



IEAGHG Information Paper; 2012-IP18: COP-18 Update and Outcomes from Doha

Background: Tim Dixon attended the COP-18 meetings in Doha

COP-18 was held in Doha, Qatar, with approximately 9,000 delegates from over 194 countries.

High Level Outcomes

On a high level, there is some good news, some bad news, and some more good news;

Good news: After a marathon 36-hour final session, COP-18 and CMP-8 have concluded with an agreement for a second Commitment Period for the Kyoto Protocol. This will run from 2013 to the end of 2020. This entails new legally-binding emissions commitments for the developed countries agreeing to it under the Kyoto Protocol, notably the 27 EU Member States, Australia, Norway, and Ukraine. Developing countries are also included, but without emission targets.

Bad news: The emissions targets of 18% reduction from 1990 to 2020 are not high enough and not on sufficient countries to significantly reduce global emissions to avert dangerous climate change. Some major emitting developed countries will not be included, specifically USA, Canada, Japan, Russia and New Zealand.

Some more good news: All of this is significantly better than having no second Commitment Period and no countries with emissions targets.

Whilst many think the emission targets for individual countries are set too low, this does keep the global framework for emissions reductions and emissions trading mechanism (e.g. the CDM) operational while countries make progress on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP) towards a legally-binding agreement for 2015 for all 194 UNFCCC countries (including USA and China). There is also some limiting of the carry-over of AAUs (hot-air).

Unexpected difficulties arose in the higher-level negotiations over the new issue of recognition by developed countries for 'loss and damage' to developing countries as a result of climate change. The potentially un-limited nature of this clause ringing alarms bells for some.

CCS outcomes

The text adopted by CMP-8 on CCS in CDM reflects the Decision from SBSTA to defer any further consideration of transboundary projects and of a Global Reserve until SBSTA 45 (expected 2016), and was as follows:

"*Welcomes* the work undertaken by the Executive Board to adopt relevant documents regarding carbon dioxide capture and storage in geological formations as clean development mechanism project activities;

Decides that the eligibility under the clean development mechanism of carbon dioxide capture and storage in geological formations project activities which involve the transport of carbon dioxide from one country to another or which involve geological storage sites that are in more than one country and the establishment of a global reserve of certified emission reduction units for carbon dioxide capture and storage in geological formations project activities shall be considered by Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice at its forty-fifth session;



Also decides that while carbon dioxide capture and storage in geological formations project activities which involve the transport of carbon dioxide from one country to another or which involve geological storage sites that are in more than one country would merit inclusion under the clean development mechanism, more practical experience of carbon dioxide capture and storage project activities in geological formations under the clean development mechanism would be beneficial;”

CCS Projects

CCS project survey: Separately, the UNFCCC Secretariat would like to assess the level of interest and potential for CCS CDM projects, and so are undertaking a survey, details and links below, please respond by 28 December if you are interested. The link to the survey is https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/CCS_Survey_PP.

Technology Mechanism

The Technology Mechanism was partly operationalised, with the appointment of a consortium lead by UNEP to operate the Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN) for five years. It is anticipated that CCS will be included in the range of technologies assisted by this network.

CCS during Doha

Two sets of negotiating meetings took place on the transboundary projects and Global Reserve of CERs issue. Text was agreed that consideration of both is to be postponed until SBSTA-45 (i.e. 2016) to allow time to learn from CCS projects in the CDM. Whilst this isn't a bad result in itself for the time-being (very few wanted the Global Reserve and there were good arguments against it) it isn't as good as the initial version proposed by the Chairs which would have removed the Global Reserve permanently, recognising the adequacy provided by the existing modalities and procedures (also described as "providing robust environmental protection" by many here).

These results of the negotiations on CCS were approved by SBSTA Plenary at 11:06pm on Saturday 30th Nov. Some observers expressed disappointment at the two CCS issues on transboundary and Global Reserve being deferred for four years and then brought back for consideration, not realising that the resolution of transboundary issues was always likely to take some time. For example, the London Convention, a large treaty which moves faster than UNFCCC because of its decision-making design and its double pressure of ocean acidification as well as climate change, still took three years after the major CCS amendment to reach a legal transboundary CCS amendment and another three years to make any further progress on the outstanding transboundary issues. However the Global Reserve deferring is a different matter, there were no substantive arguments made for it or why to revive it in four years, but substantive arguments were made for it to have been taken off the agenda now.

In SBSTA Plenary the IMO were pleased to announce the progress made at the London Convention earlier this month on agreeing guidelines for transboundary CCS activities subsurface (in which IEAGHG were involved).

CCS on the side



Although CCS negotiations concluded in the first week, there was a lot of other activity on CCS at this COP.

There were four 'official' UNFCCC Side-events on CCS and four 'unofficial' events. IEAGHG spoke at five, specifically on the CCS Summer School, on the work on CCS for the Iron and Steel sector, on transboundary developments (including the UNFCCC report on transboundary issues and its gaps), and on UK Department of Energy and Climate Change policy for the UK Programme, on Science in policy making, and on knowledge transfer. By comparison at Durban there was only one 'official' Side-event on CCS (ours). The UNFCCC Side-event of CCSA/University of Texas/IEAGHG on CCS Education on the first Tuesday went well, was well attended (apparently the most of any CCS event here) and with a high level of interest. Especially interesting at other Side-events were the talks by Qatar, UAE and Saudi Arabia on their CCS project activities, with several pilot projects now in development in the region, supported by R&D programmes. Bio-CCS continues to gain prominence and interest, and the IEAGHG studies in this area are proving a valuable resource.

The need for information on CCS was demonstrated both in the negotiations (e.g. where one negotiator questioned the basic risk, safety and uncertainty of CCS) and at the booths of CCS-related organisations which have been more popular than ever being visited by those seeking information on CCS. The University of Texas, CCSA and the International Energy Agency collaborated with IEAGHG in sharing our information at their booths.

There was also a media-release here by seven green NGOs (NGOs) who, funded by the Global CCS Institute, collaborated to produce a paper advocating actions to encourage CCS (see <http://www.engonetwork.org>).

CCS Outside

Also in Doha, the COP-18 Reception was held at the Qatar Sustainability Expo. Of interest here were several displays on CCS, including an impressive 'CCS elevator' by Shell and the Qatar Carbonate and Carbon Storage Research Centre (with some video content from IEAGHG). Of note was an interesting car from Saudi Aramco which is their project to capture CO₂ from vehicle exhausts. Fully operational for 2,000km so far, capturing 10% of the CO₂, the plan is to increase the capture rate to 60%.

Concluding thoughts

The world of climate change mitigation took significant steps forward, and CCS is now embedded as a validated option to reduce emissions in both developed and developing countries. Much work is still to be done, and experience to be gained, and capacity to be built, but the building blocks for climate change mitigation are in place and prospects for CCS exist within all of them.

Tim Dixon
9/12/12