

# MAKING PROGRESS IN DURBAN



The United Nations Climate Change Conference in Durban is an opportunity to strengthen the international climate framework. The top priority should be implementing the Cancún Agreements with steps to: 1) improve the transparency of countries' efforts, and 2) strengthen support for developing countries, including a new Green Climate Fund. If established, a second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol should be transitional in nature. Looking ahead, parties should set the longer-term aim of working toward a comprehensive binding agreement.

At the Seventeenth Conference of the Parties (COP 17) in Durban, South Africa, parties to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) face immediate decisions on strengthening key aspects of the multilateral climate system, and issues concerning the future direction of the international effort. A central issue for many countries is the future of the Kyoto Protocol, whose emission targets expire at the end of 2012.

World leaders agreed two years ago in the Copenhagen Accord to a goal of limiting warming to 2 degrees Celsius and to establish new mechanisms to strengthen the international effort. More than 80 countries pledged 2020 targets or actions under the Accord, and its essential elements were formally incorporated into the UNFCCC in last year's Cancún Agreements. Parties were able to agree on a broad package of incremental steps in Cancún in part by putting aside differences on the regime's future direction and legal form. With the Kyoto targets expiring, however, those issues are now reemerging.

In Durban, parties should again strive for tangible near-term progress even if they remain stalemated on the longer-term legal issues. By building on the Copenhagen and Cancún agreements, a well-crafted Durban outcome can help cement a new phase in the evolution of the climate regime: taking steps to incrementally strengthen the international architecture – and, thereby, national efforts – while working toward the goal of a comprehensive binding agreement.

## KEY OPERATIONAL DECISIONS

Strengthening the UNFCCC architecture can promote stronger action in the near term, build parties' confidence, and create a foundation for a future binding outcome. The Cancún Agreements established the basic parameters of new mechanisms on finance, transparency, adaptation, technology and forestry. Decisions are needed in Durban to begin operationalizing them. Priorities include:

**Improving Transparency.** The Cancún Agreements called for a series of measures to strengthen and expand the UNFCCC's system for the measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) of countries' actions. In Durban, parties should begin implementing these measures by:

- Adopting guidelines and an initial deadline for new **biennial reports** from countries on progress in implementing their pledged targets and actions and, for developing countries, on greenhouse gas inventories. (Developed countries already submit annual greenhouse gas inventories.)
- Adopting procedures for **International Assessment and Review (IAR)** and **International Consultations and Analysis (ICA)**, two new processes to periodically assess the national mitigation efforts of developed and developing countries, respectively, and support from developed countries. Both processes should include technical analysis of countries' reports; open sessions where parties present and take questions on

their implementation efforts; public release of inputs and proceedings; and “facilitative” consequences (assistance to improve implementation).

**Mobilizing Finance.** The Cancún Agreements set finance goals for 2010-2012 and for 2020, and called for a new Green Climate Fund and a new Standing Committee on finance. In Durban, parties should:

- Establish the **Green Climate Fund** by adopting the governing instrument negotiated by the Transitional Committee, which provides for: a 24-member board, with equal representation from developed and developing countries, operating “under the guidance” of the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP); an independent secretariat; funding windows for mitigation and adaptation; and a facility to finance private sector activities.
- Establish the **Standing Committee** to promote coordination among climate funding mechanisms, monitor financial flows, and advise the COP on finance needs and effectiveness.
- Provide assurances of continued finance between the “fast-start” period (2010-12) and 2020, and launch a process to explore potential long-term sources of finance.

## KYOTO SECOND COMMITMENT PERIOD

Without binding commitments by the United States and the major emerging economies, most other developed countries are unwilling to assume new binding emission targets under the Kyoto Protocol. However, the European Union and some others are prepared to enter into a second commitment period established by a decision of the parties (rather than a legally binding amendment to the Protocol) – provided parties launch a process in Durban to negotiate a comprehensive binding agreement for the post-2020 period. Such a “political” second commitment period would ensure Kyoto’s survival on

a transitional basis as parties work toward a successor agreement. Kyoto mechanisms such as the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) remain operational even without binding emission targets.

## FUTURE OF THE CLIMATE FRAMEWORK

In Cancún, parties agreed to a review in 2013-2015 of the adequacy of the 2-degree goal and of “overall progress towards achieving it.” The Cancún Agreements sidestepped the question of future commitments, saying that “nothing in this decision shall prejudice prospects for, or the content of, a legally binding outcome in the future.” While most parties voice support for the goal of binding commitments, they remain far apart on the specific form or timing. In Durban, parties should:

- Agree that the **2013-2015 review** will consider not only the adequacy of the long-term goal and existing commitments, but also the broader structure of the UNFCCC.
- Affirmatively declare their intent to **work toward a comprehensive binding agreement**, while leaving open all options on specific legal form.

### Other C2ES Resources:

“**Letting Go of Kyoto**,” in *Nature*, November 17, 2010.

**Multilateral Climate Efforts Beyond the UNFCCC**, November 2011.

**Common Metrics: Comparing Countries’ Climate Pledges**, September 2011.

**The Evolution of Multilateral Regimes: Implications for Climate Change**, December 2010.



The Center for Climate and Energy Solutions (C2ES) is an independent nonprofit organization working to promote practical, effective policies and actions to address the twin challenges of energy and climate change.