

recent developments

INTERNATIONAL

Penny Cresswell

Climate Change – The Bali Roadmap

The Bali Climate Conference from 3-15 December 2007, which incorporated the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) conference of the parties and meeting of the parties on the Kyoto Protocol, has resulted in the Bali Action Plan, or 'roadmap'. The roadmap sets an ambitious program and agenda for negotiations of a post-2012 agreement to be agreed by the end of 2009. The roadmap recognises that 'deep cuts' in global emissions will be required to achieve the UNFCCC objectives and the urgency indicated by the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The shared vision is expressly subject to the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, taking into account social and economic conditions and other relevant factors'. The roadmap sets out the building blocks to be incorporated into the process: mitigation, adaptation, technology and finance.

Mitigation – caps on emissions

The vexed 'mitigation' building block, particularly emission reduction obligations, almost derailed talks. The roadmap sets out an expectation that emission reduction objectives will, for developed countries, form part of the new regime. Developing nations may preserve the right to increase emissions where they are a necessary consequence of economic growth. The US ultimately withdrew its opposition to India's proposal that developed nations' nationally appropriate mitigation measures were to be 'in the context of sustainable development supported and enabled by technology, financing and capacity building in a measurable, reportable and verifiable manner' –intended, it seems, to hold developed countries to capacity building commitments, and provide technological and financial support.

The issue of caps on emissions still looms large with post-Bali US comments indicating that differentiated treatment of developed and developing nations might still be unacceptable to Washington. Some have reported the US may at least be open to discussions of targets following the Major Economies Meeting on Energy Security and Climate Change hosted by the US in late January 2008.

Forests squarely on agenda

The Bali roadmap includes the objective of addressing reduction of emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) in developing countries and the role of sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries. This is seen as a significant step for the wider deforestation debate, with the potential for deforestation to be brought into a binding framework. Discussions at REDD side events included proposals for new tropical deforestation emission reduction schemes, the political economy of avoided deforestation, and the need for private sector participation. A well attended 'Forest Day' event was held in parallel with the UN Climate Conference in Bali, organised by the Center for International Forestry Research and co-hosted by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. The sessions covered four cross-cutting themes: methodological challenges in estimating forest carbon; market and governance; equity versus efficiency; and adaptation. See www.cifor.cgiar.org/ and www.un.org/esa/forests/ for more information on Forest Day.

For a summary of the Bali conference see: <http://www.iisd.ca/vol12/enb12354e.html>

For a brief summary of recent related meetings on climate change see: <http://www.iisd.ca/recent/recentmeetings.asp?id=5>