

Presidency of the Dominican Republic
National Council on Climate Change and Clean Development Mechanism

The Road to Copenhagen
Dominican Republic's Position on Climate Change

PROLOGUE

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing humanity and it needs a global response. It is a complex problem facing the present generation and threatens to nullify the efforts of decades of development. The Dominican Republic has addressed the problem through the knowledge of the causes and driving forces, consequences, main implications and identification of measures to reduce negative impacts and take advantage of the opportunities, leading to convergences that will allow reaching an international agreement that will benefit all parties.

This paper aims to present the position of the Dominican Republic and its institutions on the topics of discussion in the negotiations on Climate Change, which are mainly based on the pillars of the Bali Action Plan, and is expected to culminate in a fair and just political settlement in Copenhagen, Denmark in December 2009.

This country position represents the efforts of Dominican public and private institutions, which based on the experiences and research of international organizations and regional groups, have identified guidelines that contribute to achieving the commitments made in the Millennium Development Goals. Some of these commitments are: facing poverty through innovative mechanisms, promoting the integration of society to the productive apparatus, contributing with energy diversification and security, fostering institutional strengthening through knowledge and technology transfer, as well as reducing vulnerabilities through joint efforts that are made from different segments of the Dominican State.

We must keep in our minds and hearts the reason why we need to reach a fair agreement. The magnitude of the problem requires coordinated action between developed and developing countries that must be effective in terms of the objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases that responds to the stability of the climate system and that ensures the sustainable development of our people. This is because, as a developing island state, we have invaluable biodiversity and our main economic activity, tourism, depends directly of the resources that to a great extent will be affected by variations in the climate system.

In order to develop a consensus position with local stakeholders and to prepare for participating in this process, which ultimately is a very demanding challenge, we have received support from bilateral and multilateral development cooperation, who have played an important role not only in the contributions to initiatives within the Strategic Funding Program, which aims to lead to policies that promote a low carbon economy, but also to social development with equity and the necessary environmental protection.

We have very little time to solve the climate crisis. It is necessary to overcome all the special interests, all resistance, and all obstacles if we want to implement the Bali Action Plan and provide a satisfactory solution to the planet and humanity, so that we assume, in an urgent manner, the tasks of the economic and social development of the people affected by poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, and extreme weather events.

The only hope of reversing the current crisis situation that prevails in the world lies in the brave, wise, and timely decisions that we could adopt at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The people of the world await those decisions. They are aware that their right to a dignified, honorable and happy life depends on it. Let's not disappoint them. Let's act with justice, courage, and sense of history and vision of the future.

Leonel Fernández Reyna

President of the Dominican Republic

Geographical Location and Historical Background

The Dominican Republic is located between 17 ° 36' and 19 ° 58' north latitude and 68 ° 17' and 72 ° 00' west longitude, which puts the country on the edge of the tropical north zone. It has an area of 48,670.82 km², of which 1,575 kilometers are in the coast, 526 kilometers on the north coast, 374 kilometers on the east coast, and 675 kilometers on the south coast. The country is bounded on the south and east by the Caribbean Sea and on the North by the Atlantic Ocean.

The island of Hispaniola or Santo Domingo, which is shared by the Republic of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, together with Puerto Rico, which lies to the east, Cuba to the northwest, and Jamaica to the southwest, belongs to the Greater Antilles of the Caribbean Archipelago.

The climate change phenomenon appears in the international political agenda in 1979 in the first World Climate Conference, which expected to demonstrate the relationship between human interference and the elements of the Climate System. As early as 1988, the government of Malta requested the intervention of the United Nations General Assembly based on scientific evidence at that time. This problem will inevitably model, in an essential way, the living conditions of the inhabitants of the planet, the current shape of economic processes, and the natural systems that constitute the basic foundation of humanity.

