

UN Climate Change Conference ends with an agreement

By Beatriz Eraso Puig, Climate Change Associate at WFUNA

The United Nations Climate Change Conference came to its end on December 15 in Bali, Indonesia. The ministers and high-level officials of 187 countries reached an agreement that launches the negotiations to adopt a new climate regime that will enter into force in 2013, after the expiration of the first phase of the Kyoto Protocol. They have set an agenda for the negotiations up to 2009, when the agreement should be presented in Copenhagen. Some of the key issues that will be discussed in the following two years will be: action for adaptation to climate change, ways to reduce greenhouse emissions, technology transfer and financing of adaptation and mitigation measures.

Mr Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) said that “this is a real breakthrough, a real opportunity for the international community to successfully fight climate change. Parties have recognised the urgency of action on climate change and have now provided the political response to what scientists have been telling us is needed”.

During the conference the Parties also agreed on the steps that have to be taken on a number of crucial issues for developing countries: adaptation, deforestation and technology transfer.

Governments agreed to launch the Kyoto's Protocol **Adaptation Fund** to finance adaptation projects in developing countries Parties through the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). The Global Environment Facility (GEF) will provide secretariat services and the World Bank will serve as trustee. The fund is currently worth 37 million USD, and this figure will increase 80-300 million USD in the following four years. But there was no agreement on other practical adaptation measures, so this issue will be in the agenda in the following meeting of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technical Advice in 2008.

The mandate of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) Expert Group has been extended, as it is critical to support LDCs in adaptation issues because of their low capacity to face this challenge.

The governments also reached a deal regarding the **reduction of emissions from deforestation in developing countries (REDD)**. It is a system to compensate developing countries for protecting their forests. The agreement will launch projects to reduce deforestation and forest degradation. The Parties are encouraged to support capacity building and take actions to reduce deforestation. This issue is especially important for local and indigenous people whose life depend on forests. Deforestation will be an important part of adaptation and mitigation strategies in the future climate change deal.

Finally, there was progress on the **technology** issue, one of the main concerns of developing countries. The GEF, together with international financial institutions and the private financing sector, will put together a new strategic program to scale up the investment for the transfer of adaptation and mitigation technology in order to reach the demands of developing countries. The objective is to do more demonstration projects and create an attractive environment for investment and the private transfer of technology.

Regarding this last issue, the mandate of the Expert Group on Technology Transfer has been extended for five more years. This group will work on performance indicators to monitor and evaluate progress on the development, deployment and transfer of technology. Their work will be an important input for the new climate change agreement.

On the opening of the high-level segment that took place during the last three days of the meeting, Mr Ban Ki-moon said “the time for equivocation is over. The science is clear. Climate change is happening. The impact is real. The time to act is now”. The Secretary General said that

every UN agency, fund and programme is committed and that the UN is determined to be part of the answer to climate change. They want to lead by example, so the UN system will move towards carbon neutrality.

During the two-week conference, there were more than 10,000 participants: 3,527 delegates from 188 parties and 3 observer states; 5,037 representatives of 349 NGOs; 1,497 members of the press from 530 media organizations. Some of the public figures that attended the conference were: Mr Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary General; Mr Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of Indonesia; Mr. Kevin Michael Rudd, Prime Minister of Australia; Mr. Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General of the UN for Economic and Social Affairs; Mr. Rajendra Pachauri, Chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; Mr. Robert Zoellick, President of the World Bank.

The decisions adopted are available online: http://unfccc.int/meetings/cop_13/items/4049.php
For more information: www.un.org/climatechange