



COMMENTS TO THE MEDIA ON THE NEGOTIATIONS UNDER THE UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE G-77, AMBASSADOR NOZIPHO MXAKATO-DISEKO, PARIS CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE (Le Bourget, France, 3 December 2015)

As Chairperson of the Group of 77, I have the honour to share my impressions on the status of negotiations towards the adoption of a legal agreement and key decisions under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) here at the Paris Climate Change Conference.

We have now entered the last few days of a four year long negotiation process that began at the Durban COP in 2011. The purpose of this negotiation process, which we refer to as the "Durban Platform for Enhanced Action", is - as its title suggests - to enhance action under the existing Convention.

I am confident that we will achieve this objective under the guidance of the most capable incoming French COP Presidency, with whom our delegation and Group has an excellent working relationship. I would especially like to convey our appreciation to Peru, which is a member of our Group, in its capacity as the current COP Presidency, for having guided us so effectively to this point.

This confidence in a successful outcome to the Paris Climate Change Conference is based on the reality that failure is not an option for our members for whom climate change is an issue of vital importance, or in the case of our low-lying islands a matter of national survival. It is also firmly based on the encouraging and inspiring messages we heard from the unprecedented gathering of world leaders on the opening day of this meeting.

However, I also need to convey to you that members of the Group of 77 and China are well aware of the challenges we face and that there are grave concerns over both the process and the substance in these negotiations. We have intervened as a Group on many occasions this year and at this conference to try to adjust the process and to speed up the negotiations. We have taken a leadership role in the hopes of securing the shared objectives of all Parties.

The basis of our concern is that the Durban mandate is not being respected by all Parties and we are witnessing repeated attempts by one group in particular - the so-called "Umbrella Group" - to rewrite or reinterpret the Convention. This Group is attacking the Convention's core principles, such as equity, historical responsibility and differentiation of action and support.

The climate change regime is based on the need for developed countries to lead and all developing countries to undertake actions with empowering support. This basic tenant is as relevant today as it was when the Convention was adopted in 1992. This is because even after all these years all our members face pressing socio-economic challenges and acute vulnerability to climate change. Despite the considerable development gains we have made in the short time since decolonisation, none of us can truly say that we have achieved the status of being fully developed - a privilege our negotiating partners have enjoyed for a considerable period of time.

It was in recognition of this unchanged reality, as well as the equally important need to unlock the

mitigation potential of developing countries, that the Durban agreement was premised on three equally important and mutually dependent pillars, namely: 1) developed countries should honour their existing commitments under the Convention; 2) a second commitment period to the Kyoto Protocol should enter into force and 3) a new legal instrument would be adopted under the Convention that is applicable to all Parties.

The Durban agreement was historic because it unblocked an impasse that had hampered action on climate change for many years. It offered a consensus on the way forward that would balance the interests of developed and developing countries and achieve the objective of the Convention to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in order to limit dangerous climate change within a timeframe to allow ecosystems to adapt.

The context of the current negotiations as they reach their final stage is that, with only a few exceptions, developed countries have neither honoured their existing commitments, nor even provided a clear roadmap on how they intend to do so in the remaining years before 2020. They are silent on the support they will provide post-2020.

The leadership we were all counting on has not been translated into action on the ground and the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol has also not yet entered into force.

This is not a mere political statement, it is a reflection of a harsh reality that many developing countries have not received the support they require and are entitled to receive under a legal agreement to help them cope with the calamities caused by a rapidly changing climate that are occurring with increased frequency and severity. All too often we have had to respond to crises without the assistance of developed countries by using our own scarce domestic resources or with voluntary help from fellow developing countries through South-South solidarity.

There are direct implications of non-compliance with climate change commitments for basic human rights and environmental integrity. Climate finance and other means of implementation are therefore not regarded by the international community as voluntary charity or Overseas Direct Assistance (ODA), but as a legal requirement as they are vital tools for action and survival.

It is, therefore, impossible for our Group to understand why the Umbrella Group in particular is refusing to engage in the negotiations on some of the most important issues that would empower developing countries to cope with climate change and to put forward their best effort to contribute to the global response. As you will have seen, the text that is currently being discussed is littered with the Umbrella Group's "no text options" on precisely the areas that are most relevant to empowering action by developing countries, namely means of implementation support for developing countries (financial resources, technology transfer and capacity building), adaptation, loss and damage and response measures.

The Group has, therefore, decided to convene an urgent bilateral meeting with the USA immediately after this press conference to convey our concerns and to impress upon them the need to enter the negotiations on these issues and to remove all its "no text" proposals.

For its part, the G77 and China remains fully committed to addressing climate change under the UNFCCC. The impressive number of ambitious Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) that have been submitted by developing countries to date further testifies to the commitment of developing countries to contribute their fair share. Virtually all our members have submitted INDCs that include both mitigation and adaptation components and have announced very ambitious pledges, even though no guarantees of support have been forthcoming.

The Group has demonstrated unprecedented unity and has shown leadership in these negotiations, both on process and on substance as the generator of most of the proposals and negotiating text that are currently under consideration for the Paris Agreement and supporting COP decisions. We intend to continue this constructive role until we secure our shared objectives.

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