

Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Pham Khoi Nguyen holds a press conference on December 19, right upon his coming back to Hanoi from Copenhagen

1) What is the most significant outcome of the climate change summit in your opinion?

- The most significant achievement of this Conference was it has managed to draw attention of the whole world and was attended by over 190 countries with nearly 120 heads of State.

- All countries have recognized that climate change is a vital issue and an issue of sustainable development so there were extremely intense negotiations. The outcome evolved every hour and there were “overnight” debates. Some meetings were at a standstill as they were boycotted. Outside the meeting hall, tens of thousands of people joined in demonstrations.

- Although a legally binding treaty has been not reached, the United State, China, India and South Africa, those nations with the largest emissions and the hardest stance in negotiations have agreed on a political pact, called the “Copenhagen Accord”. Even the agreement largely fell short of our expectations, the most significance was it has managed to keep the top priority of maintaining the Kyoto Protocol and open new ways for continued negotiations. Developed countries have committed to contribute to a 30-billion dollar fund to help poorer countries cope with climate change by 2012 and mobilize 100 billion dollars a year after 2020. The Copenhagen Accord has been also supported by 25 nations whose greenhouse gas emissions accounts for 75%. This is a positive achievement, which none had expected a year ago.

2) What agreements on cutting greenhouse gas emission have been reached?

The Kyoto Protocol under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (also known as Climate Change Convention) has taken effect worldwide since February 16th 2005. It is now the only universal legal document on greenhouse gas emission reduction in developed countries in order to mitigate climate change. It took 8 years for the 1997 Kyoto Protocol to come into force (ratified by developed and developing countries). During negotiations this time, the most contentious issue is that developed countries wanted to replace Kyoto Protocol with a new agreement more favourable to them and they wanted emerging economies having a large amount of emissions such as China, India, Brazil and South Africa to also commit to cut emissions quota. Developing countries, called G77 and China, meanwhile, blamed developed countries for “killing the Kyoto Protocol” and making climate change more severe and they’re determined to reject this request, stating that their economies have just grown and that there are in their countries, many poor people who might not even have access to electricity.

The second serious tension is that developing countries (including G77 and China) required developed countries to have a strong commitment as to reduce significantly, by between 40% and 45% of greenhouse gas emissions as compared with 1990 levels in order to ensure that global temperature will not rise further than 2 degrees in comparison with the pre-industrial period. African countries and small island countries saw in that a survival struggle as the sea level rise would encroach their land, hence, they’re determined in requiring developed countries to reduce a large amount of emissions, to pay off their historical debt and compensate developing countries so that they can adapt and respond to climate change.

Meanwhile, developed countries find it impossible for this would affect their economic development, and that cutting on emission could only be conducted gradually.

The third serious dispute is that developing countries, especially those in Africa require that US 50 billion dollars be available each year by 2015 and hundreds of billions US dollars by 2020 for climate change adaptation and mitigation. Meanwhile, developed countries estimated that only US 100 billion by 2020 are needed. For the upcoming time, they committed to mobilize US 10 dollars a year from 2010 to 2012 for only poor countries, which are the most vulnerable to climate change.

The meeting gets tenser towards the end. Several African countries wanted to boycott the conference. It was predicted that no agreement would be reached in the conference and many countries seem to let things go.

Though no specific agreement has been made, many countries have committed to reduce emissions by 2020 as follows:

- Europe: by 20% compared with 1990 levels (if other countries committed to cut a larger amount, the emission reduction would be 30%). Denmark and Norway committed to reduce more (some 40%).
- The United States: by 17% compared with 2005 levels (or 1.8% compared with 1990 levels);
- Japan: by 25% compared with 1990 levels;
- China: by 45% of the emissions/1 million USD of its GDP in 2005;
- Australia: by 5-15% compared with 2000.

3) What initiatives did the Vietnamese delegation put forward on climate change mitigation at the conference:

Firstly, The UN Frame Convention on Climate Change and the amended Kyoto Protocol for countries with a large greenhouse gas emissions shall be kept as fundamental legal grounds for the international community to take actions to respond to climate change.

