

COP 18: An Antiguan and Barbudan Perspective

Introduction

The United Nations Climate Change Conference in Doha, Qatar, is taking place from 26 November to 8 December 2012. It includes the eighteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 18) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 8).¹ The chief target of the Doha talks is ‘to set a timeframe and country targets for the second period of Kyoto. The first leg of the protocol bound about 40 rich nations and the EU to curbing emissions but excludes the two biggest polluters - the US, which refused to ratify it, and China’.² Sophie Webber, who is a special advisor to the Environment Division of her government from the small island developing state of Antigua and Barbuda (see map for geographical location), is already a veteran of climate negotiations at the age of 27. Her focus has included mitigation and issues related to the Kyoto Protocol. This has also included assisting in the coordination, negotiating, and technical strategy with the rest of the Antigua and Barbuda delegation and within the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).³

About the sustainability case library: The Sustainability Case Library is a growing collection of cases that can be used and adapted for teaching and learning at different departments, and also includes a teacher’s guide that briefly introduces the case methodology. A case is a real or constructed scenario that involves issues and conflicts that need to be resolved, though they usually do not have one clear or obvious solution. They may contain a description of the scenario as well as relevant background information such as graphs, stories or historical documents. Cases explore a problem from the point of view of a specific actor and can be used to bridge theory and practice, develop critical thinking, illuminate conflicts of interest and improve problem solving and communication skills. Cases can be used to shift focus from sustainability problems to solutions and strategies for a sustainable development. There are both Swedish and English language cases available and the aim is that the cases can be used without prior experience in the case methodology or in teaching sustainable development. The Sustainability Case Library is funded by a grant from the Division for Development of Teaching and Learning at Uppsala University and is coordinated by CEMUS/CSD Uppsala. More information and resources can be found at:

www.csuppsala.uu.se/sustainabilitycases

1 <http://www.iisd.ca/vol12/enb12567e.html>

2 <http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/international/04-Dec-2012/climate-talks-deadlocked-as-countdown-starts-for-final-week>

3 For more information on what everyone wants from Doha: <http://www.rtcc.org/cop18-live-latest-news-from-day-1-of-doha-climate-summit/>



AOSIS coordinate unified positions prior to and during the climate talks and they share the work load because, unlike larger states like the US and China⁴ who allocate more than one delegate per issue, small islands usually only send about two to three representatives.⁵ Negotiators come to Doha with very clear directives from their home countries, and therefore have difficulty maneuvering within these constraints. As such, even if the media portrays an optimistic negotiating atmosphere, Sophie notes that ‘no one we have spoken to in Doha believes the conference will end with an agreement to cut global emissions in line with what the science demands’.⁶ Despite this illusion of hope, over-caffeinated delegates are running around on little to no sleep, fuelled by notoriously weak coffee in order to keep going. Sophie and her fellow delegates go into the COP 18 meeting in Doha prepared for the lack of ambition shown by developed countries.⁷ Antigua and Barbuda already see the impacts of climate change and must prepare to take great adaptation measures to protect their island from the effects of climate change. According to one UN study, island nations could face losses of up to 18% of gross domestic product (GDP) from sea level rise and extreme weather events, combined with pressures from unsustainable fishing practices and coastal development.⁸ The Caribbean basin has already experienced about one millimetre rise per year in the 20th century. With an increase of just 1.5°C by 2100 they are looking at about half a metre rise by 2100, but with the status quo they are looking at 1-2m or much more. Just 1m sea level rise means about 2% of Antigua and Barbuda’s land area lost and 3% of their population displaced. Among other things, there will also be many more impacts on their airport, harbours, turtle nesting beaches, hotels, agriculture, salt-water intrusion of ground water, power station, and desalination plant. As such, AOSIS demands:

...a concerted global effort from all, with developed countries taking the lead, to enhance their mitigation ambition in order to close the pre-2020 ambition gap, in

4 China has 142 delegates in Doha. Antigua has five, but that was one just for high level negotiating (i.e minister) and one who left in the first week, so is not really there for the meeting, basically leaving just three negotiators.

5 <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2012/cop18/eng/inf02.pdf>

6 <http://www.rtcc.org/eu-alliance-with-small-island-states-vital-to-success-of-doha-talks-uk-minister/>

7 To get a sense of the history of the negotiations, which can be important to frame the atmosphere of the 18th Conference of Parties, see <http://www.qatar-in-brussels.org/a-briefish-history-of-the-unfccc-and-a-peek-into-the-future/>.

