



FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE - Secretariat

CONVENTION - CADRE SUR LES CHANGEMENTS CLIMATIQUES - Secrétariat

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Secretary-General

Date: 04 May 2009
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FROM: Yvo de Boer
Executive Secretary

SUBJECT: **Report on first preparatory meeting of the MEF, Washington, 27-28 April 2009** ✓

The first preparatory meeting of the Major Economies Forum (MEF) took place in Washington on 27-28 April 2009. The meeting was attended by Leaders' representatives (and their Advisers) from 17 major economies, as well as the European Union, Denmark (as the host country of COP 15) and the United Nations.

The meeting marked a very good start to this new process. Discussions were open and on a high political level. There was good representation with 11 countries represented at ministerial level. It was opened by a speech by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who outlined the US expectations for the MEF and emphasized that the US was committed to a successful outcome of the UNFCCC negotiations. Later on the first day, there was a very nice - clear and concise - presentation on the science by John Holdren, the Assistant to the US President for Science and Technology, and a presentation on technologies by Secretary of Energy, Steven Chu. Together with the other Leaders' representatives, I had an opportunity to speak to President Obama at the White House, who asked me to convey to you his personal regards.

This MEF preparatory meeting was focussed on agreeing on the agenda of this new process, and there was remarkable agreement on the nature and purpose of the MEF: i.e. not to be a negotiating platform to compete with the UNFCCC negotiations, but to be a forum for dialogue to help positions converge and thereby contribute to a successful outcome in Copenhagen. There was a deep commitment to making Copenhagen a success, from all sides, and a repeated call not to be irresponsible and miss the historic opportunity at Copenhagen to advance the global climate change efforts.

The five big developing countries (Brazil, China, India, South Africa and Mexico) had a common position, stating that they were ready to take some mitigation action unilaterally, and to report on this action as part of enhanced national communication under the Convention, but without international review. They further explained that they were expecting international support to be able to do more. Minister Xie of China was very engaged in the debate and very positive. India and Brazil were more cautious, often pointing to the legal basis of the negotiations. Minister van Schalwyck of South Africa was very articulate in explaining the position of the developing world and calling for greater engagement by developed countries, particular the US.

To file
No Action



Australia, Canada, Japan and Russia more or less directly called for the adoption of a new protocol. Japan was most aggressive and handed out copies informally to participants of its proposed draft protocol which it has formally submitted to the UNFCCC.

For the second day of the meeting, the Chair had modified the agenda to add a session on mitigation and one on finance. US Special Envoy Todd Stern started the mitigation discussion by explaining the US position, especially concerning the different proposals for emission reduction targets that are being discussed domestically. This started a very interesting debate which occupied the rest of the meeting, so that the group never got to a finance discussion. The frankness of the debate can be characterized by a statement by Todd Stern to defend the US position: "The US is not asking for a special status. It has had a special status for too long, namely an especially bad status."

I contributed to this debate by pointing out that all countries represented around the table had a national target or a national climate change plan, the effect of which could be quantified. Each country was looking at how these plans could be further developed in an international context, and the MEF could make a contribution by determining what provisions to be agreed in Copenhagen could actually enhance the joint ambition level.

In the discussion, most countries explained where they were in their national policy processes, often restating known positions. But the debate was very constructive, since almost everyone showed an understanding for the specific situation of others and tried to find a way forward. This moved very close to a joint reflection on how to advance together, given the different national circumstances.

Much of the mitigation discussion centred around medium-term versus long-term targets. The US is suggesting to put more emphasis on long-term emission pathways to achieve a low atmospheric greenhouse gas concentration level, instead of focussing on the percentage reduction for 2020. In his presentation, John Holdren had stressed the need for a peaking of emissions in the next decade as a key to staying on a 450 ppm eq. pathway. Several countries, including the EU countries, called for early action in order to start turning the emissions curve. South Africa suggested looking at how developed countries could ensure a peaking of global emissions around 2015.

There was also some exchange of views on technology, with an interesting presentation by India on energy efficiency. The Chair encouraged participants to take a lead in specific areas of technology by producing a policy brief for the MEF Leaders for their meeting in July. Australia undertook to lead CCS; India energy efficiency; Indonesia adaptation technologies; and Korea and Japan will announce later the areas in which they are interested in taking the lead. China, supported by Germany, asserted quite forcefully that the MEF should not address technical aspects but focus on policy aspects of technology cooperation, such as barriers to technology cooperation and transfer.

All in all, this meeting marked a very positive start to the new process. Participants have accepted this as a forum for candid policy discussions and demonstrated commitment to jointly shaping a way forward. The debate helped rebuild some of the trust lost between the developing and the developed countries, especially the US. There is no clear outcome at this stage. There were also no strong views expressed on the form of the outcome of the MEF Leaders' meeting in L'Aquila. The Chair had suggested either a simple agreed statement or a Chair's summary.

The next meeting is set for 26-27 May in Paris, starting in the evening of 26 May. Since this does not work for South Africa, there may still be some change. Mexico was planning to host the following one in the third week of June. Japan also showed interest in hosting a MEF meeting in the future.



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