

A journalist's guide to the Bali climate conference

An IIED Briefing

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The 13th Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the 3rd Meeting of Parties to the Kyoto Protocol will take place in Bali, Indonesia, from 3-14 December 2007. The meetings are some of the most important to date, as negotiators will be discussing the successor to the Kyoto Protocol, whose first commitment period expires in 2012. This briefing gives a quick overview of the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol, the structure and function of the meetings in Bali and some of the main issues that will be on the agenda. It describes key possible outcomes of the meeting and provides reliable sources of further information.

KEY POINTS:

- The United Nations conference in Bali, Indonesia in December 2007 is of major importance as it could shape global climate-change policy for years to come.
- The talks are complicated. They take place in several fora and involve a number of negotiating groups that gather countries with common interests.
- High on the agenda are issues such as: a timetable and process for reaching a global agreement that builds upon the Kyoto Protocol; how to make the Adaptation Fund operational; and measures to reduce deforestation in developing countries in order to limit greenhouse gas emissions.

Why Bali is so important

In mid-2007, Norway's retiring climate-change negotiator Harald Dovland called on his counterparts from around the world to: "Promise me one thing... do your job in Bali."

He was referring to some of the most highly anticipated meetings in the history of climate-change negotiations — the 13th Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the 3rd Meeting of Parties to the Kyoto Protocol — which will take place in Bali, Indonesia in December 2007.

Bali will also host dozens of side events at which nongovernmental organisations, academics, the private sector and others will share information and policy recommendations.

What happens (or doesn't) in Bali could determine the shape of global climate policy for years to come. The negotiations are complicated. They take place in various strands and between different groups of countries that negotiate alone or in groups. This briefing provides journalists who are new to the process with

a rapid overview of the UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol, the structure and function of the meetings in Bali, and the countries in, and positions of, the main negotiating groups. It lists some of the key issues that will be on the agenda and sources of more information.

Structure and function of UNFCCC bodies

UNFCCC AND KYOTO PROTOCOL

The UNFCCC was adopted in 1992 with the objective of stabilising atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases at levels that will avoid dangerous human interference with the climate system. The Convention aims to achieve this goal in a timeframe sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally, to ensure food production is not threatened, and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner.

The 192 Parties to the Convention are divided into two groups: developed (Annex I Parties) and developing (Non-Annex I Parties). The Annex I Parties are further divided into two groups. Annex II Parties are those more advanced industrialised countries that are required to provide funds to support actions in developing countries. The remaining Annex I parties are those with economies in transition to a market economy.

A number of institutions, set up under the Convention, facilitate and monitor its implementation. These include the Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA), the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI) and a financial mechanism, which has been entrusted to the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

The UNFCCC's Kyoto Protocol was agreed in 1997. It commits 36 of the Convention's Annex I Parties (known as Annex B Parties) to individual targets for limiting or reducing emissions which, taken together, would reduce overall emissions of six greenhouse gases from these countries by approximately 5 per cent below 1990 levels within the Protocol's first commitment period (2008-12). The Protocol's three main tools for helping Annex B Parties to reach

these targets efficiently are: international emissions trading between countries with targets; joint implementation of emissions-reducing projects; and the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). The CDM allows Annex-I countries to invest in emissions reductions in developing nations rather than directly reduce emissions at home. Non-Annex I countries do not have legally binding targets to reduce or limit their greenhouse gas emissions during the first commitment period. The Protocol now has 175 parties — notable exceptions being the United States and Australia*.

THE AWG

The AWG gathers Parties to the Kyoto Protocol to negotiate further commitments for the Protocol's Annex I Parties. These would apply after the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol ends in 2012. Parties agreed that the AWG would complete its work "as early as possible" and aim to ensure that there is no gap between the first and second commitment periods. The 4th session of the AWG will resume in Bali. On the agenda will be the identification of ranges of emission-reduction objectives of Annex I Parties, and the review of the AWG's work programme, methods of work and schedule of future sessions.

CONVENTION DIALOGUE

The Convention Dialogue was created to allow parties to the UNFCCC to share experiences and analyse strategies for long-term cooperative action to address climate change. It is an open and non-binding exchange of views, information and ideas in support of enhanced implementation of the Convention. It does not open any formal negotiations leading to new commitments. A series of dialogue workshops have covered four thematic areas: addressing development in a sustainable way, addressing action on adaptation, realising the full potential of technology and realising the full potential of market-based opportunities. In Bali, the dialogue's co-facilitators will report on the workshop series to COP13. Among other things, the Convention Dialogue has identified four key building blocks for long-term action to address climate change. They are mitigation, adaptation, technology and finance.

