

## Doha climate talks draw to a close

DOHA, QATAR: UN talks seeking to halt the march of global warming ended in Doha Friday (7 December) with a number of key points outstanding: extending the greenhouse gas-curbing Kyoto Protocol and funding for poor countries.

Delegates were preparing for a long day and night of final haggling to find consensus on interim ways to rein in climate change and smooth the way to a new deal that must enter into force in 2020.

"We woke up today and found ourselves no closer to addressing climate change, and possibly considerably farther from this imperative than when we started here" 11 days ago, said Kieren Keke, chairman of the Alliance of Small Island States.

Funding to help poor countries deal with the fallout from global warming and convert to planet-friendlier energy sources remains a key sticking point between negotiators from nearly 200 countries gathered in the Qatari capital.

Developed countries are being pressed to show how they intend to keep a promise to raise climate funding for poor countries to US\$100bn per year by 2020 -- up from a total of US\$30bn between 2010 and 2012.

Developing countries say they need at least another US\$60bn between now and 2015 to deal with increased droughts, floods, rising sea levels and storms.

But the United States and European Union have refused to put concrete figures on the table in Doha for funding, citing tough financial times in the First World economies.

NGOs and delegates have expressed frustration at the pace of negotiations that coincided with a slew of fresh scientific warnings that Earth faces a calamitous future of more frequent extreme weather events.

"Political negotiators need to realise urgently that the climate does not negotiate," Greenpeace chief executive Kumi Naidoo told *AFP* in the final hours of the talks.

"Negotiations are out of touch with scientific reality. This is about human survival," Naidoo said.

Another point of contention was "hot air," the name given to Earth-warming greenhouse gas emission quotas that countries were given under the first leg of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol and did not use -- some 13bn tons in total.

The credits can be sold to nations battling to meet their own quotas, meaning greenhouse gas levels decrease on paper but not in the atmosphere.

Poland and Russia emitted much less than their lenient limits and insisted in Doha on being allowed to bank the difference beyond 2012 -- a move vehemently opposed by most other parties.

Agreement on hot air is key to the Doha delegates extending the life of the Kyoto pact, whose first leg expires on December 31.

The protocol is the world's only binding pact on curbing greenhouse gases, but locks in only developed nations and excludes major developing polluters such as China and India, as well as the United States, which refused to ratify it.

A new 2020 deal, due to be finalised by 2015, will include commitments for all the nations of the world.

Draft conference texts drawn up so far "fail to meet the basic requirements of the countries facing an existential threat" from climate change, said Keke, but stressed "the day isn't over yet".

The Philippines urged bickering climate negotiators to take heed from the deadly typhoon that struck the archipelago last week and wake up to the realities of global warming.

"As we sit here, every single hour, as we vacillate and procrastinate, the death toll is rising," climate envoy Naderev Sano told delegates.

German Environment Minister Peter Altmaier has predicted that the talks, notorious for running way over schedule, "will be on the knife's edge up to the last moment".

Source: *AFP* via I-Net Bridge

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