAMA architecture if a consistent approach is not agreed upon.

It is also clear that while many countries are willing to take mitigation action through NAMAs, these actions remain *voluntary*, a point stressed on numerous occasions by major developing economies like China and India. Very little discussion is publically taking place around the measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) aspects of NAMAs. This does not bode well for the United States' (and other developed countries') insistence that a future legally binding agreement will only come to pass if there are consistent requirements on both developed and major developing countries in terms of mitigation commitments.

Financing

Financing remains a key question in the climate negotiations. The lack of negotiating time in Bangkok meant that little clarity was gained on the operationalization of the Green Climate Fund, as established in the Cancun Agreements, or on country commitments to the fast-start financing goal of US\$30 billion for 2011 and 2012.

On fast-start financing, developed countries have been invited to submit a complete overview of fast-start funding to the UN Climate Change Secretariat by May 1, 2011, including ways in which developing countries can access these resources. These submissions will no doubt set the tone for the June negotiating session. Given the current situation in the United States, it is entirely likely that the United States will not be able to live up to its fast-track financing commitments for 2011, and there is growing concern that the same will be true for 2012. The inability of the United States to meet its commitments could result in a domino effect, with other countries withdrawing their support as well. At this point, the more immediate concern is not necessarily a question of quantity (i.e., that financing pledges will not be made), but of quality (i.e., that the pledges will not be "new and additional"). There are also concerns that countries have different definitions of additionality in the provision of fast-start financing.

On long-term financing, one will recall that the Cancun Agreements established the Green Climate Fund, to be designated as a financing mechanism under the Convention. It reaffirmed the goal of US\$100 billion in financing to address the needs of developing countries first put forward at COP 15 in Copenhagen. No further clarity came out of the Bangkok talks in terms of the establishment of modalities of the Fund, or availability of financing.

The Cancun decision had also established a Transitional Committee for the Fund, comprised of 40 members, with 15 members from developed country Parties and 25 members from developing country Parties. The committee is to develop a number of "operational documents" for the Green Climate Fund to be presented to negotiators at COP 17. The first meeting of the Transitional Committee will take place April 28-29, 2011 in Mexico City. Canada is a member of the committee, represented by Rob Stewart, Assistant Deputy Minister of the International Trade and Finance Branch at Finance Canada.

In Bangkok, several appeals were also made by the Secretariat for increased funding from Parties, particularly if the Secretariat is to be relied upon to facilitate the implementation of key elements/mechanisms under the Cancun Agreements. There was no discussion in Bangkok about the potential role of the private sector in this regard, which is viewed by some as a missed opportunity, and characteristic of the broader lack of input from the private sector within

the negotiations. There is growing concern that the expectations placed on the Secretariat are beginning to outweigh their capacity to deliver due to financing constraints. The current fiscal crisis has impacted country contributions to the Secretariat, and while there is hope such issues are not long term, the timing is of serious concern given the hopes to operationalize several mechanisms under the Cancun Agreements by 2012.

Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV)

Considering the fact that MRV and finance have been key stumbling blocks in the past, it is perhaps surprising that little mention was made of MRV over the course of the Bangkok talks. However, this is likely much more the result of the lack of substantive negotiations in Bangkok than any resolution of the core issues surrounding MRV, particularly between the United States and China.

Much like their views on mitigation commitments, the United States remains insistent that any MRV requirements on developed countries must be “symmetrical” with those of developing countries. That is to say, major developing countries (namely the BASIC countries) should face the same stringency of MRV requirements as developed countries. The United States would allow for differentiation of MRV requirements amongst developing countries, recognizing that both capacity and availability of information greatly vary between the BASIC countries and least-developed countries, for example. In this way, there is general consensus around the need for a tiered approach to the burden of reporting under any future MRV regime.