CONTACT GROUPS AND CORRIDORS

After the opening plenary sessions of the COP, COP/MOP, SBSTA, SBI and the AWG, issues that require further consideration will be referred to contact groups, which will meet and report back to the plenary. All interested Parties and observers are able to participate in the formal meetings of the contact groups. However, in order to aid negotiations, often additional informal contact group sessions, only open to the Parties, will also be held. Parties often hold informal bilateral meetings with each other to try and reach agreements on difficult issues.

NEGOTIATING GROUPS

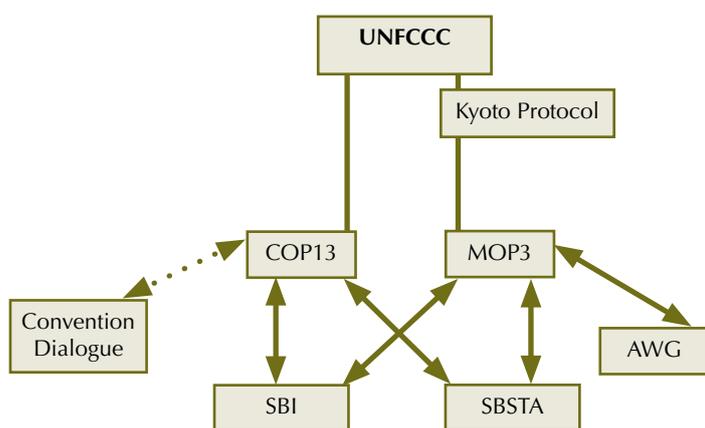
In the UN process, in theory, each country holds an equal vote. However, in reality, there is a big difference in the negotiating power of individual nations. Some have teams of well-trained negotiators, whereas others have individuals who may be meteorologists or technicians without training in negotiating. Rich countries have used this to their advantage in the past by negotiating at length about minor issues — leaving opponents tired out — and then rapidly bringing in key decisions. In addition to country delegations, nations come together in different blocks to negotiate on common interests (see maps).

The **G77/China** brings together 132 countries whose main position is that the rich countries should accept their historical responsibility for climate change and greatly reduce their emissions while allowing the G77/China to continue to develop. Within that group there are some tensions due to the wide diversity among countries and regions. Within the G77/China there are a number of regional and special-interest sub-groups.

The **European Union (EU)**, which comprises 27 member states, negotiates as a unified entity and the **Umbrella Group** brings together non-EU Western nations (Australia, Canada, Iceland, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Russia, Ukraine and the US).

Kyoto Emission Reduction or Limitation Commitments (% relative to 1990 emission levels)	
EU-15, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Monaco, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Belarus	-8%
US*	-7%
Canada, Hungary, Japan, Poland	-6%
Croatia	-5%
NZ, Russia, Ukraine	0
Norway	+1%
Australia*	+8%
Iceland	+10%
NB: the US has withdrawn from the KP; Australia has signed the KP but not ratified it*.	

Each year, a Conference of Parties (COP) to the UNFCCC assesses progress in implementing the Convention and negotiates next steps. The Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of Parties (COP/MOP) to the Kyoto Protocol takes place at the same time, as do meetings of the UNFCCC's two subsidiary bodies. From time to time, special working groups are established to address particular issues. The Ad Hoc Working Group (AWG) on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol, which is currently constituted, is one such example (see below).



SUBSIDIARY BODIES

The SBSTA and SBI each have specific mandates and report to the COP and COP/MOP. The SBI considers issues relating to the implementation of the Convention and its Protocol, such as national communications of greenhouse gas emissions, funding and capacity building. The SBSTA addresses scientific, technological and methodological matters, such as technology transfer, impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change, and methodological issues associated with emissions, such as preparing emissions inventories and addressing land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF).



G77/China



Africa Group



Alliance of Small Island States



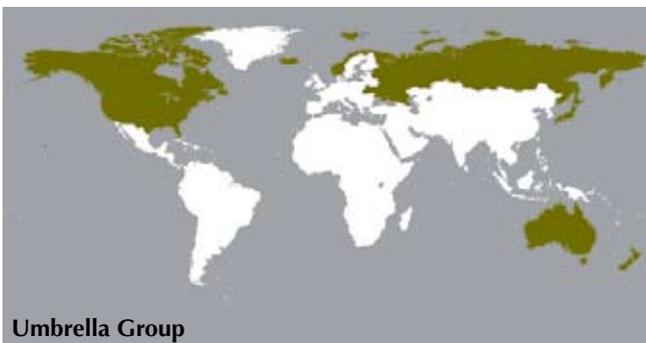
Least Developed Countries



OPEC



European Union



Umbrella Group



Environmental Integrity Group

The **Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)** is a coalition of 39 small islands and low-lying coastal countries that share similar development challenges and concerns about the environment, especially their vulnerability to the adverse effects of global climate change, including sea level rise.

