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SUBMISSION TO THE UNFCCC UNDER THE DURBAN PLATFORM FOR ENHANCED ACTION ON

“OPTIONS AND WAYS FOR FURTHER INCREASING THE LEVEL OF AMBITION”

February 2012

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This submission draws from the findings of the UNEP-WRI joint study “Building the Climate Change Regime: Summary and Analysis of Approaches.” The study, which was released in October 2011, is available at:

<http://www.wri.org/publication/building-the-climate-change-regime>

I. INTRODUCTION

In Cancun at COP16/CMP6, UNFCCC Parties agreed to limit a rise in global average temperature to 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to consider strengthening this goal to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The UNEP report “Bridging the Emissions Gap”,¹ released in 2011, found that current country pledges for 2020 are not adequate to reduce emissions to a level consistent with the 2°C or 1.5°C target, with an emissions gap in the range of 6-11 GtCO₂e in 2020. However, the report demonstrates that this emissions gap can be bridged through many economically and technologically feasible options.

Despite several achievements at COP17/CMP7 in Durban, levels of ambition remain insufficient. Increased action is therefore urgently needed now, as well as up to and after 2020, to bring the aggregate ambition level in line with what science suggests is necessary. The level of ambition may be defined as the anticipated collective level of Parties’ greenhouse gas emissions by a certain date, based on successful implementation of their pledges and commitments under the UNFCCC and other relevant initiatives.

The agreements reached in Durban on the Kyoto Protocol, implementation of the Cancun Agreements, and launch of the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action could, if pursued aggressively, could mark a decisive shift

toward an inclusive, effective and equitable climate regime. UNFCCC Parties opened a window of opportunity to raise the level of ambition in the short term (before 2020) and long term (after 2020). Parties agreed to launch a process that “shall raise the level of ambition and shall be informed, inter alia, by the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the outcomes of the 2013-2015 review and the work of the subsidiary bodies.” They further agreed to “launch a workplan on enhancing mitigation ambition to identify and to explore options for a range of actions that can close the ambition gap with a view to ensuring the highest possible mitigation efforts by all Parties.”

This submission focuses on options within the UNFCCC for increasing climate ambition. These options are complementary and include practical recommendations for the COP and CMP.

Although the UNFCCC will remain a significant central actor moving forward, many complementary options exist in the broader climate regime to increase ambition. Indeed, action to address climate change needs to be taken at different levels, from the international – where the UNFCCC is playing a central role – to the local and through national, regional, bilateral and plurilateral levels. Each level includes a constellation of institutions and actors whose capacities and specialized focus can contribute to an increase in ambition. These include multilateral institutions (e.g., the Montreal Protocol, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the International Maritime Organization, and the World Trade Organization), bilateral and plurilateral initiatives (e.g., the Major Economies Forum, the G20), national governments, businesses, states, cities and citizens, who together can form the broader stage for action. The UNFCCC is the center point of this constellation and can catalyze climate action in the broader climate regime. However, bridging the emissions gap and raising ambition to adequate levels ultimately depends on whether Parties will increase their pledges and actions. These options are not described in this submission but could be pursued in parallel to the UNFCCC negotiations to generate maximum mitigation. Some of these parallel complementary ideas are described in Chapter 2 of the joint UNEP-WRI study “Building the Climate Change Regime: Survey and Analysis of Approaches”.

II. TEN OPTIONS TO INCREASE AMBITION

Many relevant options exist for increasing ambition. The list below, which is not comprehensive, includes options to (A) increase commitments, (B) facilitate commitments and (C) strengthen the assessment of these commitments. Each option could be presented in more detail at the workshop in Bonn in May 2012 and in future publications and exchanges.

Increase commitments

1. **Revise existing commitments to increase ambition before 2020:** Taking steps to increase ambition only during the post-2020 period will not be sufficient to meet the 2 degree or 1.5 degree C goal. Emissions pathways leading to a “likely” chance of meeting these goals have a peak before 2020, have emissions levels at around 44 GtCO₂e in 2020 and see emissions decline sharply thereafter. To meet the 2 degree or 1.5 degree C goal, it is therefore essential to increase ambition above the Cancun pledges for the period ending in 2020. Some Parties have put forward conditional pledges under the Cancun Agreements.² Based on successful domestic implementation of climate policies in several countries and a growing collective resolve to tackle climate change

post Durban, a first option would be for Parties to commit now to the higher end of their pledges. This would narrow the gap significantly. However, as noted above, even implementation of the higher end of Parties' Cancun pledges will not be sufficient to bridge the gap. To do so, it would be necessary for Parties to revise their pledges above and beyond those communicated in Cancun.³ Developed country Parties have a first opportunity to do so in 2012 as they submit information to the Secretariat on their quantified emission limitation or reduction objectives (QELROs) for the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. In addition to revising current pledges, Parties who have yet to communicate a pledge could do so in 2012. 86 of the 195 UNFCCC Parties have communicated pledges under the Cancun Agreements, which are contained in two INF documents.⁴ Parties could also consider an ongoing process to allow countries to communicate new or revised pledges at any time to the Secretariat, for example through a standing agenda item on ambition at each COP where revised pledges could be recognized and revised upward regularly through an appropriate legal instrument.

