



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

MEMO

Brussels, 6 November 2013

Questions and Answers on the UN climate change conference in Warsaw

1. Why another climate change conference?

Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)¹ and the Kyoto Protocol² meet once a year at high level to discuss how to advance international action to combat climate change. Poland is hosting this year's conference from 11 to 22 November in Warsaw. It will be the UNFCCC's 19th 'Conference of the Parties' (COP 19) and the Kyoto Protocol's 9th 'Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties' (CMP 9).

The conference will include the third meeting this year of the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action. The Durban Platform has an important dual mandate:

- To draw up a **new climate agreement applying to all countries**, for adoption by 2015 and entry into force in 2020; and
- To identify ways to **achieve further cuts in greenhouse gas emissions before 2020**. This part of the mandate reflects a recognition that the emission pledges for 2020 put forward so far by over 100 countries are collectively not adequate to meet the internationally agreed goal of holding global warming below 2°C compared to the pre-industrial temperature.

2. Is climate change a real threat?

Yes, this is the consensus view among the vast majority of climate scientists.

The most recent assessment of climate science by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), to which around 2,000 climate scientists from around the world contributed, concludes that there is no doubt the climate system is warming. It says human influence on the climate system, through emissions of greenhouse gases, is clear and there is 95-100% certainty that humankind has been the dominant cause of the warming observed since the mid-20th century. During this period the oceans have warmed, glaciers have melted, the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets have lost mass, Arctic sea ice has retreated and sea levels have risen. The global surface temperature has increased by around 0.8°C since reliable records started in 1880.

1 The UNFCCC currently has 195 Parties, including the European Union and all 28 EU Member States

2 The Kyoto Protocol currently has 192 Parties, including the EU and all 28 EU Member States. The difference from the UNFCCC is that the United States and Andorra have not ratified the Kyoto Protocol and Canada withdrew last year.

The report says continued emissions of greenhouse gases will cause further warming and changes to the land, atmosphere and oceans in all regions of the globe. Many of these changes will persist for centuries even after emissions cease. Many extreme weather events are expected to increase in scale and frequency.

Without significant action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, by the end of this century the global surface temperature is likely to be at least 2°C higher than pre-industrial levels and potentially as much as 5°C higher, the report concludes. The international community has agreed that global warming needs to be kept below 2°C compared to the pre-industrial temperature as it is widely considered that climate change could become far more severe and dangerous beyond this level.

3. What results is the EU seeking from the Warsaw conference?

To advance international climate action in a way that is acceptable to all Parties, the European Union believes a balanced package of decisions is needed covering three areas:

- Preparation of the 2015 agreement
- Raising the ambition level of pre-2020 action
- Implementation of measures already agreed.

4. What progress towards the 2015 agreement is needed in Warsaw?

The EU wants to see the Warsaw conference capture the progress made in negotiations so far and plan the work to be done in 2014. This is necessary to ensure that elements for a draft negotiating text will be ready for consideration at the UN climate conference in Lima at the end of next year and the draft text itself will be available well before May 2015.

Warsaw also needs to agree a process for all Parties to formulate ambitious emission commitments for the 2015 agreement. The EU has proposed a process in several steps which has received support from many other Parties and offers a sound basis for a decision.

The agreed process should include:

- A timetable for Parties to prepare their proposed commitments in 2014;
- The provision up-front of the information necessary to ensure the proposed commitments are transparent, quantifiable, verifiable, comparable and ambitious; and
- An international process to assess the proposed commitments before the conclusion of the 2015 agreement. This is needed to ensure the collective level of ambition is informed by science and consistent with the internationally agreed goal of keeping global warming below 2°C compared with the pre-industrial temperature.

5. How would the proposed commitments be assessed?

The EU considers that the ambition and fairness of Parties' proposed commitments should be assessed in light of their contribution to the goal of keeping warming below 2°C. The assessment should use the information Parties provide in formulating their commitments, including objective indicators. It should be transparent and facilitate high ambition. The assessment should be guided by considerations of Parties' evolving capability and responsibility, and should take into account the need for countries to maximise the benefits of climate action in terms of sustainable development.

