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UN climate change official urges States to grasp last chance ahead of major conference



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The United Nations climate change chief today called on governments taking part in negotiations this week to urgently scale up their efforts to combat the problem ahead of a UN-led conference on the issue starting next month in Durban, South Africa.

The preparatory negotiations, which started today in Panama City, are the last formal negotiations before world leaders meet in Durban to discuss ways to implement existing climate change agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol and the Cancún Agreements.

“During this year, governments have been steadily building the pillars that will support the next chapter of the global climate regime,” [said](#) Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change ([UNFCCC](#)).

“They have recognized very clearly that the current level of effort is not enough, and they have realized that it is important to increase both the level of emission controls on greenhouse gases as well as the capacity of countries to adapt to climate change.”

Ms. Figueres said the Panama negotiations will provide Member States with the chance to work on their proposals and focus on key issues to be resolved ahead of Durban.

“Governments know that the best way to have a successful Durban is to arrive there with draft decision texts and I see a lot of support for that approach. They can leave Panama with a clearer idea of what they would be able to agree in Durban,” she said.

Ms. Figueres said she expected governments at the Panama negotiations to focus their attention on their agreement to strengthen the systems that measure, report and verify the efforts of all countries to ensure international accountability and transparency on climate change.

She also noted that countries would need to attend to issues that were left unresolved in last year’s climate change conference in Cancún, Mexico – particularly the questions of the future of the Kyoto Protocol and the broader climate change regime.

“Governments can decide what they want to do over the future of the Kyoto Protocol and, in particular, how they would like to address the protocol’s second commitment period. This would involve the question of deeper emission reduction commitments of industrial countries under the Kyoto Protocol and the question of how to go forward with the current emission pledges of the US [United States] and developing countries which are currently not under the protocol,” she said.

The Kyoto Protocol has been ratified by 192 of the 195 UNFCCC Parties. Under the Protocol, 37 States, consisting of highly industrialized countries and countries transitioning to a market economy, have legally binding emission limitation and reduction commitments.

“As a bridge between two oceans and two continents, Panama is a good place to identify where governments positions connect in order to advance towards Durban on a firm footing,”

Ms. Figueres said.

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