

Key outcomes from COP 23

Beijing, 23 Nov (Zhenyan Zhu) – Several key decisions and important outcomes were adopted at the recently concluded 23rd session of the Conference of the Parties (COP23) to the UNFCCC, which met from Nov 6 to 18 in Bonn, Germany.

Among the key decisions included outcomes from the Report of the Executive Committee (ExCom) of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with climate change impacts (WIM), local communities and indigenous peoples' platform, issues relating to agriculture and gender and climate change.

The work on these issues began through informal consultations under the 47th session of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI47) and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA47), which recommended draft conclusions for the adoption of the COP.

SBI47 and SBSTA47 concluded its work and closed in the morning of 15 Nov. SBI Chair **Tomasz Chruszczow (Poland)** and **SBSTA Chair Carlo Fuller (Belize)** presided over their respective closing plenaries.

Below are the highlights of some of the key decisions.

Report of the ExCom of the WIM on Loss and Damage

COP 23 considered and adopted the recommendations forwarded by SBSTA and the SBI which including the following conclusions.

Parties welcomed “the report of the ExCom of the WIM and the progress made in implementing its initial two-year workplan and operationalising the clearing house for risk transfer and the task force on displacement.”

It “noted the flexible five-year rolling workplan of the ExCom which enables the timely consideration of cross-cutting issues and current, urgent and emerging needs and that the ExCom will evaluate progress made

towards implementing its five-year rolling workplan in 2020 and at regular intervals at subsequent meetings of the ExCom.”

The task force on displacement will convene a meeting in May 2018 on all areas of its work which will include wide consultations with stakeholders to ensure regional coverage. The task force will take into consideration both cross-border and internal displacement, in accordance with its mandate, when developing recommendations for integrated approaches to averting, minimising and addressing displacement related to the adverse impacts of climate change.

The secretariat, under the guidance of the ExCom and the Chair of the SBI, is requested “to organize, in conjunction with SBI 48 (April-May 2018), an expert dialogue to explore a wide range of information, inputs and views on ways for facilitating the mobilization and securing of expertise, and enhancement of support, including finance, technology and capacity-building, for averting, minimizing and addressing loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, including extreme weather events and slow onset events and the secretariat is requested to prepare a report on the expert dialogue.”

The COP reiterated its invitation “to constituted bodies under the Convention, as appropriate, to continue to integrate into their work efforts to avert, minimise and address loss and damage that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, vulnerable populations and the ecosystems that they depend on.”

It encourages the ExCom “to seek further ways to enhance its responsiveness, effectiveness and performance by improving the planning and organisation of its work, including in the context of operations of its expert groups, subcommittees, panels, thematic advisory groups and task-focused ad hoc working groups such as appropriate balanced representation, expertise of membership in

accordance with the tasks, and the duration of the mandates (of the aforementioned groups).”

At the start of the work during the first week of the climate talks, developing countries, led by **Cuba**, representing the **G77 and China**, as well as the **Alliance for Small Island States** had been pushing hard for a permanent agenda item under the Subsidiary Bodies to ensure discussions on the WIM inter-sessionally, so that the WIM can be effective in helping developing countries impacted by climate change. Developed countries were resisted strongly the proposal of developing countries.

As a compromise, Parties have agreed to having an expert dialogue to explore a wide range of information at the next session of the SBs, that also requires the secretariat to prepare a report from that dialogue.

Local communities and indigenous peoples' platform

At COP 21 (in Paris, 2015), Parties recognized the need to strengthen knowledge, technologies, practices and efforts of local communities and indigenous peoples related to addressing and responding to climate change, and established a platform for the exchange of experiences and sharing of best practise on mitigation and adaption in a holistic and integrated manner.

COP 22 (Marrakech, 2016), agreed to adopt an incremental approach to developing the local communities and indigenous peoples' platform with a view to ensuring its effective operationalization.

The issue was included as a new agenda item at SBSTA 47 and the SBSTA was invited to conclude its consideration of this agenda item by forwarding recommendations on the operationalization of the platform for consideration and adoption at COP 23.

COP 23 decided that “the overall purpose of the platform will be to strengthen the knowledge, technologies, practices and efforts of local communities and indigenous peoples related to addressing and responding to climate change, to facilitate the exchange of experience and sharing of best practices on mitigation and adaptation in a holistic and integrated manner and to enhance the engagement of local communities and indigenous peoples in the UNFCCC process.”

It was also decided that “the platform will deliver the functions of exchange of knowledge, capacity for engagement and integration with climate change policies and actions.”

