

Climate talks open with call for urgent action

Bonn, 7 November (Zhu Zhenyan*) – The meetings of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Kyoto Protocol (KP) and Paris Agreement (PA) as well as the meetings of the Subsidiary Bodies serving these treaties kicked off on 6 November.

In his opening plenary statement, the newly elected President of the 23rd session of the UNFCCC Conference of Parties (COP 23), Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama of Fiji, said that, “the need for urgency is obvious. Our world is in distress from the extreme weather events caused by climate change - destructive hurricanes, fires, floods, droughts, melting ice, and changes to agriculture that threaten our food security.”

In light of such extreme events, he said, “Our job as leaders is to respond to that suffering with all the means available to us. This includes our capacity to work together to identify opportunities in the transition we must take. We must not fail our people. That means using the next two weeks and the year ahead to do everything we can to make the PA work and to advance ambition and support for climate action before 2020.”

UNFCCC Executive Secretary Patricia Espinosa followed by saying that that in record time, 169 countries have ratified the Paris Agreement, “making it possible that we go from the era of hope ... to the era of implementation. Together with the (2030) Sustainable Development Agenda, we have a clear path forward to truly address climate change and sustainable development. Yet, it is an incomplete journey.”

Referring to the United Nations Environment Programme’s latest Emissions Gap Report, she said the Paris national pledges only led to a third of the reductions in emissions needed by 2030 to meet climate targets.

She listed some specific goals that must be achieved in Bonn: the negotiations are expected to be the next essential step that ensures that the Paris Agreement’s

structure is completed, its impacts are strengthened and its goals achieved. She added that there was also need to move forward to fulfil the commitments that are due in 2020. In this regard, finance and mitigation pledges are essential, she stressed.

The Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Hoesung Lee also spoke at the opening ceremony. He informed Parties that over 7,500 nominations for authors for the IPCC’s Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) just ended a week ago and this showed that “we can draw on a superb range of talent and expertise for the IPCC’s work, as implementation of the Paris Agreement begins.”

Meanwhile, he said that work continues apace on the Special Report on *Global Warming of 1.5°C*. The special report will assess how the rise in global temperatures could be limited to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels; the impacts of a 1.5 °C world compared with higher levels of warming; and the enabling conditions of meeting this target in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty.

After the adoption of the COP 23 agenda, the session was adjourned and the President convened the CMP which took up organizational and procedural matters and was then adjourned, which was also the same case in the CMA.

The President then held the joint plenary of the COP, CMP and CMA and invited Parties to make their statements.

Ecuador on behalf of **G77 and China** said that it was ready to engage constructively in the textual work that is needed for the operationalization of the PA, in a manner that reflects equity and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC), in the light of different national circumstances, while continuing to enhance the full implementation of the Convention and its KP, without any renegotiation or reinterpretation of their principles and provisions.

On loss and damage, Ecuador stressed the need to fully implement Article 8 of the PA as a matter of urgency, in order to allow a better integration of loss and damage issues into the broader ongoing work of the UNFCCC, to identify and implement concrete alternatives of support and cooperation for developing country Parties that are increasingly experiencing losses and damages resulting from extreme weather events.

To facilitate this full implementation, the Group called for loss and damage to be included as a permanent item on the agendas of the Subsidiary Bodies (SBs), with a broader and more inclusive scope of inputs from all Parties that will be available at regular meetings of the SBs, including the Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage and its 5-year work program. In this regard the Group stressed the need for special financial resources from developed country Parties to cover activities and further actions in countries.

Ecuador also emphasized that it is crucial to preserve the delicate balance of the Paris Agreement in its implementation phase and to ensure that no one will be left behind. “we must ensure transparency, inclusiveness, a Party-driven process on the basis of consensus and balance of all issues and across different bodies.”

With regard to the pre-2020 ambition, the Group stressed the need to enhance the pre-2020 ambition, providing a strong basis for post-2020 efforts under the Paris Agreement. It also called for the ratification of the Doha Amendment by Parties that have not yet done so, so as to enable its prompt entry into force and expeditious implementation of the KP’s second commitment period.

On adaptation, the Group expected a concrete outcome of this COP to be the confirmation that the Adaptation Fund will serve the Paris Agreement, via decisions from the CMP and the CMA so that the following sessions of the bodies of the COP and the next COP session can decide on the arrangements pending for this to happen.

The Group proposed to construct the proper way to recognize and register adaptation efforts and measures. It emphasized the importance of the work under the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement (APA) in relation to further guidance to the adaptation communication in order to enhance support for adaptation in developing countries. The Group added that expert guidance for modalities and procedures under APA should be reviewed in a comprehensive and holistic manner.

The G77 and China noted with concern that the flows to finance adaptation actions through specific

multilateral funds are rapidly declining. Funds under the guidance of the COP are demanding additional unwarranted requirements that have not been agreed under the Convention and these place an additional burden on developing countries.

