



Climate Action Network

2013 – 2015 Review of the UNFCCC

May 30th, 2015

Climate Action Network International (CAN-I) is the world's largest network of civil society organizations working together to promote government action to address the climate crisis, with more than 900 members in over 100 countries. www.climatenetwork.org

In 2012, the COP decided to establish a structured expert dialogue (SED) with the aim to support the work of a Joint Contact Group of SBSTA and SBI and to ensure the scientific integrity of a review in 2013-2015 on the adequacy of the long-term global goal in light of the ultimate objective of the Convention. Through a focused exchange of views, information and ideas SBSTA and SBI should give recommendations in relation to party commitments. The message of the SED could not be clearer: 'Climate change is here and it is a matter of survival'.

The SED has shown to be an appropriate vehicle for open and substantive discussions between Parties on the scientific knowledge and evidence based climate policy formulation. It considered scientific information, especially the latest IPCC Report (Fifth Assessment Report), relevant to the review through regular scientific workshops and expert meetings and assisted in the preparation and consideration of synthesis reports on the review.

Since its inception, the SED has held five meetings. After the last meeting in February 2015, the Co-Facilitators were requested to prepare a final factual report on the SED. This report summarizes the face-to-face dialogue between over 70 experts and Parties on: "the adequacy of the long-term global goal in the light of the ultimate objective of the Convention; and the overall progress made towards achieving the long-term global goal, including a consideration of the commitments under the Convention."¹ It includes a technical summary and a compilation of the summary reports on the four sessions of the SED.

The aim of this paper is twofold: To get greater recognition of the significance of the 1.5°C goal from all stakeholders and to make recommendations on how to translate the findings of the SED into concrete outcomes, in the context of the UNFCCC negotiations. The Report on

¹ UNFCCC: Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI)/Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) (2015): Report on the structured expert dialogue on the 2013–2015 review. Note by the co-facilitators of the structured expert dialogue. See:

http://unfccc.int/documentation/documents/advanced_search/items/6911.php?preref=600008454#beg

the structured expert dialogue on the 2013-2015 review will be the main basis for CANs analysis.

A. Main messages of the structured expert dialogue on the 2013–2015 review

Overview

The report of the Co-Facilitations on the SED begins with general statements on global warming and its dynamics. The SED report gives a good picture of the irreversible consequences of overshooting, on the relationship between cumulative emissions and global warming and on the need to reduce global CO₂ emissions in the short to medium term. The report states that even a 3°C limit requires a substantial reduction in global GHG emissions and fundamental transformation of the energy system is needed (see also para. 17, 19, 21, 23 and 26 of the Report on the structured expert dialogue on the 2013–2015 review.)

“Limiting global warming to below 2 °C necessitates a radical transition (deep decarbonization now and going forward), not merely a fine tuning of current trends.“

1. Impacts of Climate Change differ substantially between 1.5°C and 2°C.

The first key message of the SED is that even a warming of 2 degrees (the objective of the Convention) would already lead to catastrophic impacts, slow down economic growth and hinder poverty reduction efforts considerably (see para. 107, 108, 110, 114, 115 and 117 of the Report on the structured expert dialogue on the 2013–2015 review)

For CAN, aiming for a ‘below 1.5 degrees’ limit would avoid and weaken numerous impacts of climate change and is not necessarily more costly than pursuing the ‘below 2 degrees’ limit.

„114. In terms of **feasibility, costs and risks** of the 1.5 °C scenarios, the IPCC indicated that overshooting is a typical feature of low-emission scenarios, with its related risks. Higher emission scenarios come with higher risk of feedbacks that accelerate climate change, so keeping the temperature rise below 1.5 °C could help control carbon cycle feedbacks and reduce risks from them. The technologies required for the 1.5 °C scenarios are the same as for the 2 °C pathway, but need to be deployed faster, and energy demand needs to be reduced earlier, implying a higher cost than in the 2 °C scenarios.“

2. The 2°C limit should be seen as a defence line, while less warming would avoid substantial impacts.

The second key message of the SED is that the world is not on track for a path towards a ‘below 2 degrees’ scenario. Past and recent global GHG emissions have accelerated, an emissions gap exists, and the current Cancun pledges are more consistent with pathways limiting global warming to 3°C. (see para 67, 68, 70, 72, 87 of the Report on the structured expert dialogue on the 2013-2015 review.)

„67. Regarding **past and current global GHG emissions**, WGIII found that growth in global GHG emissions has accelerated despite mitigation efforts and the global economic crisis, and that emission growth between 2000 and 2010 was greater than in any of the previous three decades (...). In addition, about half of the cumulative anthropogenic CO₂ emissions between 1750 and 2010 occurred in the last 40 years. The IPCC and WMO also underscored that this happened while roughly half of those emissions were absorbed by the oceans and the terrestrial biosphere.“

3. Limiting global warming below 2°C is still feasible and will bring about many co-benefits, but poses substantial technological, economic and institutional challenges.

The third key message of the SED report is that keeping warming below 2 degrees is still achievable. Deep emission cuts are needed to keep warming below 2 degrees and would require approximately 90 per cent scaling-up of low-carbon energy technologies by 2050 compared with 2010 and full decarbonization of energy systems. However, achieving this would not significantly affect global gross domestic product growth. It is helpful to mention that mitigation action comes with co-benefits, in particular for human health, biodiversity conservation and other societal goals. (See para. 42 46, 47, 48, 49, 51, 52 and 55 of the Report on the structured expert dialogue on the 2013-2015 review.)

„52. Mitigation action comes with **co-benefits**, in particular for human health, biodiversity conservation and other societal goals, that are however challenging to define and quantify. The IEA emphasized that in many cases these non-climate drivers are the real reasons that governments take action and should therefore be harnessed.“

B. Key recommendations drawn from the SED for the UNFCCC negotiations

CAN suggests that the deliberations of the SED should lead to the initiation of a COP-decision in Paris that will strengthen the long-term goal of the Convention to ‘1.5 degrees’. CAN would like the COP decision to operationalise this temperature threshold. Climate Action Network’s proposed long term goal does exactly that - "phasing out all fossil fuel emissions and phasing in a 100% renewable energy future with sustainable energy access for all, as early as possible, but not later than 2050".²

The COP decision should also acknowledge that the Parties are not on track to meet the previously agreed long term goal and therefore parties need to reduce their emissions substantially to prevent the impacts from climate change.

Finally, the SED did not address several important issues that should contribute to inform the 2013-2015 review. Firstly, the issue of international bunker fuel emissions from aviation and maritime transport although this is a source of growing GHG emissions with no regulation in effect to cap emissions. CAN calls for the COP in Paris to send a much clearer signal than

² Climate Action Network (2014): CAN Position, Long Term Global Goals for 2050, see: <http://www.climatenetwork.org/publication/can-position-long-term-global-goals-2050>

before to ICAO and IMO to introduce global regulations on limitation and reduction of GHG emissions (including the warming effect of contrails and cirrus clouds) from these sectors.

Secondly, CAN notes that the SED did not consider in sufficient depth the social implications of the long-term global goal (such as consequences for human rights, mobility and labour). Such information is of particular importance for the review, particularly considering that – as noted in the co-facilitators’ report – assessing the adequacy of the long term global goal involves value judgment at the global, regional and local levels (key message 3). When considering the outcomes of the SED and the report by the co-facilitators, CAN invites the SBI and SBSTA to also consider additional information submitted by several parties. These issues should be addressed during the next periodic review.