6. Why does the ambition level of pre-2020 action need to be raised?

The EU and more than 80 other countries, including China and the US, have made commitments to reduce or limit their greenhouse gas emissions up to 2020. These commitments cover over 80% of global emissions. Though some of these commitments are ambitious, collectively they are not ambitious enough to put the world's emissions on a path compatible with keeping global warming below 2°C. The significant gap to be bridged is confirmed in the latest 'emissions gap' report from the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), published on 5 November. The report concludes that **current pledges would lead to warming of 3-4°C**.

Research shows that the earlier global emissions peak and start declining, the greater the chance and the lower the cost of staying below 2°C. Stepping up pre-2020 action will **contribute to an ambitious 2015 agreement** by providing a more ambitious starting level for action to be taken from 2020 onwards. It would also **deliver significant benefits in terms of sustainable development, economic growth, energy security and public health**. The EU therefore believes ministerial engagement is needed on this issue in Warsaw.

7. What can be done to step up action pre-2020?

The EU strongly encourages Parties which have not yet done so to make **emission pledges** for the period up to 2020. It is calling on all Parties to implement their commitments fully and without delay and to consider next year how they could step up efforts so that the emissions gap can be closed as soon as possible.

The EU is also calling for **further international cooperation** on this issue. There are substantial opportunities to reduce emissions through, *inter alia*, increased action on energy efficiency, renewable energy, fluorinated greenhouse gases, short-lived climate pollutants (eg methane, black carbon, ground-level ozone), land use including tropical deforestation, fossil fuel subsidy reform and aviation and maritime emissions. A variety of options can contribute to closing the gap, including directly associating key players such as local government, business and civil society.

The EU would like to see Parties use the UNFCCC as a forum to promote the visibility and transparency of international cooperation, as well as voluntarily report on international cooperative initiatives.

8. Why is it important to phase down HFCs?

Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) are a family of powerful greenhouse gases, some of which have a global warming effect almost 15,000 times higher than carbon dioxide over a 100-year period. They are used as substitutes for ozone-depleting substances in industrial applications such as refrigeration and air conditioning. Though HFC emissions currently account for around 1% of global greenhouse gas emissions, they are growing faster than any other gases and doubling worldwide every five years.

The EU and many other Parties therefore want the Warsaw conference to send a strong signal calling on the Parties to the Montreal Protocol on protecting the ozone layer to take action to phase down the production and consumption of HFCs.

With its 25 years of experience of managing the phase-down of environmentally harmful gases, and its financial mechanism to support developing countries, the Montreal Protocol is the best forum to handle a global phase-down of HFCs. However, the UNFCCC should continue to play its role in accounting for the climate benefits of an HFC phase-down. It should also include HFCs in the setting of future emission reduction targets under the 2015 agreement.

9. What is the EU's position on providing climate finance to developing countries?

Developed countries have committed to jointly mobilise US \$100 billion in climate finance a year by 2020 from a wide variety of sources in the context of meaningful and transparent actions to mitigate emissions in developing countries. As the world's biggest provider of Official Development Assistance and climate finance, the EU and its Member States are committed to contributing their fair share of this amount. The EU underlines the need for fair burden sharing among developed countries. It is also calling on emerging economies to contribute to financing adaptation to climate change and mitigation of emissions in developing countries in line with their responsibilities and evolving capabilities.

While the global figure of US \$100 billion per year will come from a mix of sources - public, private, bilateral, multilateral and alternative - the EU and Member States are continuing to provide public finance. In 2012 EU and a number of Member States announced voluntary contributions for developing countries amounting to €5.5 billion, and the latest assessment shows they are on track to deliver this amount in 2013. This follows the provision of €7.34 billion in 'fast start' finance by the EU and all Member States between 2010 and 2012.