In 1992, the governments of the countries adopted the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as a first step in addressing one of the most urgent problems of humanity. Likewise in 1997 was adopted the Kyoto Protocol as a legally binding instrument to the Convention, with two particular elements:

- The establishment of emission limits
- Its innovative flexible mechanisms.

The protocol's emission limits are imposed to the industrialized countries (Annex 1) that historically are responsible for high concentrations of Greenhouse Gases (GHG) emissions in the atmosphere. Flexible mechanisms (Joint Implementation, Clean Development Mechanism and International Emissions Trading) are used to achieve the goals adopted, provided that the emission reductions achieved are additional, voluntary, and contribute to sustainable development.

The Dominican Republic as a Party to the Convention and part of the Kyoto Protocol has had to engage in the processes and initiatives of adaptation and mitigation, because of its characteristics of a developing island state, with a real chance of being affected by extreme weather events, hurricanes, and rising sea levels, putting at high-risk coastal infrastructure throughout the country, including tourism.

Within these commitments, the country has developed the National Emission Inventory and Greenhouse Gas Absorption, which is one of the key components of the National Communication, and with which we have tabulated our emissions and we are working to make reductions in the future.

The preparation, periodic updating, publication, and communication to the Conference of the Parties of national inventories of anthropogenic emissions by the sources and the absorption by the sinks of all Greenhouse Gas (GHG) not controlled by the Montreal Protocol, is one of the commitments made by all Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Based on the agreements reached at the Conference of the Parties in Bali (COP 13), Indonesia, December 2007, it was agreed and defined what is known as the Bali Action Plan (BAP), which defines the main five pillars of future negotiations, these are:

- The common or shared vision for the long-term future of the climate;
- The global measures of mitigation of the causes of climate change;
- Adaptation to climate change effects;
- The scheme of Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation of Tropical Forests (REDD); and
- The need for technology transfer, investment and financial flows, capacity building, education on climate change, among others.

The Bali Action Plan

From the "Bali Roadmap" comes the negotiation process in order to obtain a legally binding post Kyoto instrument. Two groups guide this process:

* Ad Hoc Working Group Long-Term Cooperative Actions (AWG-LCA). It focuses mainly on the modules of mitigation, adaptation, technology,

financing, and the shared vision agreements with the long-term global goal for the reduction of emissions, mitigation actions or commitments by all developed countries, that are measurable, reportable and verifiable, and suitable for the country as well as appropriate mitigation actions in developing countries.

* Ad Hoc Working Group for the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP). It focuses on the scale of emission reductions, the potential consequences, legal issues, possible modifications of project-based schemes such as the reformulation of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), of the International Emissions Trading, and the establishment of strict controls.

Process and Progress of Negotiations

Extremely complex and extensive documents have been created, that have joined the proposals of different countries about their expectations of the future of the Kyoto Protocol (KP) and of three other future instruments created under the foundations of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). These instruments aim to halt and, if possible, reverse the effects of harmful activities of human beings on the Climate System.

Since the first session of the AWG-LCA, which took place in Bangkok, Thailand, a lot of work has been done to advance the elements established in the Bali Action Plan, in the spirit of achieving coherence and maintaining transparency in the identification of elements, taking into account the relationships between the elements and the work of subsidiary bodies of the Convention.

The following meetings have worked to build an understanding in all aspects of the Bali Action Plan, through the submission of proposals and ideas on common or shared vision, mitigation, adaptation, technology transfer, the needs of financial flows and investments, and global and national capacity building.

The work within the AWG-KP has focused on the means for industrialized countries (Annex 1) to reach their emissions reduction targets to address the flexible mechanisms, the activities of land use, land use change, and forestry (LULUCF). Other issues are also considered such as the inclusion of other greenhouse gases, sectors and source categories, approaches to emissions by sector, methodological issues and residual effects.

Moreover, the negotiations have been conducted on the basis of a set of proposals that seek to define legally binding instruments for climate protection and the advancement of global political stances, which should be evaluated in light of national realities, to establish positions that must be considered with the aim of reaching a fair settlement that reflects the implementation of measures based on principles of equity, equality and right to social and economic development.

