

The Path to Paris, Part 1: Bonn Climate Change Conference March 10-14, 2014

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In the first negotiating session of 2014, Parties met in Bonn under the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP 2-4), tasked with identifying elements for a new, universal climate change agreement and identifying actions to increase ambition in the interim.

This meeting was the first opportunity for Parties to exchange views on the scope and nature of the post-2020 “intended nationally determined contributions” (INDCs) to be submitted by all countries by March 31, 2015. It was also the first of many technical workshops on policies, technologies, and cooperation with high mitigation potential that could be introduced in the short term.

A potential trouble spot emerged. While most developed countries shared their views on INDCs as mitigation commitments, the Group of 77/China and expressed their interest in bundling commitments on adaptation, mitigation, financing and other issues under INDCs. This bundling caught some off guard, and efforts by developed countries to focus on numbers were met with opposition. If the issues remain bundled for 2015, discussions could be complicated, with financing and mitigation being linked much more formally than in the past.

The March 2014 Bonn Climate Conference marks the halfway point in the life of the ADP. With time dwindling between this session and Paris, the period between now and COP-20 in Lima is crucial if a global, legally binding agreement is to be reached.

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

Defining Elements in Bonn

The primary objective of this meeting was to identify the elements of a future universal agreement on climate change, and to that end the session was a success. Under Workstream 1 of the ADP on a 2015 agreement, Parties provided submissions¹ and statements regarding their views on adaptation; mitigation; nationally determined contributions; finance; market mechanisms; transparency; ambition and equity; and technology and capacity building. What differentiated this session from previous ADP meetings were the detailed interventions outlining specifically what Parties would like to see in a new agreement and concrete suggestions for how these elements should be reflected.

Under Workstream 2, which is mandated to increase the level of ambition of all Parties in the pre-2020 period, technical expert meetings were convened on renewable energy and energy efficiency. These meetings highlighted current policies, practices, technology, finance and capacity building that could be further implemented by Parties and sub-national actors in the short-term to contribute to reduced emissions.

Intended Nationally Determined Contributions

At COP-19 in Warsaw, Parties agreed to either begin or intensify domestic preparations for intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs) towards a new climate change agreement and are expected to submit their INDCs by March 31, 2015.² The Bonn ADP meeting was the first opportunity for Parties to discuss their interpretation of the scope and definition of INDCs, and it was a useful exercise in bringing to light the divergent views on this concept, particularly given how divergent those views turned out to be.

While some developed countries such as the United States, Canada and New Zealand argued that INDCs refer solely to mitigation (i.e., the numbers), developing countries insisted that INDCs should also include adaptation, finance, technology transfer and other elements. This expanded definition has significant implications because it would require targets for adaptation, finance and other elements to be subject to measurement, reporting and verification, and assessed within the context of the goal of maintaining a global temperature increase below 2°C.

Another point of contention is the status of the contributions to be submitted by March 2015. Many view the INDCs not as final commitments, but as a first step in an iterative process. The EU, United States, and least developed countries (LDCs) urged Parties to put forward their most ambitious INDCs at the outset. However should the INDCs fall short of what is necessary to limit warming below 2°C, a process for increasing or “ratcheting-up” the level of ambition of contributions will be required.

Although Parties expressed divergent views on the nature and scope, there was general agreement that the INDCs should be transparent and comparable, and include information such as base year; time period; percentage of national emissions, sectors and gases covered; and contribution within the context of national circumstances.

¹ To date, 11 submissions have been made, outlining what Parties would like to see in a new agreement. Submissions have been received from the United States, Uzbekistan, European Union, Ukraine, Switzerland, China, Norway, New Zealand, Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDCs), the Association of Independent Latin American and Caribbean states (AILAC), and LDCs. They may be found at <http://unfccc.int/bodies/awg/items/7398.php>.

² The unofficial kickoff for the discussion of Canada’s post-2020 target development process will take place on March 24 in a federal-provincial-territorial meeting in Vancouver. We expect provinces in particular to be more closely engaged over the next 12 months as Canada will be looking for a collaborative approach to target setting. We expect that the federal target will be set based on federal actions, but also supported by provincial targets and strategies to ensure all actions underway or planned are accounted for.

At a workshop in Bonn, **presentations**³ were made by the EU, China, Thailand, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Ghana, Costa Rica, the United States, United Arab Emirates, and Trinidad and Tobago, sharing early experiences of their processes and challenges in preparing INDCs. The EU made its initial proposal of a 40 per cent greenhouse gas emissions reduction target by 2030, to be met by each EU country individually, and at least 27 per cent renewable energy by 2030, to be met cumulatively at the EU level. The EU also outlined its extensive and ongoing stakeholder engagement plan for developing its INDC.

