

Calls for Condition-Free Climate Funds

Sunday, 14 February 2010

Funds to tackle climate change must be easily available and free from burdensome conditions, officials, experts and climate activists stressed with one voice on Saturday, ahead of a key meeting of donors in Bangladesh.

Speakers at a day-long seminar on climate change funds also said that the mechanism to disburse these funds should be essentially controlled by the host government and not by foreign agencies.

Funds to tackle climate change must be easily available and free from burdensome conditions, officials, experts and climate activists stressed with one voice on Saturday, ahead of a key meeting of donors in Bangladesh.

Speakers at a day-long seminar on climate change funds also said that the mechanism to disburse these funds should be essentially controlled by the host government and not by foreign agencies.

Government officials, non-governmental organisations, experts, academics and activists said that funds to cope with rising seas, frequent floods and stronger cyclones, which are said to be fallouts of global warming, should come as grants.

They pointed out that Bangladesh, being one of the least developed countries, did not do anything to cause global warming but is suffering from its adverse impacts.

Organised by the Campaign for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods, a coalition of over a hundred grassroots organisations, non-governmental organisations, researchers and academics, the seminar was meant to convey key messages to the government ahead of the Bangladesh Development Forum scheduled to be held Feb 15-16.

Ahsan Uddin Ahmed, convenor of the livelihoods campaign, and chair of the first session, said that Bangladesh was compelled to allocate funds for climate change from its own meagre resources depriving health care and education.

"But we cannot wait for the developed countries indefinitely to solve our problem."

While the United Kingdom had pledged almost \$100 million to Bangladesh two years ago for coping with the effects of changing weather, it has not been forthcoming, he said.

Raja Debashish Roy, a former special adviser for environment, chairing another session of the seminar, also agreed that although the developed countries, essentially responsible for climate change, were obligated to provide funds to poor countries, Bangladesh could not wait for them to respond.

He said funds should be governed by a mechanism that ensured involvement of different excluded groups and minorities including women and youth.

Ahmed also pointed out that pledges for climate change funds have not been in line with the demand of poor countries and that these funds should be over and beyond previous pledges in other forums.

Experts maintain that greenhouse gases in the atmosphere are responsible for increasing the average global temperatures.

Scientific research shows that a certain level of temperature rise could bring about irreversible climate change.

This would result in the polar ice caps to melt causing the sea level to rise besides bringing about more frequent and intense natural calamities such as floods, cyclones and droughts.

The latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which is the highest climate body in the world, observes that even a one metre sea-level rise could result in the submergence of a fifth of Bangladesh's coastal areas and displace up to 30 million people.

Together with that imminent threat, frequent floods, cyclones and small pockets witnessing droughts, densely populated Bangladesh is said to be one of the most vulnerable countries in the world.

Participants included Atiq Rahman, executive director of Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies, Mihir Kanti Majumder, environment secretary, Zafar Ahmed Khan, director general of the environment department, QK Ahmad, president of Bangladesh Economic Association and Ziaul Hoque Mukta, CSRL member secretary.

Source: bdnews24.com