10. How does the EU see the task of scaling up global climate finance by 2020?

Scaling up climate finance will be an iterative process, meaning that it will have to go hand-in-hand with solid preparatory work in both developed and developing countries for scaled-up, effective action on the ground and for improving developing countries' ability to absorb climate finance from both public and private sources. Ambitious domestic climate strategies and policies in developing countries, on both mitigation of emissions and adaptation to climate change, as well as conducive regulatory frameworks will stimulate climate change actions and the financing of viable projects.

Part of the global climate finance is likely to be channelled through the new Green Climate Fund. Progress is being made towards bringing the Fund into operation and this task should be completed by May 2014.

11. What should be done on climate finance in Warsaw?

The high-level ministerial dialogue on climate finance on 20 November should help to build consensus and contribute to preparation of a decision on strategies and approaches for scaling up both public and private finance. The conference should also adopt decisions on arrangements for bringing the Green Climate Fund into operation and on climate finance for adaptation.

The EU would also like the Warsaw conference to accelerate work on transparency standards for climate finance. The variety of future funding sources demands a robust and harmonised framework for monitoring, reporting and verifying climate finance contributions and the development of clear definitions to ensure the necessary transparency and trust.

12. What about the role of adaptation to climate change?

Adaptation will be a central element in the 2015 agreement. The EU is committed to continuing to support developing countries' efforts to adapt to climate change.

The 2015 agreement should underline the commitment of all countries to work towards low-carbon and sustainable climate-resilient development, and should play a role in enhancing the adaptation action countries are already undertaking under the UNFCCC. It should build on and add value to the work being done through existing institutions and processes such as the Adaptation Committee and the national adaptation planning processes (NAPs).

In Warsaw the newest of these institutions, the Adaptation Forum, will meet for the first time. This will help to raise the profile of adaptation in the international negotiations.

13. What is the EU's position on how to address loss and damage associated with the adverse of effects of climate change in developing countries?

In Warsaw a decision is needed on institutional arrangements for addressing loss and damage and on further activities to be undertaken under the work programme for loss and damage. The EU wants Parties to decide on the functions the institutional arrangements would have before considering what form they should take. The EU favours a flexible and efficient arrangement that brings in experts from relevant bodies, both under the UNFCCC and outside it, to discuss solutions and build on existing efforts without duplicating them. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions remains the most important way to limit climate change and thereby the loss and damage it can cause.

14. What is on the agenda regarding reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation ('REDD+')?

The conference aims to complete a package of decisions that would mark an important step in the development of the REDD+ mechanism. Together the five decisions would outline the methodological framework required for a system of results-based payments to developing countries that slow, halt and reverse emissions from deforestation.

15. Are decisions needed in Warsaw to implement the Kyoto Protocol's second commitment period?

The Kyoto Protocol's second commitment period started on 1 January this year and runs until 2020. A decision on formats for reporting and for accounting for transactions is needed in Warsaw to make possible the technical implementation of Parties' emission commitments based on an up-to-date set of rules. These requirements need to be in place in time for Parties to start reporting in 2015 on the fulfilment of their obligations.

16. When will the EU ratify the Kyoto Protocol's second commitment period?

In practice the EU has been applying the targets and rules of the Kyoto Protocol's second commitment period since it started on 1 January this year. On 6 November the European Commission proposed the legislation necessary for the EU to formally ratify the Doha amendment to the Protocol which establishes the second commitment period. The EU, its 28 Member States and Iceland have committed to jointly achieve a 20% reduction in their combined greenhouse gas emissions over the second period compared to the level in 1990 or their other chosen base years. The measures needed for the EU to deliver on this commitment have already been put in place through the 'climate and energy package' of legislation adopted in 2009.

As well as enabling the EU, as a Party to the Kyoto Protocol, to ratify the Doha amendment, the European Commission's proposal also sets out the terms according to which the EU, its Member States and Iceland will fulfil their joint reduction commitment.

The Commission would like the EU and national ratifications to be completed by February 2015. The EU, the Member States and Iceland will then deposit their respective instruments of acceptance at the UN simultaneously, enabling the Doha amendment's entry into force at the same time for all of them.