Dominican Republic's expectations in each of the pillars.

Pillar 1: Common or shared vision of long-term future climate

* That the actions taking place between now and the long term, are based in accordance with the provisions and principles of the Convention, in particular the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

* In the expectations of future climate, it must be taken into account the precautionary principle, which states that countries should take precautionary measures to anticipate, prevent or minimize the causes of climate change and reduce adverse effects, without arguing the lack of scientific certainty as a justification for postponing or failing to perform the necessary steps, taking as its fundamental premise education and research.

* That the suggestion to introduce the Climate Resilience of the different elements that are affected by changes in the Climate System, is subject of study before establishing it as part of the Principles in the Shared Vision, since it could be interpreted as the precautionary principle.

* Developed countries must commit to maintain an economic growth with low emission levels, since they are historically responsible for the high concentrations of Greenhouse Gases-GHG-in the atmosphere, and they should recognize the need and the right of all countries and their citizens of the world to develop.

* We hope that the GHG emission reductions are established within the global target of reducing emissions and stabilize at 350 ppm CO₂e by 2050. With these concentrations it is expected that the average annual temperature does not exceed 1.5 ° C. This would mean to reduce emissions by 85% of 1990 levels, and by 2020, at least 45% of 1990 levels. It is expected that the moment of maximum emission value is reached in 2015.

* Within the expectation of mitigation actions of developed countries, deep leadership is expected to consider its historical responsibility and respective capabilities, so that these could be measurable, reportable and verifiable (MRV).

* Mitigation commitments of developing countries could adopt National Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMA's) on the basis of national efforts in the context of sustainable development with technological support, capacity building, and enabling sources of investment and financing that could be measurable, reportable and verifiable. Developing countries that are considered high emitters should report in the NAMA's more frequently, and must also perform inventories of Greenhouse Gases every two years.

* The base year for the realization of all calculations we pretend to be the same that was established in the Kyoto Protocol, to ensure the same reference frame of emissions or emissions reductions achieved and thus to compare the efforts of the next commitment periods. The expectation of adaptation measures and actions is that these are supported by developed countries to cover the costs of adaptation based on their vulnerabilities and support the resilience of ecosystems.

* Adaptation costs should be covered entirely by the developed countries as well as the costs of preparation of the National Action Plans for Adaptation (NAPA's). Developed countries should also provide support in building national capacities for the preparation and implementation of these plans.

* For the technology transfer and Capacity Building it is expected to reach an agreement to establish a Multilateral Technology Fund under the authority of the Conference of the Parties (COP) with an appropriate governance structure that will function under the proposed implementation of Action Plans to strengthen the action in all phases of the technological cycle. The Multilateral Technology Fund would fundamentally support mitigation and adaptation, ensuring that the actions taken can be measurable, reportable and verifiable (MRV).

* It is intended that the financial scheme proposed, ensure adequate resources, program resource utilization, and for these resources to be new ones, thus other commitments are not neglected by developed countries for mitigation and adaptation in developing countries, under the guidance and direction of the COP to which they will report to, ensuring that the actions taken can be measurable, reportable and verifiable (MRV).

Pillar 2: Global Mitigation Measures of Climate Change Causes

Mitigation of the causes of climate change has been from the beginning included as an important part of the negotiations as a strategy for achieving the objectives of reducing atmospheric concentrations of Greenhouse Gases (GHG). Based on the decisions taken at COP 13 in Bali, Indonesia, it has been established the need for all parties to make a commitment to reduce emissions so that these could be measurable, reportable and verifiable. For our country:

* Mitigation commitments of developed countries should be in nature, different from mitigation actions of developing countries.

* Developed countries should assume ambitious commitments of emissions reduction that are measurable, reportable and verifiable (MRV) that are consistent with their historical level of responsibility for climate change, according to their respective economic and technological capabilities and on the basis of developments scientific evidence.

