



UN climate talks: The time for talking is over

By Sven Harmeling

After a week of deliberation and discussion at the UN climate talks in Warsaw there are few, if any, signs of [the urgent progress so desperately needed to tackle the climate crisis](#).

As yet, there are no measures on the table to drastically reduce emissions or ramp up climate finance – which is not that surprising given that critical decisions can only be taken by ministers. Neither, though, have any significant steps been taken to build the technical foundations of a new and ambitious climate deal by 2015.

On ‘loss and damage’ from climate change impacts, already a key issue for people living in poverty who are increasingly facing the consequences of extreme weather and climate-related crises, the negotiations kicked off with a number of new proposals related to the ‘institutional arrangements’ required to create an international loss and damage mechanism. More than 130 developing countries joined forces as part of the G77, alongside China and the Small Island Developing States.

But, they were not entirely alone in suggesting steps to help address loss and damage. The US, EU and Norway offered proposals that go some way towards identifying a number of common positions on the issue; even though they still seem to misunderstand the fundamentals about why tackling loss and damage is of utmost importance for developing countries. We NGOs also pitched in with our take on what a loss and damage mechanism might look like – and why it’s so urgently needed – [in a new CARE, ActionAid, WWF joint report](#). Loss and damage is far from dealt with and discussions will continue into the second week. It will now be up to ministers to battle it out, though this won’t be an easy task. The ultimate goal must still be to establish an international mechanism on loss and damage here in Warsaw.

On adaptation, the next phase of the Nairobi Work Programme on Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability has been high on the agenda although discussions on specific elements and activities have been deferred to 2014. Discussions on National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), meanwhile, have focussed on the need for countries to provide finance to help develop NAPs in Least Developed Countries, as well as other developing countries. Assessment and revision of the existing technical guidelines on NAPs will now also mostly happen next year.

The Adaptation Committee, the primary ‘body’ that deals with adaptation under the Convention, has also been under the spotlight as governments have discussed its latest report and what it needs to focus on during the coming 12 months. There are some serious issues to deal with. The Adaptation Fund is in a critical state of health with dire finances and this has not gone unnoticed by developing countries or by civil society. Developed countries need to put money on the table urgently so the Adaptation Fund can meet its goal of raising an additional USD 100 million for concrete adaptation projects by the end of 2013. Looking ahead to beyond 2020, the role of adaptation in the Convention will

need to be strengthened considerably and negotiations on how to do this need to build on the work of and progress achieved by existing UNFCCC institutions. In particular, massively increasing adaptation finance for vulnerable countries will remain a core task – both now and in the future.

[Following last year's landmark decision at COP18 in Doha](#), gender has been a key area of concern this week. Governments took part in a gender workshop which considered how to increase gender equality and participation in the UNFCCC negotiations and governing bodies and addressed how they might promote a more comprehensive approach to achieving gender equitable climate action. As yet, no decisions on either have been taken – nor has the widely discussed Gender Action Plan been concluded. Consolidation and resulting action is likely to be one of the outcomes of a dedicated gender day in the second week.

On agriculture, it's perhaps fair to say that the negotiations ended before they had begun. Although the UNFCCC held a workshop on agriculture and adaptation, which highlighted the importance of adapting to climate change in agriculture, with considerable mention of the particular challenges faced by smallholder farmers, the workshop was astonishingly gender-blind. Given the crucial role of women in agriculture, particularly in many of the developing countries where CARE works, and given the existing gender inequalities faced by many people living in poverty, this was surprising to say the least. More surprising, though, was the fact that developed and developing countries could not reach agreement on actually starting negotiations on agriculture this year – and they were moved to... yes, 2014.

As ministers set off for Warsaw there is much work to do. On Tuesday, the Adaptation Committee will hold its first *Annual Adaptation Forum*, which will host a number of prominent speakers including the President of Tanzania, Lord Nicholas Stern, and Mary Robinson. On Wednesday, ministers from Denmark and Uganda will chair a high-level ministerial on climate finance, expected to shed some light on how developed countries aim to scale-up climate finance to the promised USD100 billion by 2020.

Finally, on Thursday ministers will begin a high-level dialogue on the new climate agreement to be reached by 2015 and discuss how to scale-up ambition on the road to Paris and beyond. Ministers will need to redouble their efforts if they are to achieve the step change in action and ambition which is so urgently needed to tackle the growing scale and pace of climate change and its impacts.

Of course, let's not forget that the work of this COP will be measured in outcomes not words. The science is clear. The impacts of climate change are growing in frequency and intensity. Lives and livelihoods are under threat. For the world's poorest people and for us all, talking is just not enough. Week two must focus on action.

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Links:

CARE's expectations paper for COP19:

http://www.careclimatechange.org/files/No_Excuse_for_InactionCAREs_demands_for_UN_climate_talks_in_Warsaw.pdf

New CARE, ActionAid, WWF report, Tackling the climate reality:

http://www.careclimatechange.org/files/tackling_the_climate_reality.pdf

Gender decision from COP18:

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2012/12/cop-18-adopts-a-decision-promoting-gender-balance-in-climate-change-negotiations/>