8 <http://www.antiguaobserver.com/?p=84481>

particular by urgently increasing the ambition of their current targets and nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs), and by bringing forward mitigation action where they are yet to do so.⁹

A report by the UN says global attempts to curb emissions of CO₂ are falling well short of what is needed to stem dangerous climate change despite the fact that it is economically and technically feasible to reach the AOSIS goals. 'AOSIS estimates that current pledges from Annex 1 parties deliver only 1-7% below 1990 levels...Developed countries must move immediately to the top of their target ranges and beyond if we're to stay on track to avoiding dangerous climate change.'¹⁰ UNEP's 2011 report 'Bridging the emissions gap' stated that the emissions gap could be bridged by 2020, but since the report was released in 2011, the pledges on the table have failed to be ambitious or adequate enough to do so, as early ambitious action was needed.¹¹ The UN's Environment Programme says greenhouse gases are 14% above where they need to be in 2020 for temperature rises this century to remain below 2oC.¹²

⁹ <http://aosis.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/2012-AOSIS-Leaders-Declaration.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://aosis.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Closing-Statemnet-at-UNFCCC-AWG-LCA-24-May-2012-Bonn.pdf>

¹¹ http://www.unep.org/pdf/unep_bridging_gap.pdf

¹² <http://www.antiguaobserver.com/?p=84191>

The Challenge

One of Antigua's goals in Doha is to ensure the Parties adopt a decision that requires more stringent and detailed reporting requirements for developed countries on their emissions, targets, projections, and climate finance in the future. The report, called a biennial report that is an additional reporting requirement to the national communication, is an inventory of all of a country's emissions sources and the actions that a country undertakes to lower emissions¹³, but the content of the report has been under debate preceding COP18. The goal for Antigua and Barbuda is for the report to have as much detail as possible, be standardized for easy cross-country comparison, and be as transparent as possible. This includes knowing where a country's money is going and from where it is coming. A workshop took place in Bonn, Germany earlier in 2012 on how this could be achieved and on how detailed the reports should be.¹⁴ Antigua and AOSIS want a lot of transparency, and thus aimed to make the report as detailed as possible. Sophie thought that the workshop was a success, but made special note of the fact that the US was only present on the first day of the workshop, after which their absence made for a more productive workshop. The outcome of the workshop was a draft for the contents and requirements of national communications. Even with such a draft, Sophie knew it would be a struggle to get it to pass in negotiations since no developed country wants to report in detail on their financing. Still, 'countries made progress in enhancing how to report public finance, technology transfer, and capacity building. However, they agreed that they need further methodological work and considerations on how best to report private finance'.¹⁵ This type of reporting is important and necessary to evaluate climate finance at the global and a country-by-country level.

Sophie knows that negotiations are fast paced, and thus having the right people in the room during negotiations can be crucial. The meeting discussing the biennial reports has two facilitators, one from New Zealand and the other from China. The representative from New Zealand is very pushy, and does not act neutrally, very much pushing her own country's agenda.¹⁶ Furthermore, New Zealand has already slighted AOSIS before the negotiations even started when it announced that it would not partake in the second phase of the Kyoto treaty.¹⁷ On the other hand, the Chinese representative, with English being his second language, struggles to keep up. China argues that 'it must be allowed to increase its emissions as its economy expands, lifting millions of people out of poverty. It also insists that Western nations bear a historical responsibility for climate change, since their fossil fuel

13 It is a lot more than this, too: <http://insights.wri.org/news/2012/11/making-progress-measurement-reporting-and-verification-mrv-cop-18>; http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/doha_nov_2012/decisions/application/pdf/cop18_cr.pdf

14 <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2012/sbsta/eng/l11.pdf>

15 <http://www.rtcc.org/measuring-and-reporting-success-of-cop18-talks-in-doha/#sthash.DZbn6Tix.dpuf>

16 Sophie thought it was interesting to note that NZ had won the fossil of the day award from CAN: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global/2012/dec/07/doha-climate-talks-final-day-live>

17 <http://www.timesherald.com/article/20121202/NEWS05/121209950/climate-talks-new-zealand-forget-kyoto-write-new-deal>

factories spewed emissions into the atmosphere long before China started industrializing. China therefore wants to retain the sharp division between rich and poor countries that has guided the slow-moving climate talks since they started two decades ago. Rich countries want to get rid of that distinction, which they say doesn't reflect the world today'.¹⁸

Apart from China, many Parties are involved in the negotiations but the main developing country Parties involved are South Africa, Brazil, Pakistan, Grenada and Chile. Ministers from Brazil, South Africa, India and China – also known as the BASIC countries – have called on developed nations to scale up ambition on their emissions reduction targets in Doha as well as a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol to last eight years from 2013-2020.¹⁹ Furthermore, 'the AOSIS, Least Developed Countries and the African Group, some 100 nations, said the Kyoto Protocol should be provisionally applied from 1 January to prevent a gap between phases'.²⁰ While China shows slightly more tolerance to slow mobilization of mitigation funds by developed countries, 'South Africa's ambassador at large for climate change, Nozipho Mxakato-Diseko is not as forgiving of the current economic crises in the West. "Remember that South Africa is a developing country. We are in a perpetual state of economic distress and we never said we'd set our obligations aside," she said. "Financial distress is not new to Africa yet we're doing more. That is why we won't leave Doha with onerous [mitigation] demands on developing nations without financial, technical and logistical support".²¹

In the final days of the COP most of the decision on the biennial reports has been agreed to with the exception of a few details, which are of political nature and have implications for other ongoing negotiations under both the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol. Being of political nature, most negotiators do not have authority to change the position of their country without higher-level approval or prior to seeing the balance of the 'package' of decisions coming out of the COP in their totality. The US delegate is even contacting the White House on some issues surrounding their financial reporting requirements. Marlene Inemwin Moses, Permanent Representative of Nauru to the United Nations and Chair of the AOSIS, voices a common concern 'that perhaps purposefully, the climate negotiations have become very much divorced from the decision-makers in capitals around the world who at the end of the day have to choose to solve this problem or not'.²²