The United States had pushed for a detailed work plan on MRV to be included on the agenda coming out of Bangkok. In the end, this was not the case, given opposition from China and the general desire of other Parties to focus on other core issues that were generally agreed upon out of the Cancun Agreements and leave the more politically sensitive issue of MRV for later discussions. Though MRV is not explicitly on the current agenda, it will most certainly continue to be discussed under broader mitigation and financing discussions, and is likely to remain a key stumbling block if compromise is not reached at or before Durban.

There are a number of parallel initiatives and informal discussions on MRV taking place outside of the negotiations, including the Germany/South Africa Partnership on mitigation and MRV. The initiative met in Bangkok and plans to meet again in Bonn this June. Initiatives such as this allow for informal negotiations to constructively feed into the formal talks and work through the key challenges in a less “political” venue, in the hopes of bridging gaps in the negotiations. There is also a strong push to increase capacity amongst developing countries so that rules, whenever they may be agreed upon, are not overly burdensome but instead help facilitate a process that is useful and efficient at both the national and international levels.

Technology

The importance of promoting and enhancing national and international cooperative action on the development and transfer of technologies to enhance both adaptation and mitigation actions was recognized in the Cancun Agreements, through the establishment of a Technology Mechanism. According to the Agreements, the mechanism is to consist of a Technology Executive Committee (TEC) to provide technical, analytical and policy support along with a Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN) to “facilitate national, regional, sectoral and international technology networks, organizations and initiatives with a view to engaging the participants of the network.”⁵

⁵ UNFCCC (2011, March 15). *Report of the Conference of the Parties on its sixteenth session, held in Cancun from 29 November to 10 December 2010 Addendum: Part Two*, Section 117, p. 19, retrieved from: <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2010/cop16/eng/07a01.pdf>

The Cancun Agreements also requested that an expert workshop be held to begin working through Parties' views on the establishment of the TEC, the CTCN, and their respective functions and governance structures. As such, a pre-session workshop was held in the days prior to the Bangkok negotiations. Presentations were delivered by a number of developed and developing country Parties, as well as observer organizations.⁶ From the presentations, it is clear that divergent views remain on the relationship between these new institutions, their governance and links with a future financial mechanism. Furthermore, it is concerning to see the lack of (or insufficient) engagement of the private sector in these discussions.

There was no mention of intellectual property rights (IPRs) in the Cancun Agreements, but it remains a fundamental area of concern in technology discussions. In the workshop, the United States made it very clear that it would not address IPR concerns in these discussions, whereas many developing countries are calling on the future technology mechanism to facilitate the diffusion of technology regardless of developed country concerns over IPRs. Without a resolution in these key issues, it seems unlikely that a new technology mechanism will be "fully operational by 2012" as agreed to in Cancun.

Nonetheless, Parties and relevant actors are beginning to think through the various mechanisms proposed under the Cancun Agreements and how they may be operationalized, which is certainly a constructive step forward in the negotiations. Technology development and transfer are included on the compromise agenda reached in Bangkok, thus formal negotiations are very likely to take place in Bonn.

Adaptation

No substantive progress was made on adaptation at the Bangkok negotiations. The *Cancun Adaptation Framework* encompassed a suite of activities, the most notable of which being the establishment of an Adaptation Committee charged with providing technical support and guidance to Parties; strengthening, consolidating and enhancing information sharing; strengthening engagement with various international organizations; providing recommendations on best practices; and identifying gaps in policy and practice.

Submissions of views on the architecture, functions and modalities for the Adaptation Committee were made by a number of Parties earlier this year.⁷ There was hope that discussion of these proposals would take place in Bangkok. Though this was not the case, adaptation did make it onto the compromise agenda, so it is likely that discussions will now take place at the next session. Similar to discussions around financing, and technology, the structure, governance and terms of reference for an adaptation mechanism remain to be fully negotiated, a process that will no doubt continue towards Durban and beyond.

