

UN negotiators plot route to climate pact

February 12 2015, by Mariette Le Roux



Chinese labourers work in a coal chemical factory in Huaibei, east China's Anhui province on August 14, 2013

Negotiators haggled on the penultimate day of UN climate talks in Geneva Thursday over how best to streamline the bloated draft of a long-awaited pact the world's nations must sign in December.

Five days of discussions since Sunday have seen the blueprint swell from 37 to over 90 pages—until all countries were satisfied their views were included.

And while the process was widely hailed for creating a sense of common purpose and goodwill, it yielded an unwieldy text with a variety of alternative approaches, often reflecting country positions that diametrically oppose one another.

As a result, hard choices will have to be made in the months to come.

"Many of these additional elements have been placed in there merely as a precaution... as bargaining chips," French [climate](#) ambassador Laurence Tubiana said Thursday of the draft document's added bulk.

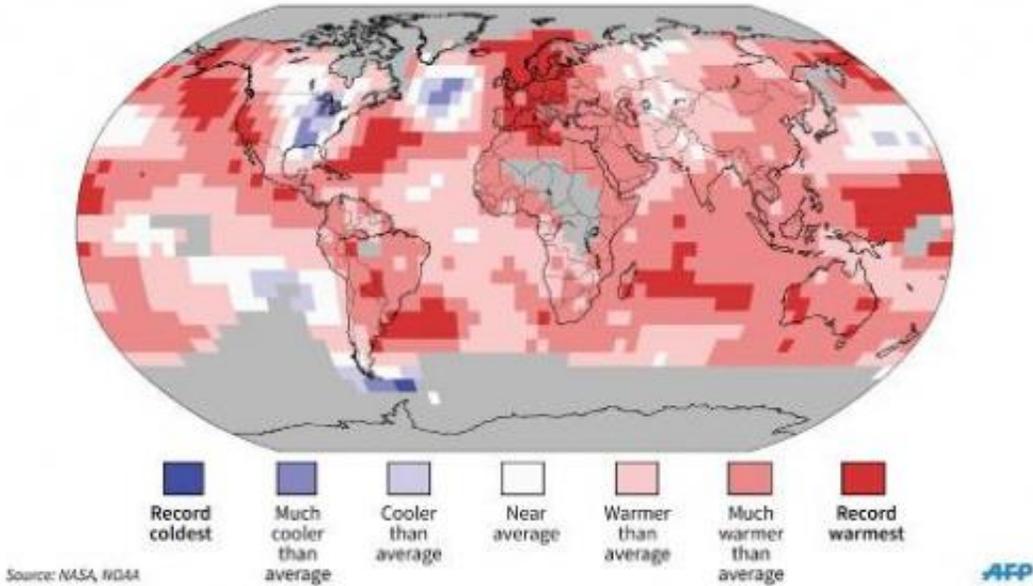
"Yes, the text is bloated, but it is artificially bloated," she told AFP—with extraneous language, duplications and options some countries added "just to counterbalance others"—all of which will be trimmed.

The Geneva meeting is one of three extra sessions added to the 2015 UN climate agenda, and must produce an official "negotiating text" before it closes on Friday.

After the 2009 Copenhagen conference failed in its mission to deliver a global climate pact, the 195 nations gathered under the UN banner agreed in Durban in 2011 to finalise a new agreement for adoption in 2015.

2014: the hottest year in modern history

Average temperature 0.69 °C (1.24 °F) higher than 20th-century average, smashing previous record



World map indicating the most extreme temperature variations in 2014

To be inked at the November 30-December 11 Conference of Parties in Paris, it must enter into force by 2020 to further the UN goal of limiting global warming to two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) over pre-Industrial Revolution levels.

Scientists warn that on current greenhouse gas emission trends, Earth is on track for double that—a recipe for catastrophic droughts, storms, floods and rising seas.

Observers and parties said the Geneva blueprint to be gavelled through on Friday had wide support.

"With two days to go... we are lucky enough that we already have some kind of a draft climate agreement for Paris," said Climate Action

Network spokeswoman Alix Mazounie.

"We have the text as big as its going to get... now it's about streamlining."

The final days of the Geneva talks saw negotiators putting their heads together on how to proceed with whittling the document down to a more manageable size without angering any party.

'Calm before the battle'

The streamlining itself will start in earnest at the next round of negotiations in Bonn in June, when things are likely to get heated.

"All the crunch issues are still on the table. We have options going from A to Z", said Mazounie.

At the very core of the pact, countries remain deeply divided on the issue of "differentiation"—how to share responsibility for emissions cuts between rich and poor nations.

Developing countries also want their developed counterparts to provide details of intended climate financing—a thorny issue.

Tubiana said "many compromises will have to be made".

"Really the spirit is very positive but of course everybody is anticipating the difficulties," she said.

"It's like the calm before the battle."

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