The last couple days of the COP are high level in nature with the arrival of Ministers to take the more political decisions that negotiators do not have the mandate to do. "What gives me frustration is that we are very far behind what science tells us we should be doing," Sophie hears UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) chief

18 http://www.timesherald.com/article/20121202/NEWS05/121209950/climate-talks-new-zealand-forget-kyoto-write-new-deal#full_story

19 <http://www.rtcc.org/basic-countries-call-for-raised-ambition-in-doha/>

20 <http://www.rtcc.org/cop18-live-latest-news-from-day-1-of-doha-climate-summit/>

21 <http://www.rtcc.org/tension-mounts-as-un-climate-talks-enter-final-day-in-doha/>

22 <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/blogs/pacificinstitute/>

Christiana Figueres tell a press conference.²³ Some delegates begin to voice fears of deadlock ahead of ministerial-level talks to crown the annual negotiations under the UN banner.²⁴ The COP President requests the minister from New Zealand and the minister from Gambia to facilitate the high level negotiations on this issue. During these high level sessions, the US's Deputy Special Envoy for Climate Change, Jonathan Pershing, is present as is the chief negotiator for South Africa, Alfred Wills. While the US is seen as a major obstacle in climate talks, Pershing has assured US backing of the negotiations, saying, "The way we see it is that nothing will replace this body. It is a body with universal membership, global participation and one that hopefully will be the foundation of efforts as we go forward".²⁵

Considering the actors, how could you build a position/proposal that could move the Antiguan delegation (or AOSIS, more generally) forward on the issue of reporting? Present their potential alliances and plan of action. Produce a document with the predicted outcome.

23 <http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/international/04-Dec-2012/climate-talks-deadlocked-as-countdown-starts-for-final-week>

24 <http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/international/04-Dec-2012/climate-talks-deadlocked-as-countdown-starts-for-final-week>

25 <http://www.rtcc.org/us-backs-un-climate-change-process-following-rumours-of-withdrawal/>

Outcome

During this time the Group of 77 and China, which includes AOSIS, develop a strong common position in favour of the AOSIS position, therefore giving a stronger, more unified approach. Due to the lengthy experience, political weight and large number of available delegates, South Africa negotiates on behalf of the G77 and China. The South African delegate is very forceful, so the Parties involved come to some agreement on a majority of the document, but smaller items are left in brackets—there are lots of little deals going on until “package” is appeasable for all (though many developed countries already have agreed on deals going into the negotiations; this is unlike developing countries who are overwhelmed by the work load at home and do not have the capacity to do this).

The outcome is the creation of constructive ambiguity around the interpretation of the use of market-based mechanisms in relation to a country’s economy-wide emission reduction target. In exchange for allowing for constructive ambiguity on the interpretation of the use of market-based mechanisms in relation to a developed country’s economy-wide emission reduction target, more detail was given on climate finance reporting requirements. Next year, for the first time, there will be reporting on all these things. Good we got a foot in the door, thinks Sophie. Now there is leverage for AOSIS to push for more transparent reporting in the future. Sophie knew the Parties were not going to agree going into the talks, but this constructive ambiguity with the tables (emissions and trends) made sure that there would be standardized reporting.

AOSIS would still like to see more detail in the finance tables so that people can tell where all the numbers come from. In an ideal world, it would be most beneficial to have an implementing agency and project-by-project level detail when reporting on climate finance. Developed countries tend to not want to report in such detail because it would clearly show that the money is either being used on developed country consultants or developed country implementing agencies. It would also reveal that the funds are not new or additional and may outline double accounting of development finance.

Sophie definitely thought that, in the end, having the G77 (132 countries) coordinated position helped heaps and having Alfred Wills, who is a very experienced negotiator from South Africa, leading was beneficial. Up until the final few days, it was extremely detrimental to the strong position of AOSIS and Antigua and Barbuda to, not only be without a G77 position (which was mostly due to lack of centralised coordination from Algeria, the chair of the G77 in 2012), but also to have a biased, pushy chair from New Zealand who tried to exploit the fact there was not a coordinated position. These dynamics changed once the G77 got our asses in gear and when it became more political, mused Sophie. Ambassador Marlene Moses of Nauru reflected: “For AOSIS, this marked a new level of cooperation with developing countries at the talks, particularly with the LDCs and Africa. Together we represent 100 countries with over 920 million people. This is a trend I

think promises to break new ground at the talks and one I hope continues as we move toward signing the comprehensive climate treaty in 2015.”²⁶

This case is written by Susanna Barrineau as part of the CEMUS Sustainability Case Library, funded by the Division for the Development of Teaching and Learning at Uppsala University. Please check the project website www.csduppsala.uu.se/sustainabilitycases for the most updated version of this case, as well as other cases.

²⁶ <http://aosis.org/amb-moses-gives-climate-talk-at-australia-national-university/>