

The Africa Group held a press conference at the Barcelona climate talks on November 3 at 13:00 CET.

Speakers elaborated on the Africa Group's demand that Kyoto Protocol negotiations be suspended until Annex I countries commit to firm reduction targets.

Speaking on behalf of the Africa Group were:

- Kamel Djemaoui, Algeria, Chair of the Africa Group
- Grace Akumu, Kenya
- Pa Ousman Jarju, the Gambia
- Bruno Sekoli, Lesotho, representing the LDCs

The following are selected excerpts from the press conference transcript.

In his opening statement, Mr Djemaoui said:

"I will first start to try to clarify particularly why we expressed a position yesterday inviting the chair of the AWG-KP, in the plenary and later, to [just have] discussions and negotiations un the Contact Group on numbers.

"We saw that since the last three or four years, we are just discussing means of implementation; means and ways; elements that are just broad and not really concrete.

"And of course, we are accountable to our countries, to our governments and to our people in Africa...we are fully accountable to them. We need to reflect their concerns, we need to reflect that Africa and African people are suffering now, people are dying now [while] those who are responsible historically—I mean developed countries—are not willing to take action, to express really what are or what will be their ambitious emission reductions according to the Article 3.9 of the Kyoto Protocol."

And:

"We cannot go along and discuss our mitigation actions—and we are prepared to discuss our mitigation actions as Africa; [you can] see that most of the developing countries are prepared, are trying to see how we can deal with NAMAs, [and] other mitigation actions that we can have as commitments—but in the sequence, how can we discuss mitigation actions by developing countries when we don't have the numbers? When we don't have the ambitious emission reductions according to science? [It] will be quite difficult."

In her opening remarks, Ms Akumu said:

"We can't afford to have negotiations stalemating because I come from a country now [where] we are having extensive droughts—and before this drought is finished, [this] three-year drought, we also have different parts of the country suffering because of El Nino flooding...For poor economies like Kenya and other African countries, it's difficult to cope.

“And so when we are asking our industrialised country partners why they are not willing to put the numbers on the table so that we can consider those ahead of Copenhagen, we are asking because we are under pressure because of the impacts.

“But their response is that politically and economically it is difficult for them to put these numbers on the table.

“And for us, when they are saying that it is politically and economically difficult for them to put the numbers on the table—for us it is a question of life and death. People are dying in Africa because of the actions or the lifestyles in the North.”

And:

“[You] know that historically that Africa is not responsible for climate change. Even currently, Africa we are not responsible for climate change...And the nations that are responsible are not willing to negotiate in good faith, not willing to put numbers on the table.”

In his opening remarks, Mr Jarju said:

“The position taken by Africa is to ensure that Annex I Parties really come with tangible numbers, on the table, particularly numbers that would demonstrate their domestic efforts towards the post-2012 second and subsequent commitment periods.

“We are not ready to give Annex I countries a blank cheque through LULUCF rules and flexible mechanisms before they give us their aggregate numbers and their individual numbers.

“Now, according to the 2009 work programme of the [Kyoto Protocol], we were supposed to conclude on the aggregate numbers during the March-April session, and then on the individual numbers during June. We are now in November and we are being taken for a ride. We can not accept this dragging on issues, this is why we proposed and recommended for a suspension of the other Contact Groups until we see tangible numbers that reflect a big proportion of domestic efforts on the part of Annex I countries.”

In response to questions, Mr Djemaoui added:

“I can assure that we are not here as African Group...as many are thinking...that we are just participating...or something like that.

“We are making public our positions, and what I can say on what can come next? We are going to fight and to defend all our positions. Keeping in mind the message we would like also to give to the outside world that we are willing to get a positive, and acceptable, equitable and fair result and outcome in Copenhagen.

And:

“And you see that we are still discussing since COP/MOP 1 in Montreal in 2005...and everything is delayed...if you can see that in the KP, yesterday, for example, just a concrete example what happened yesterday: if you see the daily program of yesterday, for KP contact groups there were one hour only, per CG...for LCA there were

one hour and a half which means that there is also tendency to push for LCA to slow down the KP. And if you see the contact group on numbers yesterday, from 3:00 to 4:00, there were nothing, no advancement.

“So we are asking to suspend other work until we get numbers in aggregate.”

Notes:

- (a) Video of the press conference is available via the UNFCCC: http://unfccc2.metafusion.com/kongresse/091102_AWG_Barcelona/templ/ovw_unfccc_big.php?id_kongressmain=95