* We support the proposal that the efforts of developing countries to implement the National Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMA's) are on a voluntary basis and within the context of sustainable development, to pursue a low carbon development, with financial and technological support from developed countries.

* Support for emission reductions in sectoral basis, under the implementation of measures that strengthen the cooperation in technology transfer actions and the facilitation of economic and financial resources for implementing the NAMA's. The structuring of it should not be under a scheme that does not lead to global standards, benchmarks or goals of sectoral emissions reduction, transnational or national that generates additional weight on the quantified reduction targets of national or sectoral emissions on developing countries.

* Mitigation measures should be in synergy with the policies of adaptation, so that the measures that may negatively impact a given sector do not result in adaptation actions, through increased vulnerability. We understand that, to achieve that emission concentrations of Greenhouse Gases do not exceed the threshold that causes interference in ecosystems (less than 1.5 ° C), it is required Quick Mitigation Actions of non CO₂ gases because the gases other than carbon dioxide (CO₂), such as HCFCs and HFCs, have a Global Warming Effect (GWE) higher, and the residence time of these gases in the atmosphere is greater. It should be closely coordinated with the Vienna Convention on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and its Montreal Protocol to achieve this action.

Pillar 3: Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation and REDD-Plus

* Under the new scheme, we support the inclusion of the mechanism of Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation of Tropical Forests (REDD), whose main objective is to incorporate it under the new scheme starting in 2012, to be implemented by developing countries suitable for forestry and reduce concentrations of greenhouse gases and mitigate the effects of climate change.

* Expectations that the REDD mechanism, operates under the authority and guidance of the COP and receive 1% of GDP from developed countries, and that these resources are adequately received, predictable and sustained. Moreover, the mechanism should be fed by the deductions of the Emission Reduction Units (ERU's), the Joint Implementation and the Assignment Amount Units (AAU's) and that these resources are moved to the financial mechanism of the Convention.

* We support that the actions implemented under REDD are part of NAMA's and in synergy with the NAPA's of developing countries within a system of monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV).

Pillar 4: Adaptation to Climate Change Effects

Developing countries must take adaptation measures and actions to prevent, reduce or minimize the adverse effects of climate change, particularly the most vulnerable developing countries: Least Developed Countries (LDC's), Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and African countries affected by drought, as well as the poor and vulnerable populations of other developing countries, like Central and South America. Regarding adaptation actions:

* We hope that the way to approach within the framework of adaptation, is comprehensive, and includes funding, technology and capacity building.

* We support the proposal that the Convention should coordinate and promote the planning and implementation of measures and actions for adaptation, and that the poor and most vulnerable, especially women and children, should be the first and main beneficiaries of the Adaptation Fund.

* We hope that under the new scheme, developed countries have the responsibility to provide financial and technological resources to Developing Countries to cover the total incremental costs in developing countries, under the guidance and direction of the COP to which they will report to, ensuring that the actions taken can be measurable, reportable and verifiable (MRV).

* We identify with the statement that the best way to function is through integrated framework under the direction of the Conference of the Parties (COP) with two mechanisms, one facilitator and the other financial, in which special attention is given to the various priority areas for action and financing in adaptation as well as to the approaches proposed by countries.

* Coverage areas for adaptation must compensate for damages and losses as well as for the strategies and measures for the reduction and management of disasters and risk due to climate change.

* We hope that the way to approach within the framework of adaptation, is comprehensive, and includes funding, technology, and capacity building.

Pillar 5: Technology Transfer and Capacity Building to tackle Climate Change

* Establishment of a Technological Mechanism under the supervision of the Convention, where is addressed the cooperation for Research & Development (R & D), dissemination and transfer of technology for adaptation and mitigation, to establish an initial short term action plan with a timetable, responsibilities, and funding sources.

