Nick Smith, Tim Groser

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NZ joins Copenhagen Accord on climate change

The Government today announced that New Zealand is joining the Copenhagen Accord on climate change and is submitting its existing conditional 2020 target range.

“The Copenhagen Accord is a constructive step forward to developing a comprehensive global deal on climate change,” Climate Change Issues Minister Nick Smith said.

“Joining this accord reinforces New Zealand’s ongoing commitment to doing our fair share to resolving this global problem.”

Minister Responsible for International Climate Change Negotiations Tim Groser said New Zealand was disappointed the Copenhagen conference did not make progress on a comprehensive and legally binding agreement.

“What this accord does is provide a framework for more progress to be made,” Mr Groser said. “It aims to set a limit on the temperature rise to 2°C, improves the transparency for developing countries to list their mitigation targets and actions, and acknowledges the need for new mechanisms for funding and technology.”

Under the Copenhagen Accord developed countries have to submit details of their proposed emissions target for 2020. New Zealand has submitted a conditional emissions reduction target range of 10% to 20% below 1990 levels by 2020.

These conditions are:

- a global agreement that sets the world on a pathway to limit global temperature rises of not more than 2°C
- comparable efforts by other countries
- actions by advanced and major emitting developing countries fully commensurate with their respective capabilities.
- effective rules governing land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF)
- full recourse to a broad and efficient international carbon market

“New Zealand’s 2020 target will be less than the -10 to -20% range in the event that these conditions are not met as has been previously stated publicly and in international negotiations,” the Ministers said.

“For our 2020 target to be representative of our fair share, other developed countries will need to set higher targets. Alternatively, New Zealand will need to reduce its target to ensure comparability.

“New Zealand joining the Copenhagen Accord sits well with our Emissions Trading Scheme, our international initiative for the Global Research Alliance on agricultural emissions and our wide range of complementary climate policies.”Copenhagen Accord:

Questions & Answers

1. What is the Copenhagen Accord?

The Copenhagen Accord is the document the majority of countries at the COP 15 Conference in Copenhagen agreed to at the final plenary session of the UNFCCC on 18 December 2009.

The Accord, negotiated between 26 countries including the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Japan, Australia, Ethiopia, Mexico, Sudan, Brazil, South Africa, India, China, Bangladesh, Grenada, Denmark, Russia, the Maldives, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Indonesia, South Korea, Norway, Lesotho, Algeria and Columbia, is not legally binding, and does not commit countries to agree to a binding successor agreement to the Kyoto Protocol which expires in 2012.

The Accord maintains the status quo pre COP 15 in Copenhagen and as such is a letter of intent to pick up where negotiations left off rather than providing the binding agreement generally expected from Copenhagen.

The Accord provides a framework for more progress to be made ahead of Cop 16 in Mexico in December. It aims to agree a limit on the temperature rise to 2°C, improve the transparency for developing countries to list their mitigation targets and actions, and acknowledges the need for new mechanisms for funding and technology.

2. What does the Copenhagen Accord say about climate change?

The Accord underlines that climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time and highlights the crucial role of reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

The Accord says that to prevent greenhouse gas emissions significantly impacting the global climate through temperature increases that the increase in global temperature should be below 2°C. To achieve this, the Accord states that deep cuts in global emissions are required according to science as soon as possible.

The Accord recognises that climate change will have unbalanced impacts on vulnerable countries and therefore there is a need to establish a comprehensive adaptation programme including international funding support.

3. How has New Zealand joined the Copenhagen Accord?

Cabinet today made the decision to join the Copenhagen Accord and the Minister for Climate Change Issues Nick Smith has communicated this to the UNFCCC secretariat in Bonn.

4. What has New Zealand signed up to?

Under the Accord developed countries have to submit details of their proposed emissions target for 2020. New Zealand has reaffirmed its conditional emissions reduction target range of 10% to 20% below 1990 levels by 2020 first tabled in Bonn late last year. This is a similar response to other developed countries who have announced their support of the Accord, including Australia and the EU, with similar conditions.

Supporting this Accord reinforces New Zealand’s ongoing commitment to doing our fair share on climate change and maintains the international negotiating position the Government took to Copenhagen.

6. What was the deadline for signing up to the Copenhagen Accord?

New Zealand has received mixed signals on the timing for countries to associate with the

Accord. Yvo de Boer, Executive-Secretary for the UNFCCC has said the deadline of 31January 2010 was a soft deadline and that countries could still support the Accord after that date.

However, Cabinet determined it was preferable to join the Accord by the publicly declared deadline.

6.What climate change mitigation and adaptation financing will the Copenhagen Accord establish?

Developed countries would provide new and additional short-term funding of $30 billion from 2010-2012 to assist with adaptation and mitigation measures in the poorest developing countries. There is no indication in the Accord as to how this would be apportioned between individual contributors. On-going funding of $100 billion per year should be made by 2020 to help developing countries cut carbon emissions through technology development and transfer.

7. Will the Accord become a legally binding document?

There is little indication from the major developing economies that they see the Accord becoming legally binding.

The international negotiations have a two-track process and developing countries do not want to see these merged or replaced with the Accord. On the other hand a number of developed countries have been advocating that the two-tracks must merge if we are to achieve a long lasting agreement binding all industrialised countries.

In principle the Accord is no more than a letter of intent to continue discussions along the lines leading up to and during COP 15 in Copenhagen.

The Accord cannot be a successor to the Kyoto Protocol as it combines issues from both tracks of the existing negotiations. It also continues the separation of countries in the arbitrary Annex 1 and non-Annex 1 camps which are fast becoming outdated in terms of development and wealth.

Note: the Copenhagen Accord can be found at:

http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/cop_15/application/pdf/cop15_cph_auv.pdf

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