

UNFCCC Executive Secretary Yvo de Boer gave a press conference today to sum up the outcomes of the Copenhagen climate change meeting. The full press conference can be viewed here (add link). Mr de Boer opened with the following remarks:

“It is fair to say that Copenhagen did not produce the full agreement the world needs to address the collective climate challenge. That only makes the task more urgent. The window of opportunity to come grips with the issue is closing at the same rate as before.

But although COP15 wasn't a full success, it produced three key outcomes. First, it raised climate change to the highest level of government, which ultimately is the only level at which it can be resolved. Second, the Copenhagen Accord reflects a political consensus on the long-term, global response to climate change. Third, negotiations away from the cameras brought an almost full set of decisions to implement rapid climate action near to completion.

Governments need time to digest what happened but cool heads already see these outcomes as a way forward to grasp a bigger, collective goal. You can say that although Copenhagen didn't produce the final cake, it left countries with the right ingredients to bake a new one in Mexico.

The Copenhagen Accord was crafted by a group of countries, including the biggest, smallest, richest and poorest. It represents a political letter of intent that offers to reduce national emissions and sets a global temperature rise limit of two degrees centigrade. It defines amounts of short and long-term finance to implement climate change action in developing nations. And it sets a 2015 review year to check if global action by then needs to be more urgent to meet the challenge.

The Accord language is anchored in the Framework Climate Change Convention and many countries are telling me it should be used now to reinvigorate the formal climate change negotiations under the UN and make further progress.

A great success before Copenhagen was that many countries pledged mid-term reductions in emissions and the world can expect them to honour those pledges. Now, they have the opportunity to record those pledges in the Accord.

Also at Copenhagen, negotiators came close to decisions on a set of measures which would make a long-term global response to climate change operational.

We're now in a cooling off period that gives useful and needed time for countries to resume their discussions with each other.

Copenhagen set out to deliver an agreement on four essential areas: medium-term emission cuts by industrialised countries; action by developing countries to limit the growth of their emissions; finance to implement action; and an equitable governance of the climate regime.

Those issues remain as relevant as they were before Copenhagen. If countries follow up Copenhagen's outcomes calmly, with eyes firmly fixed on the advantage of collective action, they have every chance of completing the job.”