* The establishment of a Multilateral Technology Fund (MTF) for the removal of barriers to research and development (R & D) and Technology Transfer (T T) that includes the purchase of patents for mitigation and adaptation actions, among others. The Fund should be fed with new and additional resources, from developed countries, acting on a donation basis and that does not divert resources from official development assistance.

* We hope that the actions implemented under REDD, promote and ensure the participation of communities and relevant stakeholders throughout the cycle, through their own forms of organization and representation.

* Defining specific mechanisms for research and development (R & D) cooperative technologies for adaptation and mitigation.

* Creation of Regional Centers of Technological Innovation for mitigation and adaptation in order to: promote the recovery, diffusion and adoption of relevant local and ancestral knowledge for adaptation, and the development of cooperative agreements in research and development (R & D) of technologies, systems, and practices for adaptation and mitigation.

* The Technology Needs Assessment (TNA's) should reflect the development needs in an appropriate scale of the National Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMA's) and National Action Plans for Adaptation (NAPA's), and consider the development of Technology Needs Assessment (TNA's) at the regional level in order to link them to the Centers for Technological Innovation.

Pillar 6: Need for New Investment and Financial Flows to address Climate Change

Under the understanding that developed countries will provide new and additional financial resources to cover all expenses arising from the implementation of mitigation and adaptation measures performed by developing countries:

* We adhere to the proposition that the institutional framework under which it is establish the structure of investment and funding support, must be coordinated under the authority and guidance of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to ensure that the commitments made under the Convention are met within the same institutional framework and ensure the participation of non-Annex 1 countries in decision making and governance, and that it also guarantees agility in obtaining resources.

* That the established scheme works on two major lines of action: a financing mechanism and a facilitating mechanism aimed at providing financial and technical assistance in the preparation and implementation of NAMA's in a way that these are measurable, reportable and verifiable. The preparation and implementation of Monitoring and Evaluation Plans (M & E) for the NAPA's, the preparation of Technology Needs Assessments (TNA's), capacity building, and facilitating environments in Developing Countries for adaptation and mitigation, while maintaining an equitable distribution between both needs. Also, it is of great importance the design of adaptation programs or projects, research and development (R & D) of technologies, deployment and dissemination of low carbon technologies, and acquisition or flexibilization of patents, etc.

* The financing sources for the operation of this scheme, could be through the establishment of a Multilateral Technology Fund (MTF) to fund:

- Removing Barriers to Research and Development (R & D);
- Technology Transfer (TT);
- Cooperation in Research and Development (R & D);
- Disclosure (demonstration projects and exhibitions or fairs);and
- The purchase of patents.

* That the Adaptation Fund under the KP, should be fed with 2% of the CDM and a considerable percentage from the Joint Implementation, Emissions Trading, and the Adaptation Fund, under the tutelage of the Convention. The level of contributions from developed countries for the NAMA's of developing countries should be between [0.5 - 1]% of its annual GDP, among other sources. These funds should be additional to funds already allocated for Official Development Aid (ODA).

Pillar 7: Other issues to tackle Climate Change

* We support the possibility that the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol is 5 years, 2012-2017, and that the existing system of performance is maintained, with possible enhancements and revisions of compliance in the medium-term.

* The generation of Policies and Measures for Sustainable Development (SD-PAM's), which suggests that developing countries identify more sustainable development strategies and commit to implement them with financial backing that would come from the developed countries. Setting as a starting point, their own long-term development goals and subsequently identifying policies and measures to make more sustainable the development strategy, to then register these with the international community.

* One of the main goals of the Dominican Republic is to: “promote education, public sensibilization and capacity building in relation to prevention and reduction of vulnerability, mitigation, and adaptation to climate change in the country, as well as to share information and meaningful experiences to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and the establishment of synergetic alliances among the civil society and the governments.”

* We believe that it is necessary to make an improvement to the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), to consider the correction of distortions in the market and the unequal distribution of projects in geographical regions and sectors. Establish a minimum international standard of contribution to sustainable development (SD) since the current contribution of CDM to SD has been widely questioned.