

Conference in overtime on future of climate talks

December 10 2011, By ARTHUR MAX , Associated Press



Protesters hold a night vigil as talks at the climate change summit stall in Durban, South Africa, Friday, Dec 9, 2011. Negotiators from Europe, small islands threatened by rising oceans and the world's poorest countries sought to keep alive the only treaty governing global warming and to move on to the next stage, struggling against an unlikely alliance of the United States, China and India. (AP Photo/Schalk van Zuydam)

(AP) -- Deep into overtime, negotiators from 194 nations worked straight through a second night, parsing drafts and seeking compromises to map out the future pathway to fight global warming.

Delegates, working on little sleep, huddled with allies to prepare for a decisive meeting later Saturday, when it will become clear whether the diverse and long-bickering parties can come together on a plan to extend and broaden the global campaign to limit [greenhouse gas emissions](#).

"We think it's important not to give up now. We have come a long way," said a weary Connie Hedegaard, the European commissioner on climate issues, speaking more than 12 hours after the two-week conference had been scheduled to close Friday evening.

Small island countries and the world's poorest nations lined up behind an EU plan to begin talks on a future agreement that would come into effect no later than 2020.

As negotiations progressed, the United States and India eased objections to compromise texts, but China remained a strong holdout, EU officials said on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the continuing talks.

Under discussion was an extension of binding pledges by the EU and a few other industrial countries to cut [carbon emissions](#) under the [Kyoto Protocol](#). Those commitments expire next year.

The EU, the primary bloc bound by commitments under the 1997 protocol, conditioned an extension on starting new talks on an accord to succeed Kyoto. The talks would conclude by 2015, allowing five years for it to be ratified by national legislatures. The plan insists the new agreement equally oblige all countries - not just the few industrial powers - to abide by [emission targets](#).

Developing countries are adamant that the Kyoto commitments continue since it is the only agreement that compels any nation to reduce emissions. [Industrial countries](#) say the document is deeply flawed because it makes no demands on heavily polluting [developing countries](#). It was for that reason that the United States never ratified it.

Host country South Africa organized the final stages of negotiations into "indabas," a Zulu-language word meaning important meetings that

carries the weight of a rich African culture.

At the indaba, the chief delegate from fewer than 30 countries, each with one aide, sat around an oblong table to thrash over text. Dozens of delegates were allowed to stand and observe from the periphery of the room but not to participate.

After the first meeting that ran overnight into Friday morning, conference president Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, who is South Africa's foreign minister, drafted an eight-point compromise on the key question of the legal form of a post-2020 regime. The wording would imply how tightly countries would be held accountable for their emissions.

But the text was too soft for the Europeans and for the most vulnerable countries threatened by rising oceans, more frequent droughts and fiercer storms.

With passion rarely heard in a negotiating room, countries like Barbados pleaded for language instructing all parties to dig deeper into their carbon emissions and to speed up the process, arguing that the survival of their countries and millions of climate-stressed people were at risk.

Nkoana-Mashabane drafted new text after midnight Saturday that largely answered those criticisms. The U.S. told the indaba it could live with the language, but the reactions of China and India were not clear.

©2011 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Citation: Conference in overtime on future of climate talks (2011, December 10) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-12-conference-overtime-future-climate.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private

study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.