
At the end of the first week of COP15, Parliamentarians from across the world joined their counterparts in Copenhagen via a web & tele conference on Friday 11th December 2009, to review issues for the U.N. Climate Change Conference scheduled for the following week.

As part of the virtual meeting participants to the briefing session had the opportunity to discuss many of the issues concerning the conference with negotiators and representatives from the Commonwealth Secretariat, AWEPA, the World Bank Institute and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. According to Dr. Habiba Gitay of the World Bank Institute, whilst this was a critical meeting, much of its deliberations would be behind closed doors because members worked in informal contact groups to decide what will happen for the Kyoto Protocol in terms of mitigation, adaptation and knowledge sharing assistance. As much of the discussion would be center on the financing aspect in terms of sourcing of funding, and its distribution Mr. Atiq Rahman, the Bangladesh Representative and Executive Director of the Center for the Climate Action Network for South Asia sighted the need to be optimistic of the whole process involve. He notes that even as there has not been any resolution of the major issues, countries on their own have had their own commitment to the process. He also pointed out that whilst there may not be a legally binding agreement, a frame work agreement may be possible since the meeting would be attended by delegates and leader in political office.

This observation was also made by the Member in the Bangladesh Parliament Hon. Saber Chowdhury, MP. The member noted that whilst a lot of the developing countries feel that they are facing the adverse of climate change it is not about the risk of tomorrow but really about the reality of today. He also pointed that left to the political process anything can happen because their responsibility towards these agreements only kicks in after they are signed, since oversight, governance, transparency and integrity will be required thereafter. The Member was encouraged by the presence of Parliamentarians during this stage but noted that the need for Parliamentarians involvement in the negotiation process will not be necessary since it is really for the government to act upon.
Mr. Carlos Fuller of the Caribbean Community Climate Change Center supported the Member for Parliament claims that the negotiation process has been a roller coaster ride. He also lamented the fact pointing specifically to the case of the US, that even if the Presidency has changed, their position on the issue has not. He remained optimistic that there would be movement in the process since there has been movement towards the concluding negotiations on the agreement on technology transfer. Whilst this is does not extend to the technology in the long term, develop and developing countries have recognised the need to get an agreement which is likely to be part of the political process that will follow.

The Secretary of the European Parliamentarians for Africa Mr. Pär Granstedt supported the views of the contributors and pointed to the recommendations of the parliamentary group towards the issue on climate change. He notes that for Africa alone, it has contributed little to the climate change problem but is taking much of its consequences which are already being felt. The Secretary General also noted that it was important to support adaptation as well as mitigation and that there was strong belief that countries who are the cause of the emission should be made responsible for the funding any mechanism that will be implemented. In this case, he sighted that where various actions of adaptation and mitigation will be required, for the purposes of accountability, there should reside string ruler ship and so Parliament would have an important role to play in that process. Therefore it is important that Parliaments in Africa and other developing states work together for a common solution to a basic common problem.

At this instance the conference fielded it first question wherein Hon. Tanvir Joy, MP, from Bangladesh asked whether there was a possibility that there would be at least a legally binding agreement at the end of this conference and that Annex 1 countries will reduce the levels of emissions. The member also questioned whether there was notion there would be an agreement on technology transfer. These reservations stemmed from the need for countries like Bangladesh to sustain and survive in view of the grave outcome that remained inevitable if no agreement was reached.
Hon. Joy was informed although a legal binding agreement may not be available after this meeting members were optimistic that an accord was possible that would lead to one in the near future.

He was also informed that a decision on technology transfer is possible with the requisite framework for the administration and funding. Again, there was the assurance the mechanisms and resources were available to make that possibility a reality. However, there were reservations expressed about the availability of that technology since it involved the use of intellectual property rights of one state by another. The participants again expressed the optimism that there was a will to proceed with the agreement since it offered a measure of the technology to develop under these adverse circumstances. One particular concern expressed by the Hon. Tanvir Joy was that of the need for more access to technology transfer for less developed countries bearing in mind it would require funding and that it is important to countries such as his.