Secondly, the international community should have a joint organization to coordinate the response to the global climate change.

Thirdly, developed countries to take lead in giving out strong and obligation binding commitments and specific goals on greenhouse gas emission cut in the medium and long terms to limit the average global temperature rise to 2 degrees by the end of the century.

Fourthly, developed countries and those having a large amount of greenhouse gas emissions have responsibility in supporting developing countries, especially those suffered the most from climate change and sea level rise (*including Vietnam*), by new financial mechanisms, technological transfer, the adaptation fund and capacity-building in climate change adaptation.

Fifthly, developing countries should actively contribute to the global efforts by developing and implementing Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (**NAMAs**), on a voluntary basis while ensuring sustainable development goals.

4) How did the international community appreciate the efforts of Vietnam?

- Of ASEAN countries, Vietnam sends the largest delegation, which was split into 4 groups. The first group of negotiations technical experts departed on December 3rd. The

second group of officials of nearly 10 ministries and government departments led by the Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment took off on December 7th to attend all meetings of the conference. The third group led by the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment left for the conference on December 12th to attend the Ministers' Meeting, 3 days earlier than the formal delegation led by the Prime Minister. The official delegation of Vietnam led by the Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung arrived in Copenhagen in the evening of December 15th.

- The Vietnamese delegation was highly appreciated at the conference. Preparation of Vietnam in the response to climate change was highly appreciated by international organizations, the host and many countries. The Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung directly attended televised talks with the UN Secretary-General Ban-Kimoon, the Prime Minister of Denmark and Australia, the President of Algeria (Algeria?), etc. The Prime Minister of Vietnam was one of 11 leaders of countries invited to attend a restricted consultative meeting to find out solutions for negotiations.

- The speech delivered by the Prime Minister of Vietnam was highly appreciated by countries amid the tense conference as G77 and China keep a hard line on developed countries' stance and as there tensions among island countries and within the internal G77. The speech has pointed out opinions shared by many countries. Certainly, many points will be included in the conclusion of the conference. The Prime Minister of Vietnam was invited to make a speech at the beginning of the senior summit.

5) What are opportunities of international cooperation in climate change mitigation for Vietnam?

- At the conference, the delegation of Vietnam has held a Side Event with the participation of over 100 representatives of international organizations and donors. In this side event, Vietnam presented the context and impacts of climate change, the National Target Programme to Respond to Climate Change. Projects on the response to climate change have been forwarded to donors to study such as projects natural disasters management, projects on embankment construction, projects on reforestation, etc. The representatives of the UNDP and JICA made speeches at the event which was considered to be a great success.

- Nearly 30 meetings were held at Deputy Minister, Minister and Prime Minister levels. Particularly, the Prime Minister held 10 bilateral meetings with leaders of countries on this occasion to get support of these countries for Vietnam to respond to climate change.

- Vietnam has been highly appreciated and supported by the international community. Many countries and international organizations confirmed that Vietnam would always receive the first priority in support and investment no matter how the conference's outcome is.

6) Following this event, how does the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment plan to implement specific programmes for effective performance of international commitments and the National Target Programme to Respond to Climate Change?

- Strengthening capacity of climate change negotiation, enhancing participation of related ministries and authorities to actively involve in the extremely important and serious negotiation process in 2010 and subsequent years to defend Vietnam's rights.

- Promoting international cooperation to turn support commitments into projects on the response to climate change, paying special attention to research projects on embankment,

flooding prevention for area of rice cultivation and aquaculture, protection reforestation mangrove planting, flooding prevention of tide, etc.

- Speeding up the development of an action plan on the response to climate change in Vietnam, appropriate to new progress of the international negotiation. In 2010, authorities and localities must set a target in completing the action plan on the response to climate change.

- Actively studying, forecasting and updating scenarios on climate change and sea level rise in Vietnam.

- Well preparing the performance of the National Target Programme to Respond to Climate Change on the basis of climate change and sea level rise scenario in Vietnam./.