

Paths to Sustainability Coalition

Israeli Environmental NGOs' delegation to UNCCC at Cancun

Summary of activities

The Israeli Environmental NGOs' delegation to the UN conference on Climate Change (COP16) in Cancun, Mexico, included three representatives:

- **Prof. David Mahalel**, chairman of Transportation Today & Tomorrow
- **Dr. Hussein Tarabeih**, General Director of Towns Association for Environmental Quality-Agan Beit Natufa
- **Adv. Dana Tabachnik**, legal department of Israeli Union for Environmental Defense

The representatives were chosen by the Coalition's steering committee out of 11 candidates from different environmental organizations. All candidates who have not participated in previous UN conferences were personally interviewed to help better assess their potential contribution to the delegation.

Prior to the delegation departure, preparation meetings were held both in the Coalition forum and in the Ministry of Environmental Protection, with all the delegation members. The meetings included updates and recaps of the current status of the multilateral negotiation and the Israeli stands, as well as updates about logistics and useful information about the conference, in coordination with Ministry of Environmental Protection and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Position papers, representing the Coalition's stands on Israel's (lack of) climate policy, were co-created by the Coalition members and coordinator, both in Hebrew (for other members of the delegation) and English.

As been the case since Johannesburg Earth Summit in 2002, our representatives were included in the official Israeli delegation that was comprised of representatives from government offices, the Israeli electricity company, JNF and other organizations, and took part in the official discussions of parties in the conference during its high level segment (4-10.12.2010).

Our representatives participated in the daily briefing of the Israeli delegation, in which updates were given about progress of the discussions, as well as about important discussions and events that took place later that day.

The official discussions at the conference were carried out in two parallel tracks, both held in the same venue (Moon Palace, about an hour from Cancun center): *COP16* deals with the continuation of the climate convention, aiming to reach a global treaty on climate change; and the *CMP6* deals with the continuation of the

Kyoto protocol, and the question of replacement after its termination in 2012. Due to lack of time, our representatives attended mostly COP16 discussions.

The Following issues were most relevant during the discussions to Israel:

- The shared vision: how would the overarching goal for mitigation targets be defined, what would be the accepted rise in global mean temperature, what year would be defined as the "pick year" from which global emissions level will decline, etc.
- Israel's status as a 'non-annex I country' (developing country, not obligated to reduce its emissions) – is a main issue, especially after joining the OECD. So far, no change was made in this status, although it is expected to happen in the coming years.
- Israel's diplomatic status: Israel is the only country that is not a member in any of the party groupings. Recently, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs considers joining the **Umbrella Group**, a loose coalition of non-EU developed countries which formed following the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol. This will help Israel to be better informed about developments during the negotiations.
- The issue of adaptation to climate change is significant for Israel, due to its geographic and geo-political location in the heart of the Middle East, which, according to the IPCC, is one of the most vulnerable areas to climate change. Being a non-annex I country, Israel is seemingly eligible for adaptation support from developed countries. However, due to its economic situation (OECD member), an external financial support is probably irrelevant. This strengthens the Coalition's stand on the urgent need for local adaptation strategy.
- Technology transfer was another focus area for the Israeli delegation, as Israel has the potential to contribute significantly to the global effort to combat the climate crisis by exporting knowledge and technological expertise to developing countries.
- Forestation was one of the most discussed issues in the conference, as the shaping of REDD program (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries) is accelerating. This issue was naturally less relevant to the Israeli delegation. However, JNF organized an official side event about forestation in arid areas during the conference.

In addition to participating in some of the official discussions, our representatives took part in a long list of side events, both "official" side events (organized by parties) and "civil" side events (organized by NGOs).

Some of these events were:

- The Opening Ceremony for high level officials
- International Energy Agency (IEA) event: "Electricity at the core of climate mitigation"

- IEA seminar: "aspects of sustainable energy policy and technology as response to climate change"
- US side events: state and regional energy policy, green economy and GHG emission reduction programs
- UNEP side event about the gap between declared reduction targets and actual reductions in reality
- Earth-justice event: Climate change and human rights
- EPIA event: sustainable development and solar energy
- ICLEI event: cities' role in global mitigation and adaptation efforts
- Hanukah event at the local Jewish community synagogue (coordinated by the coalition coordinator for the entire delegation)

Newsletters updating about the conference were widely disseminated prior, during, and after the conference, in order to notify organizations and the media, and raise awareness to the issue in the public sector. All the updates were also published in *GreenChange* network, Life and environment website and facebook pages and other blogs.

The participation in the UN conference has also allowed our representatives to meet a variety of organizations from different countries, share ideas and experiences and create long term relations with some of them. Among the list of the organization were IEA, Greenpeace international, WRI (World Resources Institute), IEA, OECD, EPIA (European Photovoltaic Industry Association) and others. Some connections are most valuable, as the NGOs members would be able to share knowledge and information relevant for current projects in Israel. For example, a Canadian NGO has been keen on sharing its experience from their tar sands campaign, which is very similar to the Israeli campaign against oil shale extraction in the Adulam region.

Finally but perhaps most importantly, the preparation and participation of the NGOs representatives in the official delegation, has contributed to strengthening working relations between government officials and the Coalition members, by creating opportunities for cooperation and conversations. This cooperation is valuable for the coalition's ability to communicate and advise some of these bodies in the future.

We wish to express our gratitude for the **Heinrich Böll Foundation** for supporting the Coalitions activities and allowing the participation of environmental NGOs in the UN climate conference. This participation has both a symbolic importance and direct benefits to the Coalition's actions and its ability to make an impact in climate policy in Israel.