2. **Negotiate new commitments for the post-2020 period in line with the science:** In addition to the necessary increase in ambition for the period before 2020, meeting the Convention's objective will require ambitious commitments in the period after 2020. In 2014, a year before the new international agreement is set to be adopted under the Durban Platform, Parties could communicate new commitments for the period post 2020. This would allow the year 2015 to be focused on an assessment of the aggregate adequacy of these commitments so that Parties can negotiate a way to bridge a gap if necessary before they are ultimately adopted under the new agreement in 2015. These commitments should be in line with the science and informed by the results of the 2013-2015 review in particular.

3. **Enhance coverage of sectors and climate forcers:** Annex I Parties are taking on "economy-wide" targets for 2020. However, "economy-wide" has yet to be defined. Depending on the scope of sectors, gases and other climate forcers covered, the targets can lead to very different levels of ambition. Under the Kyoto Protocol, Annex A lists the greenhouse gases and sectors to be covered under a Party's target. However, because Annex A of the Kyoto Protocol is not a comprehensive list, Parties should consider expanding its scope. In addition, the Cancun Agreements do not specify which greenhouse gases or sectors Parties' pledges will cover before 2020. Neither does the decision on the Durban Platform indicate the scope of countries' commitments post 2020. The COP could therefore ensure that a wide range of sectors and gases are covered by countries under their pre-2020 pledges and post-2020 commitments. For example, emissions from international aviation and maritime transport are currently unregulated by the UNFCCC despite the fact that they represent a significant share of emissions from these two sectors, being 62% of total aviation emissions in 2006 and 83% of total shipping emissions in 2007. Combined global civil emissions from these two sectors are projected to account for 2.09 to 6.77 GtCO₂e in 2050, amounting to 10% to 32.5% of total emissions.⁵ In addition, addressing some climate forcing gases and particles not covered by the Kyoto Protocol could help with raising ambition on the part of developed and developing countries. However, CO₂ is the single most important contributor to the human enhancement of the global greenhouse effect and needs to remain the main focus of emissions reduction efforts. In the case of maritime and aviation emissions, as well as with climate forcing gases and particles not covered by the Kyoto Protocol, other initiatives and institutions such as ICAO, IMO, bilateral and plurilateral initiatives are considering steps to reduce emissions in these areas and may be well positioned to take action that complements the UNFCCC's goals.

Facilitate commitments

4. **Scale up finance, technology and capacity building:** Scaled up support to developing countries is essential to give them the means to reach the upper end of – or even beyond – their pledged actions, as well as to build confidence between developed and developing countries in support of greater collective action.⁶ This includes scaled-up climate financial flows in the short-term (2012-2015) and in the period before and after 2020. To mobilize the \$100bn annually by 2020, early decisions on innovative sources will signal to developing countries that sustainable and predictable finance will be available to support their efforts to take on ambitious mitigation commitments from 2020 onward. In addition, swift operationalization of the Green Climate Fund and Climate Technology Center and Network would accelerate development and deployment of clean technologies to support developing countries' low-carbon development efforts.

5. **Support and replicate effective implementation:** The success of Parties in achieving or surpassing their current pledges and future commitments will depend on effective implementation of policies. Parties could generate information on effective implementation of policies and deployment of international climate finance, for example, by communicating best practices, challenges and lessons learned in their first biennial reports and biennial update reports, as well as in the registry.⁷ The UNFCCC could facilitate informational exchanges on policy implementation among countries, for example through the processes of international assessment and review (IAR) and international consultations and analysis (ICA). Government officials could learn from the experience of their peers, replicate successes and support each other financially or otherwise when facing challenges.

6. **Promote mitigation actions with an emphasis on co-benefits:** Using new narratives to frame the issue of climate change can serve to engage new stakeholders and breathe new life into the climate negotiations. Narratives around energy independence, human health, national security, food security and competitiveness, for example, can empower governments and non-governmental actors not traditionally involved in the UNFCCC climate negotiations to increase domestic constituency support for increased climate ambition. By giving countries the option to frame revised and new pledges and commitments around national co-benefits that also deliver measurable mitigation, governments might increase ambition and achieve development as well as climate goals.

7. **Promote equity and environmental integrity:** When considering “a range of actions that can close the ambition gap,” the DPEA may facilitate a dialogue among Parties on the concept of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, to integrate equity in the new agreement to be adopted in 2015 in a way that ensures environmental integrity. The workshop on “access to sustainable development” could be the first step in rethinking equity and developing a common vision that reconciles historical responsibility, development needs and scientifically driven mitigation imperatives. Progress on equity will likely be closely linked to progress on ambition and in particular the adoption by Parties of a long-term mitigation goal and a commitment to a global peak year.