REDD+

As with many of the other substantive elements of the Cancun Agreements, no formal discussions took place in Bangkok on reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries, including conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon sinks (known as REDD+). The outcomes of Cancun provided a foundation for the future of the initiative and set out a framework for continuing on with the phased

⁶ All country presentations and further information can be retrieved from: <http://unfccc.int/meetings/awg/items/5928.php>

⁷ Submissions made by 34 country Parties can be retrieved from: http://maindb.unfccc.int/library/view_pdf.pl?url=http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2011/awglca14/eng/misc01.pdf

approach to implementation at the national level. There was hope heading into Bangkok that the session would provide an opportunity to continue addressing the relevant elements of the REDD+ framework under the Cancun Agreements; instead, most REDD+ negotiators had very little to do over the week session.

A meeting of the REDD+ Partnership (serving as an interim platform for its partner countries to scale-up actions and finance on REDD+) on the margins of the Bangkok negotiations was useful in serving as a venue for exchanges of views, particularly given the lack of such opportunities in the negotiations at this round. While REDD+ remains one of the most advanced elements of a post-2012 climate regime, it is becoming increasingly clear that the proliferation of activities around REDD+ also brings about capacity, coordination and efficiency concerns. The broad range of actors and stakeholders, financing commitments and mechanisms, and varying degrees of capacity and policy development makes for a dynamic yet complex situation. Another meeting of the REDD+ Partnership will take place in Bonn this June.

Agriculture

The Cancun Agreements did not include any language on agriculture, due to the fact that agriculture had previously been grouped with discussions of bunker fuels under the umbrella of “sectoral approaches” to mitigation. Given strong opposition to potential levies on bunker fuels by exporting countries such as Saudi Arabia, the sectoral approaches debate remained stalled through Cancun. In Bangkok, New Zealand, supported by Canada and Australia, requested agriculture be put on the agenda as a separate discussion item. Though it appeared on earlier drafts of the agenda, agriculture was not on the final “compromise” agenda that was agreed upon in the final hours of the negotiating session.

While there has been a long-standing understanding of the mitigation potential in agriculture on the part of developed countries (including Canada, as above), there is also growing recognition amongst developing country Parties that agriculture holds a great deal of adaptation potential as well. In this sense, there is a two-pronged approach taking place behind the scenes to get agriculture back on the agenda in mitigation discussions (mainly supported by developed countries) and adaptation (lead by developing countries like Kenya), including agriculture’s links to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+). However, a critical mass of support from Parties is still needed, and it remains a challenge to decouple agriculture discussions from the broader “sectoral approaches” discussions, which remain contentious due to the bunker fuels issue.

Looking towards Durban

The Bangkok session was viewed by many Parties as a lost opportunity for negotiating key elements of the Cancun Agreements, an increasingly urgent undertaking as Durban quickly approaches. One can hope that the Bangkok session marks a low point, and not the new norm for 2011 negotiations. However, there is little evidence to suggest that things will change between now and the next session.

The June sessions in Bonn will be burdened with a heavy agenda, but with a compromise agenda now set, perhaps some of the goodwill and inclusivity that characterized Cancun will return. However, with Durban fast approaching, serious concerns remain. South Africa, as the incoming COP president, was disconcertingly quiet in Bangkok, while Mexico maintained its leadership role. There is reluctance to hand over the presidency at this point given serious capacity and

financial concerns for South Africa, as well as within the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change Secretariat. Bonn will mark another opportunity for the incoming presidency to take the stage and exert leadership, though it remains to be seen if this will indeed be the case.

It was announced in Bangkok that, following the June Bonn meeting, an additional intercessional meeting will be held in late September or early October. The rumoured host is the United Arab Emirates, though this will not be confirmed until the June session. The tone in Bangkok was less than encouraging, but cautious optimism remains that the next two sessions before Durban will see more substantive progress. If not, the hopes of reaching any semblance of a comprehensive agreement at COP 17 could be dashed. Let's hope this is not the case.

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Head Office

161 Portage Avenue East, 6th Floor, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3B 0Y4

Tel: +1 (204) 958-7700 | Fax: +1 (204) 958-7710 | Website: www.iisd.org

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