The 49 **Least Developed Countries (LDCs)** are the world's poorest countries and are mostly in Africa. Their emissions are tiny compared to those of other countries and they are the least prepared for the changes ahead.

Although most of their members are also part of the G77/China, the LDCs and AOSIS want large developing nations such as China and India to reduce their emissions. This break from solidarity within the larger block is a new development.

The **Africa Group** comprises 50 countries that are seeking to highlight their particular vulnerability to climate change and other issues of concern such as poverty and access to resources.

The **Environmental Integrity Group** (Mexico, South Korea and Switzerland, together with Liechtenstein and Monaco) sometimes intervene as a separate negotiating group to ensure their inclusion in last-minute, closed-door negotiations.

The 13-member **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)** is not a formal negotiating group, but often creates barriers to progress in the negotiations because oil — a major source of greenhouse gases — is the lifeblood of their economies.

Key outcomes in Bali?

BALI ROADMAP

Optimists hope that delegates will agree on which elements need to be negotiated to create a successor to the Kyoto Protocol, whose emission reduction and limitation targets only extend until 2012. A 'Bali Roadmap' would set a timetable for negotiating this post-2012 regime, ideally by 2009 when COP15 will be held in Copenhagen, Denmark. Pessimists fear that countries will adopt a short-term approach and continue to expect each other to make the first move.

The Kyoto Protocol took two years to negotiate, from 1995-97, but only entered into force in 2005. So the next two years will be critical. Two outcomes are possible: a fair and appropriate agreement in Copenhagen, or an incomplete and inadequate one that will do little to protect the climate system and those most vulnerable to climate change.

THE ADAPTATION FUND

The Adaptation Fund was set up under the Kyoto Protocol to support adaptation to climate change in developing nations. It is financed from a 2 per cent levy on the value of credits resulting from emission reduction projects under the CDM. But the fund is not yet operational. Key elements associated with the operationalisation of the fund will be negotiated in Bali.

AVOIDED DEFORESTATION

Deforestation produces 20-25 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions but the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol do not currently include measures to address deforestation in developing countries. This will be an important negotiating point in Bali. Many tropical nations want rich countries to provide financial support and positive incentives to them in exchange for keeping their forests intact. They are calling for early action through support for pilot activities that explore this option before 2012.

IPCC

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) will brief delegates on the findings of its Fourth Assessment Report, whose Summary for Policymakers was published in November 2007. The report is the most comprehensive scientific assessment of climate change to date. It stresses that abrupt and irreversible impacts are possible and says urgent action must be taken.

ACTION FROM CHINA

China has consistently stated that it will not accept binding emissions reduction targets. However, in Bali it may indicate a willingness to consider other types of commitments or steps to reduce emissions — a move that could help to break the deadlock between Annex I and non Annex I countries about future commitments under the Kyoto Protocol's successor.

More information

UNFCCC (www.unfccc.int)

The UNFCCC's official conference website lists full details of the agenda, side events and information for journalists. To request interviews with UNFCCC officials or referrals to delegations, email: press@unfccc.int. When requesting an interview, please indicate which media organization you represent and submit a brief list of questions to be answered.

National Focal Points (<http://maindb.unfccc.int/public/nfp.pl>)

The list of National Focal Points provides contact details of representatives of the Parties to the Convention.

IPCC (www.ipcc.ch)

In November 2007, the IPCC published its Fourth Assessment Report (AR4), a complete synthesis of the latest scientific and economic analysis of the causes of climate change, mitigation and adaptation.

Earth Negotiations Bulletin (<http://www.iisd.ca/climate/cop13/>)

The Earth Negotiations Bulletin (ENB) is a balanced, timely and independent reporting service that provides daily information in print and electronic formats from multilateral negotiations on environment and development. The ENB team will be reporting daily from the meetings in Bali. Journalists can subscribe to free electronic reports by email.

CLIMATE-L (www.iisd.ca/email/climate-l.htm)

The International Institute for Sustainable Development's Climate-L email list is a top source of news about events and publications about climate change.

Post-2012 Policy Options

Various groups have suggested frameworks for post-2012 climate policy. These are available in pdf format:

Forum on Global Climate Strategies beyond 2012:

The Route Ahead

<http://tinyurl.com/37mr9y>

Global Leadership for Climate Action:

Framework for a Post-2012 Agreement on Climate Change

<http://tinyurl.com/325f93>

Tallberg Foundation:

Climate Policy Post-2012 - A Roadmap

<http://tinyurl.com/2sw73t>

*Kevin Rudd, elected Prime Minister of Australia on 24 November 2007, has pledged to ratify the Kyoto Protocol immediately.

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