17. What is needed in Warsaw to enhance the transparency of Parties' action?

Robust systems of monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) of emissions and policy action are essential, both pre- and post-2020, to provide the transparency needed to maintain trust that Parties are delivering on their commitments. In Warsaw a series of decisions is needed to establish MRV requirements and guidelines for both developed countries and developing countries.

For **developed countries**, in addition to the formats for reporting and for accounting for transactions under the Kyoto Protocol mentioned in point 15 above, new reporting guidelines are needed for Parties' inventories of greenhouse gas emissions and for the review of Parties' national communications and biennial reports to the UNFCCC.

Among the issues regarding **developing countries**, a decision is needed on a process for undertaking technical analysis of countries' biennial update reports. Further discussion is needed on guidelines for setting up national MRV systems for domestically-funded emissions action.

18. What is the EU doing to reduce its own greenhouse gas emissions?

The EU recognises that developed countries have a responsibility to take the lead in combating climate change. Europe is committed to becoming a highly energy-efficient, low greenhouse gas-emitting economy. It is working successfully to reduce its emissions of greenhouse gases, which account for around 11% of global emissions (including emissions from deforestation), and to continue to decouple them from economic growth.

With the help of policies and measures implemented at EU and national level over the past decade, the EU and its 28 Member States are on track to comply with, or even over-achieve, their emission reduction commitments under the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol.

The 15 countries which were EU Member States at the time the Kyoto Protocol was agreed committed to reduce their collective emissions during the **2008-2012** period to 8% below the level in a chosen base year (1990 in most cases). This target was over-achieved by a comfortable margin: latest estimates from the European Environment Agency show emissions over the 2008-2012 period averaged 12.2% below base year levels.

With the exception of Cyprus and Malta, the 13 countries which have become EU Member States since 2004 have individual targets under Kyoto's first period to reduce their emissions by 5, 6 or 8%. All are also on track to meet or over-achieve their commitments.

For **2020** the EU has made a unilateral commitment to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to 20% below 1990 levels. It has made a conditional offer to scale up this target to 30% below 1990 levels if other major economies commit to doing their fair share as part of a global and comprehensive climate agreement.

As mentioned in point 16 above, the EU and its Member States have also taken on a 20% reduction target (against base year levels) under the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. The target will be met jointly with Iceland.

The EU is well on track to meet its 2020 targets: in 2011 emissions from the 28 EU Member States were 17% below 1990 levels, while EU GDP grew 45% over the period.

Scientific evidence shows that to prevent global warming of more than 2°C, global emissions will need to be cut by at least half of their 1990 levels by 2050 and to continue being reduced thereafter. In line with this, and in the context of the developed world's responsibility to lead, the EU has set itself the objective of reducing its emissions by 80-95% below 1990 levels by **2050**. The European Commission has published a 'roadmap' which charts a cost-effective pathway for making the transition to a competitive, low carbon European economy that this reduction will require.

The Commission is now preparing the policy architecture for **2030**. Following a broad public consultation earlier this year, the Commission intends to propose a 2030 framework for EU climate and energy policies in January. This will be discussed by EU heads of state and government at their summit in March 2014.

19. Who will negotiate for the European Union in Warsaw?

As a regional economic integration organisation, the European Union is a Party to both the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol. All 28 EU Member States are also Parties in their own right.

Lithuania, as current President of the Council of the European Union, and the European Commission share responsibility for leading negotiations on behalf of the EU in Warsaw. However, representatives from several Member States are designated as lead negotiators for the EU on specific issues and therefore also speak on the EU's behalf in the negotiations on these issues.

The Lithuania Presidency will ensure that the EU position is coordinated so that the EU speaks with 'one voice', even if the message is delivered by different people.

Further information:

[IP/13/1034](#): EU seeks balanced progress to advance climate action at Warsaw conference

DG CLIMA Warsaw page http://ec.europa.eu/clima/events/articles/0086_en.htm