Parties reiterate views at Shared Vision contact group

Poznan 8 Dec (By Lim Li Lin) -- The Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA) held its meeting of the contact group on shared vision on Friday 5 December. The issue of the contact group had been the subject of debate at the opening of the AWG-LCA. A number of developing countries had questioned the disproportionate amount of time allocated to “shared vision” during the Poznan climate talks. It was decided that a contact group session for an hour-and-half would be held.

The Chair of the Contact Group on Shared Vision, Michael Zammit Cutajar of Malta, opened the session by explaining that he would use the structure of the Chair’s Summary of the workshop on shared vision to guide the discussions. (The workshop chair was Luis Machado of Brazil). The Chair’s Summary has two substantive sections: guiding principles, scope and objectives of a shared vision for long-term cooperative action; and a framework for implementing the elements of the Bali Action Plan. The framework section includes a section on the long-term global goal for emission reductions, which is the most controversial issue.

The Chair invited comments on the four paragraphs on guiding principles, scope and objectives of a shared vision. He suggested that the issue of the figures for the long-term global goal could be taken up in the next meeting of the AWG-LCA in March next year. He said that the table in the IPCC’s Fourth Assessment Report which specifies a “substantial deviation” or “deviation from baseline” for non-Annex I countries as a group as well as the figures proposed by China in the workshop on shared vision could also be taken up then.

Costa Rica, on behalf of the G77 and China said that the shared vision is composed of the four building blocks of the Bali Action Plan, to enable the full, effective and sustained implementation of the Convention, now, up to and beyond 2012, in order to achieve its ultimate objective, which balances stabilization, adaptation and sustainable development.

It stressed that in accordance with the Convention, the Shared Vision must promote the right to and integrate the legitimate priority of sustainable development and poverty eradication in non-Annex I Parties.

The Shared Vision shall be guided by the provisions and principles of the Convention, in particular, the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, equity, precaution and prevention, it said. On financing, it said that developed country Parties must fully implement their commitments to provide new and additional, adequate and predictable financial resources, necessary for mitigation and adaptation in developing countries.

Efforts to address climate change should not be impaired by the current financial crisis, and should receive an equally urgent global response. Under a shared vision for long-term cooperative action, financing and technology transfer must be measurable, reportable and verifiable. To this end,
the G77 and China has submitted a proposal on a financial architecture, it said.

On technology, Costa Rica insisted that Annex I Parties must fully implement their technology commitments including providing financing and support, transfer of and access to environmentally sound technologies and know-how to developing countries. To this end, the G77 and China has proposed a multilateral technology fund under the authority of the COP. The fund should implement a Technology Action Plan to enhance action at all stages of the technology cycle, it said.

On the relationship between adaptation and mitigation, it said that both adaptation and mitigation must be addressed as equal priorities, redressing past imbalances. If Annex I Parties do not reduce their increasing emissions and take urgent mitigation actions, the cost of adaptation would significantly increase.

On adaptation, it said that negative impacts are already occurring worldwide. Non-Annex I Parties are the most vulnerable and have already been forced into adaptation without appropriate support and at their own cost. Annex I Parties have the commitment to provide assistance to non-Annex I Parties in order to meet the costs of urgent implementation of adaptation actions and building long-term resilience, including ecosystem based adaptation and use of traditional knowledge.

On mitigation, it said that all Annex I Parties, given their historic responsibility, and as shown by the latest scientific evidence, are obliged to reduce their emissions, primarily domestically. They should have mid-term absolute emission reduction commitments which must be measurable, reportable and verifiable, and should achieve deeper reduction targets by 2030 and 2050.

Building on their current domestic efforts, non-Annex I Parties could further advance nationally appropriate mitigation actions in the context of sustainable development and if supported and enabled by technology, financing and capacity building, in a measurable, reportable and verifiable manner, it said. It concluded that non-Annex I Parties envision a long-term goal which successfully integrates the finance, technology, and capacity building needed to support mitigation and adaptation actions, delivered through a coherent approach and based on the best available scientific information.

The EU began by stressing that the problem is global and that a global solution is needed, based on respective capabilities. The shared vision, including the long-term global goal is the overarching element to ensure safe and sustainable low carbon development, and should guide short and medium-term mitigation and adaptation. The shared vision should be science based, is relevant to all the BAP building blocks and recognizes the need for scaling up finance and investment. The long-term global goal should provide guidance and inspiration, and should guide concrete short and medium-term action. It should take into account equity, common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. There should be a peaking year and deep cuts are needed. There should also be clear and ambitions mid-term targets. It is the balance of the Bali Action Plan and action is required by developed and developing countries. Developing countries need to deviate from business as usual, on the basis of support by developed countries, to achieve the goal, it said.

Japan stressed that shared vision is a key issue and includes a long-term goal. It said that the Hokkaido G8 meeting agreed that the global goal should be at least 50% reduction by 2050, and should be met by a global response in particular by all major economies in accordance with common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. It added that at the major economies meeting, it was stated that the transition to a low carbon society would require technological and lifestyle innovation and change, and public awareness. Innovative technology will play a central role, and innovative research and development has to be focused, identified and emphasized.

Japan said that all countries are required to take action on the basis of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. It stressed on respective capabilities. It said that it
was uncomfortable with paragraph 17 and 18 of the Chair’s Summary of the shared vision workshop especially with the mid-term goal of reducing emissions by 25-40% of 1990 levels by 2020.