The need for parliamentary support for the process to a negotiated settlement on the issue of climate change was also voiced by the Mr. Terry Townshend of Globe International, a parliamentary group comprising parliamentarians of the major economies. That support came in the form of a common statement or recommendation on behalf of the group. Mr. Townshend noted that a measure of the progress of the conference can be scientifically assessed through ITCT Technology which is based on the number of pledges from the many countries, develop and developing, to see its direction towards an outcome. However, the assessment made on the pledges has indicated that there are signs of progress towards a solution. That measure was largely attributed to commitment of developing countries on their use of renewable energy and it is the developed countries that are lacking in their ambition. He also underscored the importance and need for Parliamentarians in the whole process since their role is fundamental to the implementation and execution of the agreement.

Another voice in support of the optimism that the participants should have about the conference toward a settlement came from the Hon. Jeppe Kofod, Member of the Danish Parliament and the Vice President of AWEPA. He expressed the view that while a conclusive agreement remained unrealistic, the strong political will gave hope to the view that a legal framework would be attained some time soon. As the representative of AWEPA, Hon. Kofod noted that one of the major factors affecting the process is finance and in this respect it was a positive sign that the European Union committed to offering start of funding towards adaptation.
Whilst this contribution may only assist at the commencement stage, he offered praise to these member states towards the efforts.

In this regard, he also lamented the fact that the discussion on how states dealt with the issue had to be addressed openly and honestly as developed and developing state had different responsibilities as compared to least developing states.

For this, he called on members to continue to press for the undivided attention and support from the various Parliaments in the implementation of the final agreement continued

A youthful perspective was added to the debate. Yvette, a young person from Uganda and Kevin Odhiambo of Kenya, the youth representatives contributed to the debate. They spoke of the effect of climate change lamenting its consequences on the future of youth. Both persons pointed to the fact that the issues they are now confronting were being dealt with by grownups leaving but sighted that there was need for the politicians to become conversant with the issues involved in the negotiations in order to deal with them at the political level effectively. This view underlined the point that the politician in this way would be able to secure a positive future for the young people whose tomorrow would be left unsecured.

In a review of the briefing session, there was a general accord that the meeting would not emerge with a legally binding agreement and that a framework of the agreement would be most likely be available. The participation of Parliamentarians in this conference is an endorsement of the fact that they must continue to play an integral role ensuring that the agreement achieved its objectives in the member countries. More so, it also gave confidence to the fact that there will be a strong appreciation for more effective governance on the issues involved in the implementation of the agreement when it came into force. The most pressing concerns mainly touched on the adaptation and mitigation and the equitable distribution of funding for individual member states that would be adversely affected. On the other hand, there was also the pressing need for Parliamentarians to act and to press their individual parliament to act and to do so now and not wait for the outcome of the conference. This raised the debate on the issue of the awareness of Parliamentarians on the issues they are to confront requiring them to become apprised of them. In this context, it was recommended that part of the funding that would be made available would have to be used to encourage the capacity of the Parliament.
The other concerns that were highlighted centered on the use of technology in the process and how states can acquire a benefit from the technology that was available. This concern introduced into the debate the pressing need for a resolution for on the issue of intellectual property right on the technology that would be used among states. Hon.e Chowdhury expressed the view that one of the decision coming of the Copenhagen would be for the establishment of a fund and to allow some of the fund to enable the training and the purchase of the technology, the establishment of a hub where countries can request and provide the necessary training so that the financial mechanism can be developed to implement those projects.

In all, the briefing sounding its final statement on the note that the consequences of the climate change is and will be of great concern to all and so much can be achieved from this conference. Therefore, a true and realizable outcome depends not only on the will of the technocrats who continue to remain powerless but on those who drive the political power.