Assess commitments

8. Establish consistent, complete, comparable, transparent and accurate common accounting rules for Annex I emission reductions:

The absence of consistent, complete, comparable, transparent and accurate common accounting rules for emissions reductions and enhanced removals for non-Kyoto Protocol Parties risks weakening the Cancun pledges (which studies have shown to be inadequate in aggregate⁸) and any commitments under the new agreement to be adopted in 2015.⁹ For example, if both developed and developing countries count the emission reductions generated from offsets toward their own commitments and actions respectively, this could lead to “double counting.” Such double counting could increase emissions by up to 1.3 GtCO₂e in 2020.¹⁰ The COP could consider requesting that the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technical Advice (SBSTA) develop consistent, complete, comparable, transparent and accurate accounting rules for Annex I Parties applicable to pre-2020 and post-2020 commitments. Such rules will be particularly important in the design of the new market-based mechanism called for by the Durban LCA text in order to meet the requirement of environmental integrity of offsets articulated in paragraph 79 of this text.¹¹

9. Clarify Annex I and non-Annex I pledges: More information is needed about the diverse pre-2020 pledges of developed and developing countries. Underlying assumptions and methodologies are essential to track progress toward domestic emission reduction goals and collective progress and ambition toward the Convention’s ultimate objective.¹² Building on the Durban LCA decision, the COP could ensure that developed and developing countries provide all remaining details about their pledges in a timely manner, including through workshops, technical papers and use of questionnaires and templates, such as the one to be filled out by Annex I Parties under paragraph 5(a) of this decision.¹³ The COP could also ensure that Parties provide this detail about their post-2020 commitments as they emerge between 2012 and 2015.

10. Launch rigorous, credible and effective periodic reviews: The first periodic review between 2013 and 2015 has the potential to help make the case for increasing ambition. While Parties agreed at COP17 to a timeline for the review, they were unable to agree on the scope and institutional arrangements. A decision at COP18 in Qatar confirming the scope of the review would ensure a timely start to the process in 2013. The results of this 2013-2015 review can form the basis for countries’ post-2020 emission reduction commitments. The COP could also consider scheduling post-2015 periodic reviews as future IPCC reports become available to assess adequacy of the collective steps taken by Parties and the long-term goal.

III. CONCLUSION

The Durban agreements on the continuation of the Kyoto Protocol, the implementation of the Cancun Agreements and the launch of the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action open a narrow window of opportunity to meet the 2 degree C goal – if these agreements are diligently implemented. The complementary options presented in this submission could help inject a renewed sense of urgency in the UNFCCC negotiations and help raise ambition to levels that would prevent dangerous climate change. The UNFCCC Secretariat could summarize the recommendations put forward by Parties and observers and the AWG-DPEA could replicate this process and regularly convene workshops and invite submissions on ambition.

¹ United Nations Environment Programme, “Bridging the Emissions Gap Report”, 2011, <http://www.unep.org/publications/ebooks/bridgingemissionsgap/>.

² Some countries have expressed their pledges as a range, the higher end of which would be implemented if certain conditions were fulfilled, such as adoption of certain national laws, action by other countries, or support in the form of finance, technology and capacity building.

³ The UNEP Bridging the Gap report finds that even if conditional pledges were implemented, there would remain a gap between about 6 and 9 GtCO₂e in 2020, depending on whether strict or lenient accounting rules were applied.

⁴ Figure drawn from the UNEP Bridging the Gap Report. Also see: “Compilation of Economy-wide Emission Reduction Targets to Be Implemented by Parties Included in Annex I to the Convention” (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, June 7, 2011), <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2011/sb/eng/inf01r01.pdf>; “Compilation of Information on Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions to Be Implemented by Parties Not Included in Annex I to the Convention” (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, March 18, 2011), <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2011/awglca14/eng/inf01.pdf>.

⁵ United Nations Environment Programme, “Bridging the Emissions Gap Report.”

⁶ While support for developing country mitigation is essential to increasing ambition, support for adaptation is also essential to realizing a comprehensive and effective global response to climate change. Although the focus of this submission is on mitigation only, scaled-up finance for mitigation would need to be paired with scaled-up finance for adaptation in order to achieve a ‘balanced allocation’ as outlined in the Durban outcome.

⁷ Additional information could also be considered from non-official sources, such as civil society and other intergovernmental organizations.

⁸ United Nations Environment Programme, “Bridging the Emissions Gap Report.”

⁹ Kelly Levin et al., “Remedying Discord in the Accord: Accounting Rules for Annex I Pledges in a Post-2012 Climate Agreement” (World Resources Institute, November 2010), <http://www.wri.org/publication/remedying-discord-in-the-accord>.

¹⁰ United Nations Environment Programme, “The Emissions Gap Report: Are the Copenhagen Accord Pledges Sufficient to Limit Global Warming to 2° C or 1.5° C?: a Preliminary Assessment.”, 2010, <http://www.unep.org/publications/ebooks/emissionsgapreport/>.

¹¹ Paragraph 79 of the Durban LCA decision states that “various approaches, including opportunities for using markets [...] must meet standards that deliver real, permanent, additional and verified mitigation outcomes, avoid double counting of effort, and achieve a net decrease and/or avoidance of greenhouse gas emissions.”

¹² Kelly Levin and Jared Finnegan, “Assessing Non-Annex I Pledges: Building a Case for Clarification”, December 2011, http://www.wri.org/publication/assessing_non_annexi_pledges.

¹³ See for example: *Ibid.*