

U.S. inaction on climate change will condemn present and future generations to suffering

Bonn, 10 May (Perna Bomzan*) – Inaction by the United States (US) on climate change will condemn present and future generations to much suffering, said a leading developing country climate change negotiator at a side-event at the climate talks taking place in Bonn, Germany.

Bernarditas Mueller from the **Philippines**, who is the chief climate finance negotiator for the **G77 and China** said in response to a question from the floor that what she was most worried about if the US does not take action to combat climate change is that “it will condemn the present and future generations to much suffering”.

Mueller was speaking at a side-event organized by the Third World Network (TWN) and South Center on 8 May on the theme of ‘Implementing the Paris Agreement: Perspectives from Developing Countries.’

A member of the audience had raised the question from the floor of what the implications were of a US step back from the Paris Agreement (PA).

Other panel members at the side-event which was moderated by Mariama Williams of the South Centre were **Ravi Prasad** of **India**, who is the Joint-Secretary from the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change and **Chen Zhihua**, who is the Director of International Negotiations at the National Development and Reform Commission of **China**.

In response the question about the US, **Prasad** said that from what he has heard, most countries are committed to the PA, irrespective of what some individual countries are doing. He said that he would like to see how the Agreement can be furthered and strengthened. In relation to the implications on climate finance, Prasad said that not much has been delivered from the US on finance.

Chen said that most developing countries are firm on their resolve to implement the PA. Referring to the ‘elephant in the room’ (in relation to the US decision as regards the PA), if there is a gap due to the inaction by the US, then that gap (whether on mitigation or finance) must be filled by the other developed countries. He expressed concerns as to whether other members of the Umbrella Group would want to also cut off their climate finance contributions.

“We hope that we can all join hands to combat climate change,” said Chen stressing further that “confidence that all Parties will all do their job was important in combating climate change”.

(While the situation of the US is uncertain as regards whether they will remain in the PA, Russia, which is in the Umbrella Group has yet to ratify the PA).

Speakers also shared their views on how the PA should be implemented and the challenges and opportunities it poses in the context of the ongoing negotiations.

All speakers made it clear that the fundamental point to start with is that the PA is a continuation of the existing UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), with the purpose to enhance its implementation.

Prasad began by saying that the PA is an effort to enhance the implementation of the Convention; the underlying principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC) which are embedded in the Convention have been carried forward in the PA. This, therefore, calls for higher ambition for mitigation along with adaptation efforts and that the delivery of means of implementation to developing countries must be accelerated, he added.

However, key concerns which persist are of pre-2020 actions not being met; notably, the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol (KP2) for 2013-2020 is still not ratified and enforced and the goal of mobilizing USD 100 billion per year by 2020 has not been scaled up, said Prasad.

In the Green Climate Fund, the level of projected public finance is very limited to USD 2.5 billion a year which is much lower than what developing countries have submitted under their nationally determined contributions (NDCs), he said further, adding that there is therefore a huge gap in current financial flows.

Prasad said that the expectation India had from developed countries is for concessional finance for renewable energy, better flow of technology transfer, a more convenient intellectual property rights regime and increased finance flows.

On the development of the modalities, procedures and guidelines (MPGs) for the implementation of the PA, Prasad stressed that there was no need to reinvent the wheel as necessary modalities, guidelines and frameworks are already in place in the current Convention. The best approach, he said should be for Parties to only identify the lacuna that exists and address them in the MPGs. Further technicalities and jargon would only add undue burden to developing countries, he said further.

Prasad also said that there must be differentiation and flexibilities in the application of MPGs to developing countries as they lack enough capability and resources, which developed countries are already well equipped with.

In response to a question from the floor on the issue of technology transfer, Prasad said that the aim should be to address the issue of costs of climate friendly technologies so that it can be available to developing countries to allow the transition to low carbon development. He said that technology relevant to a low carbon development is not forthcoming and costs 20-30 times more than conventional technologies, adding that the cost curve is too steep to negotiate. He gave the example of Montreal Protocol where two companies have monopolies over alternative technologies and it would take 20-30 years before they become cheaper, but this would be too late for developing countries to combat climate change.

Chen said that the Convention is the mother treaty while the PA is the child that carries its blood. All the principles of the Convention therefore should be reflected when designing the modalities,

procedures and guidelines (MPGs) for implementation of the PA.

He said further that the PA was a hard won achievement of all Parties and was indeed a big success. “No matter what happens we will implement the PA” said Chen, adding that “the determination is firm from our side”.

Some principles he would like to see when implementing the PA are CBDR and equity, he said further.

Chen added that the NDCs are the key feature of the PA and the work on designing the MPGs must be balanced among all elements.

He warned that there was a tendency for a mitigation-centric PA, while adaptation and means of implementation are being sidelined. He emphasized further that the PA was a comprehensive agreement and not one that is mitigation-centric.

“Since Parties are entering a new phase of implementation, we should reflect on facilitating its implementation in a constructive and positive manner and not finger point or enter into a blame game,” said Chen.

He also stressed that the key principle of differentiation between developed and developing countries must be respected in the MPGs, with flexibilities for developing countries.

Chen also echoed the call for pre-2020 actions to be met, such as the ratification of the second commitment period under the Doha Amendment of the KP and for developed countries to revisit their mitigation targets, which was part of the agreement reached in Doha. He also said that the roadmap to the USD 100 per year by 2020 was pretty far away from the expectations of developing countries.

He also said that developing countries had many challenges and were lacking in enough resources and experience. The more resources there are, the more ambition there will be, he said further.

He said developed countries did not achieve their industrialization through a low carbon development. Developing countries do not have a model to follow where industrialization is achieved without carbon emissions. This therefore posed a challenge to developing countries in developing their economies and addressing climate change, Chen stressed further.

In terms of the negotiation process, given the time constraint of only a year and a half remaining, textual negotiations must start as early as possible for a comprehensive and balanced decision so that all MPGs are finalized by 2018, he added further.

Mueller, who is a seasoned negotiator and has been in the process since the birth of the Convention, said that the only universal agreement which still exists is the UNFCCC. She said that the PA has yet to be ratified by all countries, including some big countries. She recalled the history of how the Convention began as well as the Kyoto Protocol, which were driven largely by the scientific findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCCC), which has now shown that it is incontrovertible that climate change is human induced. She emphasized that the PA was to

enhance the implementation of the Convention even further.

She also stressed the challenges faced by developing countries who are facing and suffering the impacts of climate change due to the historical responsibility of developed countries for greenhouse gas emissions. Mueller also lamented that not much climate finance and technology transfer has really been delivered from developed to developing countries despite the obligations under the Convention.

Mueller stressed that ambition of developing countries can be enhanced but it requires the necessary means of implementation to be enhanced as well.

** With inputs and edits from Meena Raman.*