Indonesia said there should be a mid and long-term global goal, which should be based on latest scientific findings. Annex I Parties should fulfil their Kyoto first commitment period obligations. A sustainable development strategy must be pursued, in accordance with each country’s circumstances and capabilities.

South Africa said that what is important in the discussion of the numbers for the shared vision is what support will be required, and what is the means of implementation to achieve them. There should be a shared vision also on what the means will be.

Switzerland, for the Environmental Integrity Group, said that temperature rise needs to stabilize at 2 degrees Celsius, and Annex I Parties should reduce their emissions by 50 – 85% by 2050 compared to 2000 levels. There should be a mid-term target, and developed and developing countries should contribute towards reaching this objective. Developed countries should meet their quantified emission limitation reduction objectives and their nationally appropriate mitigation commitments and action, and provide finance and technology for developing countries. Developed countries should be a model for developing countries, and market mechanisms and the carbon market are important. Adaptation is an integral part of the shared vision, it said.

Barbados, on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), expressed its frustration that there was only one session of the shared vision contact group during the Poznan meeting. It said that the shared vision must safeguard the most vulnerable countries. It should be based on the best available science, and the Precautionary Principle.

The US said that the shared vision is an overview. It had not yet made a firm determination on this issue but it supported it only if it helps the discussions on the four elements of the Bali Action Plan. There is need for a strategic approach in the operational aspects of the BAP that would lead the process to the most effective outcome. New scientific information, the most recent economic circumstances, and the evolving capabilities of countries must be taken into account.

Bangladesh suggested that the methods and criteria for apportioning the guiding principles should be added to the Chair’s Summary.

India said that some Parties have spoken about global rights for all humans. The full and complete realization of these rights should not be later than the date for stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations. Common but differentiated responsibilities requires accounting for historical responsibility as countries have very different responsibility. Respective capabilities are related to historical accumulations. There is an almost perfect correlation with historical responsibility and per capita emissions. The principle goes to the heart of how we will permanently divide the world between rich and poor and first and second class citizens. The IPCC findings are not policy recommendations, and the studies that some delegations seem to have premised their approach on are only personal opinions of the researchers on what are the appropriate rights to the atmospheric resources. It is not acceptable to have this as a fundamental governing principle, it said.

Australia highlighted what it considered important in the Chair’s Summary including the urgency of the need to address climate change and the importance of a renewed spirit of cooperation. Sustainable development and safeguarding the most vulnerable are important. The shared vision should be the framework for integrating the four pillars of the Bali Action Plan. Some of the principles mentioned in the Chair’s Summary (e.g. common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities) are principles in the Convention, while others are less embedded in the Convention.

China said that the principles of differentiated responsibilities and equity would require allowing developing countries the space to develop. The
limited atmospheric resources have been excessively occupied by the developed countries. The scope of the shared vision should be the full, effective implementation of the Convention and the four building blocks of the BAP. Its objective is the ultimate objective of the Convention. The discussion could serve to provide general guidance to the four building blocks and the overall aim to reach an agreed outcome at the 15th COP.

Saudi Arabia said that the Convention is the framework, and the shared vision does not provide a new framework.

Iceland stressed on the urgency to address climate change, the importance of a renewed spirit of cooperation, the role of innovation and technology, and the gender dimension. It suggested that the Chair’s Summary should separate between principles that are generally supported, and principles that were highlighted by only some Parties.

Brazil said that shared vision has a comprehensive scope and must include all four building blocks of the BAP. There should continually be new information on the shared vision and what it should be. The work of the AWG-LCA should be towards defining the implications of the Convention principles for the four building blocks and the work in the BAP. The principles of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, the right to development, and equitable burden sharing are important. Historical responsibility is something that evolves, and has a view toward the future. It is not about looking at the past and simply presenting a structure for all time. The objective of a shared vision is for the full, effective and sustained implementation of the Convention in the context of a global effort, it concluded.

The Philippines said that the shared vision involves all four BAP building blocks. Climate change is an urgent problem, but it has been 15 years since the entry into force of the Convention, and it is way past the time that we must act. It hoped that the process would not be a set back to before 1992, when the Convention was adopted. It stressed that sustainable development is not just part of the solution, it is the core of the solution. It is embedded in Articles 2, 3 and 4 of the Convention, especially Article 4.7 which specifies that the extent to which developing countries fulfil their obligations depends on the support from developed countries on finance and technology. It said that financing is a commitment by developed countries, a debt to be paid on the use of the global atmospheric space, and is not an act of charity or solidarity. Neither is it a commercial venture. The basis is equity, and only “in accordance with” common but differentiated responsibilities, which is the context in which we agreed to “respective capabilities”.

Pakistan said that public resources need to be scaled up, and that there is a gap in financing.

Argentina said that the shared vision does not provide the framework for the four BAP pillars but rather is the integrating element, an overarching principle and approach. It said that there needs to be a very frank and open discussion on what is meant by equity. It stressed the importance of Article 4.7, and said that the four building blocks should be discussed in their relevant sections and not under the shared vision.

Malaysia stressed the importance of the principles of common but differentiated responsibility, historical responsibility and equity, and that the BAP is about enhancing the implementation of the Convention. It said that any divergence, especially discussions of differentiation were a waste of time as it is not recognized in the Convention.

Tuvalu stressed the polluter pays principle, and the precautionary principle, which should be linked to the latest scientific information. It said that the principle of state responsibility is also important. It stressed that all Parties should contribute to emissions reductions.