

Shyam Saran Press Conference Transcript Part 1

The meetings that are taking place in the last 2 weeks are really a continuation of what we started off in Bonn at the last meeting of the Ad hoc Working Group (AWG).

Essentially this exercise is to try and reduce the voluminous document we have on the four pillars of the Bali Action Plan (BAP) i.e. Mitigation, Adaptation, Technology and Finance. How to bring this to a point where it can be the basis for an agreed consensus document on Climate Change. Whatever be the nature of the outcome, that still remains to be determined, but essentially we are looking at how to come up with a document that is concise, that is cogent and reflects the consensus in the international community in terms with dealing with Climate change.

And as you know, during this exercise, various delegations, groups of delegations have given their own submissions. These are in the nature of formulations for different sections in the BAP. The exercise which began in Bonn was to see whether or not we could look at formulations which are very close to one another, even though they may not be identical, but after a careful examination of these formulations, was it possible to, if not exactly agree to formulations, identify areas where we have come to a consensus.

For that purpose, the Chairman of the AWG on long term cooperative action, set up consultative groups under coordinators, whose job was to get together delegations and to see if we could identify these areas of convergence.

The areas where we do not have an area of convergence we could identify the issues that we have to work on.

We have not concluded the exercise for the obvious reason that we do not yet have an agreement on the most difficult issues such as mitigation and finance. These issues are still to be sorted out. How long these issues will take to be sorted out is still to be seen. Slow and steady progress is being made. More progress is being made in some areas and less in some other areas. Let me focus attention on some key areas.

Mitigation - The position of India and most developing countries has been that in order to ensure success in Copenhagen it is imperative that there should be an early decision on significant emission reduction targets to be assumed by developed countries in the second commitment period phase of KP for those countries which are party to it.

On that particular exercise we have made virtually no progress.

As you are aware, in Bonn, India and 36 other developing countries presented a proposal which would have resulted in at least 40% reduction in the emissions of the developed countries by 2020 with 1990 as a baseline. There has been no response to that proposal.

The additional difficulty is what to do about the developed countries which are not party to KP and this particularly concerns the US.

In the case of the US there is an additional problem as the legislation that was supposed to go through - the legislation on climate change, better known as the Waxman Markey Bill which was supposed to be approved through the Senate process hopefully before Copenhagen, now seems to be unlikely. And there is the issue of the comparability of effort of what other developed countries are prepared to do like the EU and what would be the nature and scope of commitments that the US would be willing to take.

Because of the uncertainty now surrounding the legislation in the US and a renewal of the debate on comparability, both in the scope of the commitment as well as nature of the commitment, there is now a concerted effort to somehow put the KP aside and to say that we need some kind of a new instrument or a new protocol in which the commitments of both those that are part to the KP and those that are not party to the KP could be reflected and additionally, which concerns us, the commitments of developing countries, or at least the major developing countries could be reflected.

So you are now seeing a proposal for a new kind of instrument- an instrument that would have a certain universality which would mean that the differentiation that is at the heart of the UNFCCC which is that developed countries have one set of obligations in recognition of their historical responsibility and developing countries would have another set of obligations, taking into account the fact that they are not responsible for climate change, they are the ones who do not have the capabilities in terms of dealing with climate change.

This whole fundamental principle of common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities which all of us consider to be the basis of the UNFCCC, that is sought to be blurred by these suggestions that we need to have something different now which would incorporate the commitments of both the developed countries and the developing countries and it would have the advantage of enabling us to get over the problem of incomparability between the US and other developed countries.

The result of this is that since the US is not in a position to indicate very firm targets as legal obligation because the legislation has not gone through there is also a parallel move to downgrade the level of their commitments. We are now seeing formulations which are talking about some kinds of schedules in the nature of what we have in the WTO or we could have some kinds of registration where the actions, as opposed to legal obligations of the different parties would be reflected. Far from enhancing the level of obligations which is there in the KP we could end up with a level of obligation which is even less than what we had in the KP.

This is the danger that we as developing countries are resisting. We are saying you can not unilaterally set aside the KP.

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