



Count down to Copenhagen: climate change mitigation

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CANA International Climate Summary Sheet #5

Background

There are two main negotiating tracks considering mitigation under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. One is focused on further commitments under the Kyoto Protocol, undertaken by the AWG-KP. The other, by the AWG-LCA, carries forward the Bali Action Plan from December 2007 and is negotiating long term mitigation under the Convention more broadly. Since the Poznan COP last year, the AWG-KP working group has focused on amendments to rules of the Protocol, and has not yet broached new mitigation targets for Annex 1 countries. Currently, the AWGLCA negotiation text proposes a range of possible mitigation commitments, including:

- Stabilisation goals ranging from, "well below 350 ppm CO₂^e and a temperature increase limited to below 1.5°" to 450ppm CO₂^e and temperature limit of 2°C above the pre-industrial level.
- A1 targets proposals on the table include, "at least 25-40%," "25-40%," "more than 25-40%," "in the order of 30%," "at least 40%," "45%," and "at least 45%" from 1990 levels by 2020.¹
- Global emissions peak years proposed in the LCA text include between 2010 and 2013, 2015, 2020, in the next 10-15 years and in the next 20 years.

Some Annex 1 (A1) countries have already made announcements about the targets they are willing to adopt in the second commitment period, or under a new arrangement. The United Kingdom has committed to 34% cuts. The European Union has committed to between 20 and 30%, Norway has committed to 30% and Canada to 20% cuts. Japan recently announced a commitment to cuts of 15% below 2005 levels (amounting to 8% below 1990 levels). Climate Action Network International's policy is that greenhouse gas concentrations need to be reduced to 350ppm CO₂^e, that global emissions be reduced in the order of 80% below 1990 levels by 2050, and that developed countries adopt an aggregate reduction target of more than 40% by 2020 below 1990 levels.²

Key mitigation questions

- What level of emissions reduction commitments will A1 parties make for after 2012?
- Will some developing countries make emissions limitation commitments?
- How will commitments be expressed: as stabilisation goals, as temperature limits, as per capita targets, as aggregate targets for all parties or all A1 parties, or all of the above?
- Will the actual commitments made by countries be science based? Will all the commitments add up to an agreed global emissions path?
- What period will new commitments cover: will it be a five year period to 2017, or to 2020, or longer?
- If parties agree to a global emissions peak year, will it be sooner (eg 2015) or later?

Problems and issues to consider:

- **Quantified Emissions Limitation and Reduction Obligations:** A1 countries must commit to new binding commitments for the Kyoto second commitment period and/or a new treaty for post-2012. Some developing countries may also commit to

¹ <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2009/awglca6/eng/inf01.pdf>

² http://www.climateactionnetwork.org/climate-change-basics/by-meeting/bonn-i-mar-apr-2009/CAN-A1aggregate_target_position7Apr09-FINAL.pdf

nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs), or even to binding targets, which could take the form of deviations from business as usual projections, or reductions in absolute terms.

- **Double counting of emissions reductions:** If developing countries adopt emissions limitation commitments or mitigation commitments of another kind, there are fears that carbon emission offset schemes will allow mitigation activities in developing countries to be double counted, by the A1 party purchasing the offset, and by the NA1 party where the abatement occurs.
- **Keeping pace with the science:** The 5th Assessment Report (AR5) by the IPCC is due in 2014, in the middle of the second commitment period. A mechanism for review following this important publication would ensure that mitigation commitments keep pace with the scientific projections.
- **Supporting developing countries:** It is crucial that there is financial and other support for developing countries adopting NAMAs that safeguards human rights and sustainable development.
- **Commitment periods:** Some countries support extending the Kyoto commitment periods so that the second period ends in 2020 (rather than 2017). This is not supported by many NGOs.
- **Offsets:** What proportion of the commitments of developed countries should be allowed to be met by offsets (often bought from projects in developing countries)? Some Parties have submitted proposals limit offsetting.
- **Base years:** The base year for accounting for most countries under Kyoto is 1990. Emissions reductions are measured relative to that year. Australia's target in the first commitment period was to emit 108% of the emissions created in 1990. There are moves to change this, which would hamper Australia's ability to compare commitments and achievements between the periods.

Australia's position

- Australia claims to be a world leader on targets, so it is important that their commitments are contextualised:
- A study by the European Commission estimated that an Australian target comparable with the EU's 30% target would be 24 – 27%, depending on the treatment of LULUCF.
- Last year, Australia proposed that for the second commitment period, reductions should be relative to the assigned amount for the first commitment period.³
- Australia's use of LULUCF offsets to meet targets depends on using a base year with high land clearing emissions.
- Australia has put forward a range of possible 2020 targets, 5%, 15%, 25% depending on the outcomes of the UNFCCC talks – all of these are based on a 2000 level baseline.
- Australia's commitment to reduce emissions by 24% below 1990 levels commitment appears progressive beside Japan and Belarus, but falls short of the range mooted in the Bali Action Plan, of 25-40% cuts from 1990 levels for all A1 parties.
- Many NGOs believe that Australia's affluence and per capita emissions levels require it to commit to emissions cuts at the upper end of this range (40% or more).
- The 25% option equates to a 24% reduction from 1990 levels and comes with a suite of conditions like including forestry and land; a global trajectory of 450ppm or lower; An aggregate target cut for "advanced economies" of 25% below 1990; quantified commitments for deviation from business as usual predictions for "major developing economies" and global financial that includes money from "major developing economies".⁴

Further information:

See the other 'Count down to Copenhagen' summary sheets in CANA's international climate series:

Summary Sheet #1 What to look for, What to expect

Summary Sheet #2 International finance for climate mitigation and adaptation

Summary Sheet #3 Global adaptation to climate change

Summary Sheet #4 Legal architecture

Summary Sheet #5 Mitigation

Summary Sheet #6 LULUCF and REDD

Summary Sheet #7 International climate acronyms

³ An "assigned amount" is the total volume of relevant gases that a party to the KP is allowed to emit over a commitment period. Australia's assigned amount for the first commitment period is just under 3 billion t CO₂-e. See <http://www.climatechange.gov.au/international/pubs/081121-mitigation.pdf> for more on Australia's approach to mitigation.

⁴ http://www.climatechange.gov.au/international/pubs/submission_australia's_national_ambition2020.pdf