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UN sets out seven objectives for Cancún climate talks

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The Cancún climate talks could realistically make progress in seven areas, according to a leading UN climate official.

Halldor Thorgeirsson, director of Bali Road Map Support at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat, said that the talks, in Mexico in December, will be a "test of procedure" for climate negotiations following last year's meeting in Copenhagen that was characterised by disunity among nations.

Addressing a conference at Chatham House in London today, he called for "a paradigm shift" away from the attitude that "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed" towards "nothing is agreed until enough is agreed".

Thorgeirsson identified seven areas where progress could be made in Cancún:

1. Formalising pledges to mitigate climate change, made for example in the Copenhagen Accord;
2. Putting in place a system for measuring, reporting and verifying efforts to mitigate emissions, and financial support for those efforts;
3. Establishing a framework for adaptation;
4. Agreeing a fund for mitigation and adaptation activities, putting in motion the design of that fund and an agreement for its oversight;
5. Putting in place the infrastructure needed to deliver funds for mitigation and adaptation, and establishing a registry for developing countries' 'nationally agreed mitigation actions';
6. Establishing a global goal - most likely to limit global temperature rise to 2°C - and a process for measuring progress towards and reviewing that goal; and
7. Launching of a "readiness phase" for a mechanism to direct finance to reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation.

"This is a realistic assessment of what could be achieved," he said. "The essence really is long-term finance and delivery of short-term finance."

Thorgeirsson cautioned that assigning responsibility for emission cuts "won't happen in Cancún" and continuing to negotiate emission reduction targets "delays delivery on action".

"But, at the same time, we need to avoid a gap" between the end of the Kyoto Protocol's first commitment period, at the end of 2012, and whatever comes after, and "ensure continuation of the carbon markets".