

Dhaka Decries Slow Pace

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"We are extremely worried and frustrated that bypassing the most vulnerable countries including the LDCs, negotiations are being conducted elsewhere by very few of the influential Parties," the statement said, without naming the countries.

The 15th Conference of Parties (COP 15) brought together officials and observers from a staggering 192 countries for two weeks of tough negotiations over how to go about saving the planet Earth, believed under threat from global warming caused by human consumption and greed.

"We have been observing that the issues and concerns raised by the LDCs, AOSIS and African countries are not addressed in the different negotiating texts prepared by different parties.

"We are also worried that some of the negotiating groups and countries are not following the mandate of the Bali Action Plan," the Bangladesh statement said.

It pointed out that the Bali Plan, adopted in 2007, had spoken of a legally-binding agreement to be reached at COP 15.

Bangladesh's concerns coincided with deepening doubts about any deal coming out of the Copenhagen exercise. A non-binding interim agreement is being widely predicted instead of the one envisaged by the most vulnerable.

A binding treaty, it is now widely believed, would now be targeted by 2010.

As the world converged on the Danish capital, questions were being raised about the authenticity of scientific claims after leaked emails of some top scientists allegedly proved that the global warming was a "hoax".

"We must face the ugly truth," says a France-based group called LaRouche.

"The catastrophe that threatens mankind is not climate change or carbon, or anyone of a number of phony 'environmental' issues; it is the breakdown of the world's imperial monetarist system, imperilling the lives of billions," it said in a leaflet distributed just outside the conference centre.

But the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change strongly defended its position.

At the opening ceremony in the morning, IPCC chief Rajendra Pachauri once again reminded the world of the dangers of the changing climate caused by the global warming.

The head of the UN panel mentioned low-lying countries like Bangladesh and the small island nations, which he said could be submerged by the rising sea levels.

"It is gratifying," said Dr Pachauri, "that the G8 leaders have recognised the broad scientific view of limiting the increase in global average temperature to 2 degrees Celsius."

To achieve this, he said, the IPCC also clearly specified that global emissions must peak no later than 2015.

"That is barely six years from now. And some may even question the goal of 2 degrees as a ceiling because this would lead to sea-level rise on account of thermal expansion alone of 0.4 to 1.4 metres."

"This increase, added to the effect of melting of snow and ice across the globe, could submerge several small island states and Bangladesh."

Pachauri was specific in calling for concrete action to save Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh delegates also appeared at a press conference to register their protests and frustrations. "We are here with high expectations," said Saber Hossain Chowdhury, MP, a member of the Dhaka team, which will be joined next week by the prime minister Sheikh Hasina herself.

President Obama will come, so will over 100 other heads of state and government. No fewer than 25,000 participants--including NGO representatives and journalists--have been cleared for registration.

"We have the capacity. Bangladesh can take the lead in the adaptation negotiation process. We can handle the finances," Chowdhury told reporters.

The 49 LDC countries, Bangladesh included, have proposed reducing the carbon dioxide emissions by 45 percent on the level of 1990 by 2020 and 90 percent by 2050.

But Brazil, India, South Africa and China came up with a draft that differed with these goals.

"We are disappointed over the four countries' position. That is our position and LDCs' position," a campaigner from Bangladesh said.

Bangladesh has also been demanding legally binding adaptation framework in the terms of financial commitment from the rich and polluting nations.

The LDCs have been pressing for preferential access to the global climate fund, expected to reach US\$ 100 billion by 2020.

"We want a two-track approach, where Kyoto Protocol must survive for the second and subsequent commitment periods," the Bangladesh statement said, echoing the LDCs.

"Under Mitigation, we consider that no one has abided by their responsibilities or commitments.

"There should be an appropriate balance between right to survival and right to development and common but differentiated responsibilities."

Dr. Atiq Rahman, a member of the Nobel-winning IPCC, and former special assistant to caretaker chief adviser Debasish Roy, Dr Ainun Nishat were among those present in the press conference.

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