

Bonn Climate Change Conference: On the road to Warsaw without a map

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Bonn Climate Change Conference, June 3–14, 2013

Just a month after parties met in Bonn for a second session of the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP 2), negotiators came together for their annual summer negotiating session in Bonn. The negotiating session was to include the 38th sessions of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technical Advice (SBSTA), as well as a resumed second session of the ADP.

The lack of substantive outcomes or progress in Bonn has many feeling déjà vu. With no negotiating sessions left before the 19th Conference of the Parties (COP 19), negotiators seem only marginally closer to establishing a clear roadmap forward for a post-Kyoto agreement that includes all major emitters and can be agreed upon by 2015 for implementation by 2020. The likelihood of sticking to these timelines grows more unlikely with each session that passes without a significant breakthrough.

As always, **IISD's Reporting Services** provided in-depth on-the-ground reporting of the negotiations and selected side events. Full coverage can be accessed [here](#).

High-Level Outcomes

Constructive yet cyclical discussions under the ADP. The ADP represents the key forum for discussions of a future agreement that includes all major emitters. The talks are now divided into two streams:

- Workstream 1 is focused on the elements of a post-2020 framework (for agreement in 2015).
- Workstream 2 is focused on enhancing ambition in the near term and bridging the gap to 2020.

Under both tracks, discussions remain extremely broad and vague, and no negotiating text is under consideration yet. This situation makes it very difficult to pin down compromises on key issues, including the nature of mitigation commitments, transparency and accountability (i.e., accounting rules), and financing. As well, fault lines between key parties on the legal nature of a future agreement seem no closer to being bridged. Several developing countries (especially least developed countries) and the European Union are pushing a strong legal option, while most major economies (including the United States, China and India) prefer a much more “dynamic” agreement with a more loosely defined legal basis.

Mixed messages under SBSTA and many unresolved issues. With the closure of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA) in Doha, many of the unresolved issues and key elements likely to be a part of a future agreement—including nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs), REDD+,¹ adaptation and technology—now fall under the SBSTA. As a result, SBSTA had over 20 agenda items for the Bonn session, with progress on some issues (like REDD+ and agriculture) and little to none on others (like financing). No decisions came out of the SBSTA sessions in Bonn, in part because of the close linkages between them and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI), which did not actually convene in Bonn.

An agenda dispute that stopped SBI from convening. Overshadowing any positive tones elsewhere in the negotiations was the fact that the SBI never actually met in Bonn due to a stalemate over the agenda. On the first day of talks, Russia (supported by Belarus and the Ukraine) expressed its concern with the “deficiencies in the UNFCCC application of UN system rules of procedure, norms and principles.” As noted in IISD’s report about week one, the stalemate stemmed from Russia’s vocal opposition to the gavelling through of the Doha Agreements at COP 18. The countries wanted an agenda item to discuss this action, as Russia claimed it went against the rules of “consensus” that characterize the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Of course, COP 18 is not the first time this has happened, with similar scenarios having occurred in Cancun, Copenhagen and even Kyoto. Parties were unable to reach a compromise in Bonn and, as a result, a number of pressing issues under the SBI went unaddressed. The SBI is now expected to undertake three weeks’ worth of work in a single week at COP 19, though some remain concerned the agenda issue could be reintroduced in Warsaw.

Slow and Steady Wins the Race?

What is perhaps most worrying is the palpable lack of urgency within the talks. Low expectations for COP 19 in Warsaw remain, despite recent reports that atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide now exceed 400 parts per million, the highest in human history. While the talks were ongoing in Bonn, other parts of Germany and Central Europe were dealing with some of the worst flooding in history. As one developing country negotiator expressed, “We don’t need

¹ REDD+ refers to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries.

to go to the small islands, just look what's happening in Germany, Austria...and you can see the damage that is being caused." Despite the clear signals, the formal process continues to move at a strikingly slow pace.

Nonetheless, key dynamics continue to take shape under the various negotiating bodies, workshops and informal consultations. Observations coming out of Bonn on a number of key issues include:

- **Financing.** Little time was dedicated to discussions of financing in Bonn, despite it being one of the most pressing near-term issues for the talks. With the formal end of the fast-start period this year, many developing countries are pressing for additional mid-term commitments from parties to fill in the mid-term gap to 2020. There is also a growing tension around the extent to which additional developed country commitments to climate finance will be commensurate with mitigation commitments from major emerging economies, or even tied directly to a future agreement. As part of a future agreement, the Green Climate Fund is expected to play an important role in mobilizing and programming climate finance, although it is facing a number of issues related to design, governance and the provision of funds. The next Green Climate Fund board meeting will be held at the end of June, though no major decisions are expected in the near term.
- **Technology.** Following the agreement to establish a Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN) at COP 17 in Cancun, the past few years have been focused on operationalizing the new mechanism. With a large consortium (led by the United Nations Environment Programme) having been named the host of the CTCN last year, discussions at this session made incremental progress related to operational elements, including the modalities and procedures of the CTCN, its advisory board, and the nomination of National Designated Entities intended to facilitate support for developing countries.
- **Loss and damage.** As noted in IISD's commentary from COP 18 and report on week one of Bonn, calls from developing countries to establish a loss and damage mechanism continue to rise. A number of developing countries want to see compensation for climate impacts provided by developed countries historically responsible for emissions. Despite the lack of feasibility from both methodological and political perspectives, discussions continued, with no detailed proposals considered or decisions taken.
- **REDD+.** Negotiations on reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, plus the role of forest conservation, progressed in Bonn. REDD+ continues to be seen by many as a "shining star" in the negotiations, and a key part of a 2020 agreement. That said, on the ground, many are wary of what a lack of broader progress could imply for REDD+ given its current lack of a "home" in any agreement. Nonetheless, in Bonn, parties agreed on a series of draft decisions on various technical, methodological and reporting issues that will be forwarded for agreement in Warsaw.

As noted in our week one report, Canada remained quiet in formal plenaries and most negotiations, as usual, with the exception of supporting calls for a resolution of SBI's agenda stalemate at the beginning of week two. Canada does play a strong facilitative role, as co-facilitators of particular elements of REDD+, adaptation and greenhouse gas data discussions. Canada has also shown increased engagement in the ever-expanding [Climate and Clean Air Coalition](#) (CCAC) to address short-lived climate pollutants. As a founding member, Canada recently announced an additional \$10 million dollars in support to the CCAC (as a 2012 fast-start contribution), and participated in a side event in Bonn.² IISD is also a non-state partner of the CCAC.

² Written and video coverage of the event is available at: <http://www.iisd.ca/climate/sb38/enbots/>

Next Stop: Warsaw

As we have commented many times before, each COP does not need to end with a major agreement or milestone. A “working level” COP could be very helpful in operationalizing a number of the previously agreed-upon elements, and ensuring they effectively form the building blocks of a post-2020 agreement. This includes key issues such as financing, adaptation, technology and capacity building. However, when interim negotiating sessions do not make significant progress (such as was the case in Bonn), the chances of meeting already lowered expectations for COP are further diminished.

What continues to be the good news story in the negotiations is the increasingly bottom-up nature of the discussions. Though this has been the case since Copenhagen, we continue to see the driving forces of subnational and regional actions recognized within the formal negotiations, as well as an ever-expanding set of mechanisms and approaches that are likely to form the building blocks of post-2020 climate change governance.

In order for a future agreement to be inclusive and at all effective, it will need to be flexible and take into consideration the growing patchwork of policies, regulatory markets and approaches emerging around the world. While many parties (particularly least developed countries and small island states) continue to support a strong, legally binding architecture for a future agreement, there is a growing recognition that this should not preclude the inclusion of a broad range of governance approaches and mechanisms (both inside and outside of the UNFCCC) to help reach ambitious mitigation goals and meet pressing adaptation needs.

Ensuring that positive developments are not lost to the considerable divisions that remain is a critical step in moving forward. Furthermore, parties must rediscover a sense of urgency in order to shift the high-level and rather vague discussions that continue under the ADP into a concrete negotiation around the text of a 2020 climate change agreement, for notional agreement in 2015.

IISD's Reporting Services Coverage of the Bonn Meetings

As always, IISD's Reporting Services provided in-depth on-the-ground reporting on the negotiations and selected side events. Coverage consisted of the following elements:

- **Daily written and photo coverage.** Daily *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* (ENB) publications from the 2013 Bonn sessions are available [here](#).
- **Daily video coverage.** For the first time, Bonn coverage included short video summaries of the day's proceedings, expert interviews and side event coverage. Daily videos can be accessed [here](#).
- **Selected side event coverage.** Through *ENB On the Side* (ENBOTS), IISD's Reporting Services provided coverage of selected side events in Bonn. Available [here](#).
- **Summary report and analysis.** ENB's full summary of the Bonn conference, including a brief commentary on the outcomes, is available [here](#).

ENB Mobile also provides easy access to IISD's Reporting Services site. The ENB Mobile App can be downloaded on Apple devices, or the site can be accessed [here](#).

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