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UN official confident of progress at Cancún climate change conference



22 November 2010 – Looking ahead to the United Nations climate change conference beginning in Cancún next week, a senior official with the world body said today that talks could yield real results but was cautious to keep expectations realistic.

Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Planning Robert Orr told journalists at UN Headquarters in New York that he did not expect the conference of parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to deliver a “final answer” on solving climate change but remained positive about the possibilities.

“Significant progress is possible in Cancún,” he said. “That is not to say that we expect all issues to be resolved.”

“We need a package of decisions and outcomes. One or two [agreements] won’t an outcome create.”

Mr. Orr noted that Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon will attend the high-level segment of the talks, where he will urge countries to work towards a balanced set of agreements that move the climate change agenda forward across the board.

“He will urge governments to take decisions on those issues where there is consensus – on protecting forests, technology transfer, adaptation and the creation of a new fund to house long-term financing,” said Mr. Orr, adding that the Secretary-General will also be encouraging governments to make progress on more challenging issues.

The UNFCCC is an international treaty which considers what can be done to reduce global warming and to cope with global temperature increases. Some countries have approved an addition to the treaty, the Kyoto Protocol, which includes more powerful and legally binding measures.

The upcoming conference of parties – known as COP 16 – will take place from 29 November to 10 December, and although a blanket solution to the climate change agenda is unlikely some key questions could be resolved.

“There are enough issues that are close to resolution that give us hope that an important outcome could be achieved in Cancún,” Mr. Orr said.

“Negotiators need to remind themselves that the longer we delay, the more we will pay; both in terms of lives and in terms of money.”

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