It also recommended that “the process under the platform, including its operationalisation, take into account, inter alia, the interests and views of local communities and indigenous peoples, as well as the principles proposed by indigenous peoples organisations of full and effective participation of indigenous peoples; equal status of indigenous peoples and Parties, including in leadership roles; self-selection of indigenous peoples representatives in accordance with indigenous peoples' own procedures; and adequate funding from the secretariat and voluntary contributions to enable the delivery of its functions.”

The first activity of the platform will be a multi-stakeholder workshop on implementing the functions which would be moderated by the Chair of the SBSTA and a representative of local communities and indigenous peoples organisations, and that these co-moderators would make an equal contribution to the design of the workshop.

The SBSTA is requested “to consider at its 48th session (Apr-May 2018) the further operationalisation of the platform, including the establishment of a facilitative working group, which would not be a negotiating body under the Convention, and the modalities for the development of a workplan for the full implementation of the functions with balanced representation of local communities and indigenous peoples and Parties, and to conclude its considerations by making recommendations to COP24 (Dec 2018).”

Developing countries, led by the **G77 and China**, insisted on the further operationalisation of the platform at COP 23, by having a working group under the UNFCCC to advance the platform but developed countries such as the **United States** and **New Zealand** could not agree to this. The compromise reached was the establishment of a “facilitative working group” which would not be a negotiating body.

Issues relating to agriculture

The COP 17, held in Durban in 2011, requested the SBSTA to consider issues relating to agriculture, with the aim of exchanging views. The SBSTA, at its 47th session, was invited to continue its consideration of this agenda item, taking into account Parties' deliberations and progress made at SBSTA 46, with a view to determining any further action it deems appropriate.

The decision adopted at COP 23 requests “the SBSTA and SBI to jointly address issues related to agriculture including through workshops and expert meetings,

working with constituted bodies under the Convention and taking into consideration the vulnerabilities of agriculture to climate change and approaches to addressing food security.”

Parties and observers are invited “to submit by 31 March 2018, their views on elements to be included in the work for consideration at 48th session of the subsidiary bodies (April-May 2018), including modalities for implementation of the outcomes of the five in-session workshops on issues related to agriculture and other future topics that may arise from this work and methods and approaches for assessing adaptation, adaptation co-benefits and resilience, etc.”

The Subsidiary Bodies are requested to report on the progress and outcomes of the work to COP26 (Nov 2020).

Developed countries resisted having any outcome on agriculture at COP 23, while developing countries did not want the several years of work under this agenda item, especially in relation to issues relating to adaptation and agriculture.

Gender and climate change

The SBI was requested by a decision in Marrakech last year (decision 21/CP.22) to develop a gender action plan (GAP) in order to support the implementation of gender-related decisions and mandates in the UNFCCC process.

At COP 23, the GAP was adopted, which was created under the Lima work programme on gender, and “seeks to advance women’s full, equal and meaningful participation and promote gender-responsive climate policy and the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the implementation of the Convention and the work of Parties, the secretariat, United Nations entities and all stakeholders at all levels.”

The GAP which is contained in an annex to the decision states that “Gender-responsive climate policy requires further strengthening in all activities concerning adaptation, mitigation and related means of

implementation (finance, technology development and transfer, and capacity-building) as well as decision-making on the implementation of climate policies. The GAP recognizes the need for women to be represented in all aspects of the UNFCCC process and the need for gender mainstreaming through all relevant targets and goals in activities under the Convention as an important contribution to increasing their effectiveness.”

The GAP also sets out, “in five priority areas, the activities that will drive the achievement of its objectives” which cover capacity-building, knowledge sharing and communication; gender balance, participation and women’s leadership; coherence (seeking to strengthen the integration of gender considerations within the work of UNFCCC bodies, the secretariat and other United Nation entities and stakeholders towards the consistent implementation of gender-related mandates and activities); gender-responsive implementation and means of implementation; and monitoring and reporting to improve tracking in relation to the implementation of and reporting on gender-related mandates under the UNFCCC.

The COP also decided that “the topics of the annual in-session workshops to be held in conjunction with the sessions of the subsidiary bodies taking place in the first sessional period of 2018 and 2019, will be based on the submissions referred to activity of priority areas of the GAP and on the short- and long-term impacts of the GAP.”

The COP also decided to review at its 25th session, the implementation of the GAP in the context of the review of the Lima work programme on gender so as to consider the next steps, including an assessment of the impacts of the GAP. It also invited Parties and relevant organisations to participate and engage in the implementation of gender-related activities within the GAP, including enhancing the capacity of the gender focal point of the secretariat.