As all countries embark on this important process, it will be crucial to determine a common or comparable framework for up-front information requirements for INDCs at the next Bonn Climate Conference in June 2014. It will also be important to weigh the pros and cons of considering more than just mitigation within INDCs. On the one hand, of course any new agreement will include adaptation, financing, capacity building and other means of implementation, but trying to force these into a concept intended for mitigation commitments may only serve to stall the process. On the other hand, considering all elements together under INDCs may build trust for those Parties worried that mitigation will be prioritized. It may also provide a way for those countries that will have difficulty making deep reduction commitments on mitigation, by allowing them to link mitigation efforts to strong finance and adaptation commitments.⁴

Workstream 2 and Subnational Engagement

Technical workshops were convened in Bonn on renewable energy and energy efficiency to address the pre-2020 ambition gap. **Presentations on renewable energy**⁵ were delivered by IRENA, China, the United States, Kenya, Ethiopia, Brazil, Germany, GCF, GEF, World Bank, ICLEI and many others. **Presentations on energy efficiency**⁶ were delivered by South Africa, Japan, Colombia, Singapore, Denmark, India, International Energy Agency, GEF, UNEP, Partnership on Sustainable Low Carbon Transport, C40 Cities and SE4All.

The topics for the next technical expert meetings at the June session in Bonn will be cities and the urban environment, land-use change, forests and agriculture. These expert meetings on topics with high mitigation potential will continue throughout the year with the aim of encouraging concrete new policies, action and cooperation to deal with climate change, to be showcased at COP 20 in Lima. This bottom-up approach to increase ambition offers significant opportunity for subnational engagement in the UNFCCC. Although this is a new process, and further reflection is needed on how to incorporate the outcomes into negotiations, there is a common recognition about the integral role that local government and industry have to play, especially in the pre-2020 period.

³ See http://unfccc.int/meetings/bonn_mar_2014/workshop/8106.php.

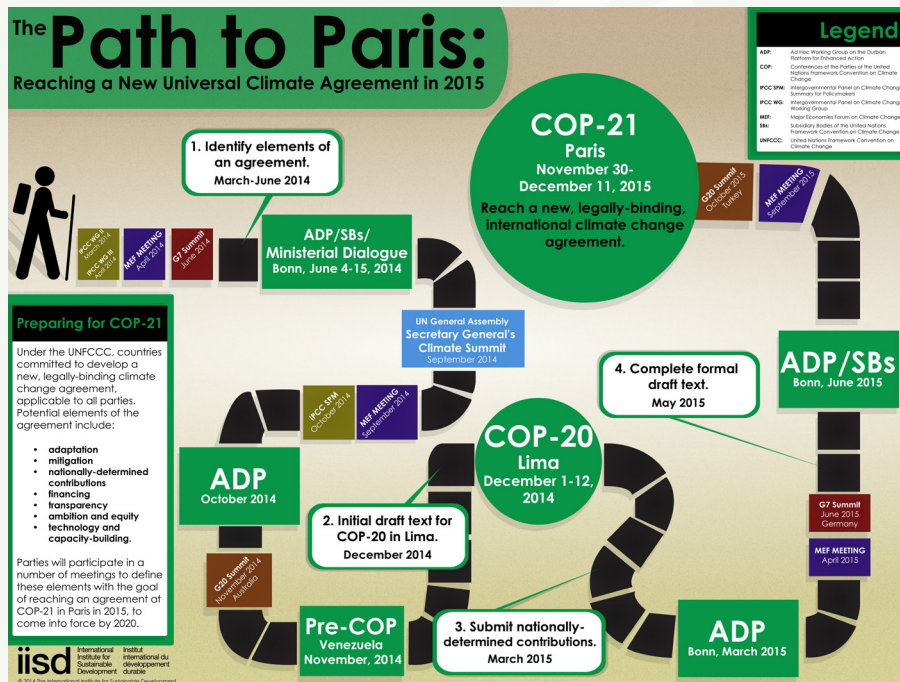
⁴ David Sawyer, personal communication March 22, 2014.

⁵ See <http://unfccc.int/bodies/awg/items/8112.php>.

⁶ See <http://unfccc.int/bodies/awg/items/8113.php>.

Next Steps

The March 2014 Bonn Climate Conference marks the halfway point in the life of the ADP. In the first two years, Parties spent a great deal of time exchanging views. The period between now and COP-20 in Lima is crucial if an agreement is to be reached in Paris. There are a number of UNFCCC and related meetings and milestones on the path to Paris.



- The next ADP session in Bonn will be from June 4-15, 2014, and a contact group will be convened to start negotiating text elaborating the elements of an agreement. There will also be a high-level round table on increased ambition on Kyoto Protocol commitments on Thursday, June 5 and a ministerial dialogue for enhanced action on Friday, June 6. These high-level meetings are important to increase political will and confidence in the process.
- SG Climate Summit will be held in New York September 22-23, 2014. Although this event is not part of the UNFCCC, it is aimed at catalyzing action by governments, business and civil society in delivering new commitments and substantial contributions towards a low-carbon economy.
- For COP-20, Parties are expected to have an initial draft text for negotiation. Progress in Lima will give a good indication of whether or not an agreement is possible in Paris.

March 21, 2014 marks the 20th anniversary of the UNFCCC entering into force. Much has been accomplished in this time, but it is a tough path ahead to an agreement in Paris.

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