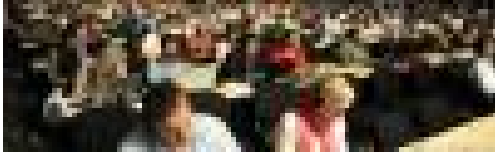


## U. N. official defends the potential for progress at Mexico Climate Conference

Rich Heffern | Dec. 2, 2010 Eco Catholic



The executive secretary of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change on Wednesday defended the potential for progress at the group's annual conference in Cancún, in the midst of low expectations in the wake of last year's meeting in Copenhagen.

"The fact is that no one can afford permanently immovable positions," executive secretary Christiana Figueres said at a press conference in Cancún on Dec. 1, referencing the overall perception of a stalemate that took place in Copenhagen last year.

Delegates at the Copenhagen conference were not able to agree on a binding climate treaty for curbing carbon emissions, which has cast doubt on the potential for the group to reach a treaty at this year's conference, policy experts say.

"Nobody can afford to stay in inaction, and it is very clear that countries are actually willing to engage to be able to produce results here in Cancún," Figueres said.

The executive secretary said she believes the nearly 200 delegates gathered will be able to deliver a "balanced package" by the end of next week, when the conference ends and an anticipated climate treaty is either passed or put on hold until next year's conference in South Africa.

A looming 2012 deadline confronts the group — formally known as the Conference of the Parties, or COP — when the binding Kyoto Protocol is set to expire.

While the Kyoto Protocol does not cover all COP nations, it does set binding emission targets for 37 industrialized countries and the European community.

Japan's announced on the second day of the Mexico conference that it would not be in favor of extending the Kyoto Protocol. That has mounted the pressure for the delegates to decide on how to move forward once the treaty expires. Japan instead said it would push for a new global climate agreement to take the place of the current Kyoto Protocol.

"It is very clear that, given the diversity of positions on the Kyoto Protocol, it is not going to be possible for Cancún to make a radical decision one way or the other on the Kyoto Protocol," Figueres said.

"Parties are going to have to compromise, be flexible and find where the medium ground may lie between the two extreme positions," she said.

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