On finance, the Group stressed the importance of having substantial and concrete advancement at this COP. It expects that the discussions on long term finance will help to identify the needs and priorities of developing countries, in particular on adaptation, financing, technology and capacity building, which could also assist in the establishment of a new long term financial goal, including through a new collective quantified goal beyond the already committed and yet insufficient floor of USD 100 billion per year, in line with decision 1/CP.21.

In addition, the Green Climate Fund (GCF) has to include filling the policy gaps, Ecuador pointed out, in particular on eligibility criteria, the start of a replenishment process, and the linkage with the UN system so as to facilitate direct access to GCF funds. The sixth review of the financial mechanism will provide the opportunity to promote coherence in the climate finance architecture, it said.

On the provision on financial and technical support, the Group expressed regret over the increasing difficulties and conditionalities faced by several developing countries in accessing financial resources from the GEF, including through the establishment of program priorities and eligibility criteria that have not been agreed at the intergovernmental level.

Deep concern was also conveyed that some developed countries are unilaterally applying eligibility criteria that are not agreed to and that limit the access of funding to developing countries under the GCF; such criteria are not compatible with guidance from the COP and are a clear departure from the letter and spirit of the Convention and the Paris Agreement. Ecuador stressed that these institutions are creating continuous additional barriers to access financial resources for climate action, which severely undermine the level of ambition of developing countries in the global effort against climate change. The Group expects this issue to be clearly addressed in the guidance of the COP to the financial mechanism.

On response measures, the G77 and China reaffirmed the importance of giving full consideration to identify necessary actions to meet the specific needs and concerns of developing country Parties arising from the impact of the implementation of response measures, and to avoid the negative economic and social consequences of response measures on

developing countries. The Group welcomed the pre-session workshop on modalities, work programme and functions under the Paris Agreement of the forum on the impact of the implementation of response measures and looked forward to the report, inputs and recommendations from the roundtable to support the work of the improved forum. The Group also emphasized the importance of fulfilling the mandate of Decision 11/CP.21 and advancing the work on the pre-2020 and post-2020 tracks on the modalities, functions and work programs for the forum under the Paris Agreement.

Iran, on behalf of **Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDC)**, said that for the LMDC, the key priorities are the principle of equity and CBDR, action on the ground with respect to adaptation, redress for loss and damage, national determination with respect to our climate policies and actions, and having access to and receiving finance, technology development and transfer and capacity-building support from developed countries to undertake such actions.

Iran stressed that this COP must be “an implementation COP” that fully addresses and resolves long-standing issues on adaptation, adaptation finance, loss and damage, and the provision of finance, technology and capacity-building support to developing countries. Developing country Parties can effectively implement their commitments only when developed country Parties implement their own commitments to provide the financial resources and transfer technology that developing countries need. Economic and social development and poverty eradication are the first and overriding priorities of developing country Parties.

The PA and the COP 21 decision that adopted it constitute a delicately balanced outcome on both pre- and post-2020 actions. However, the LMDC said, we have not seen any political will from developed country Parties to the Convention to increase their pre-2020 mitigation ambition nor to fully live up to their pre-2020 commitment to provide the means of implementation to developing country Parties. This imperils the trust and sense of international cooperation that was created at COP21 through the Paris Outcome, according to the group.

Iran pointed out that, COP23 should accelerate the implementation of pre-2020 commitments and actions, especially by developed country Annex I Parties to the Convention. These include taking stock of the implementation by developed countries of their commitment to achieve and enhance their pre-2020 mitigation targets; their joint commitment to provide

at least USD100 billion of climate finance per year to developing countries; their rapid ratification of the 2012 Doha Amendment to the KP; and determining what further concrete actions and technical work can be undertaken up to 2020 to accelerate and enhance the ambition of the pre-2020 actions and the provision of support to developing countries. This is the reason why the LMDC suggested the inclusion of an agenda item on pre-2020 issues in the COP’s agenda, it emphasized.

With respect to the scope of 2018 facilitative dialogue, Iran said it must include mitigation, adaptation and support in a holistic and balanced manner and focus on a comprehensive consideration of the pre-2020 gaps on actions and support that need to be addressed and the ways in which equity and CBDR and the overriding development and poverty eradication priorities of developing countries can be taken into account. The organization of the 2018 facilitative dialogue must be simple and Party-driven, without any overdesigning beyond its mandate.

With respect to the CMP, Iran highlighted that this conference should result in the entry into force of the 2012 Doha Amendment to the KP in an expeditious manner. Five years have already passed after the Doha Amendment was agreed to in 2012, yet most developed countries have not yet ratified it. Neither have they, despite pledging to do so since 2012, revisited and increased their quantified pre-2020 emission reduction targets and mitigation efforts under the KP and the Convention. This shows a significant lack of will to urgently implement and enhance their pre-2020 mitigation targets, the LMDC spokesperson said.

On the outcome related to the implementation of the PA, Iran said it should fully reflect and operationalize the clear differentiation between developed and developing country Parties, leadership by developed country Annex I Parties to the Convention, flexibilities for developing country non-Annex I Parties to the Convention, the full scope and nationally determined nature of contributions, and linkage between the actions undertaken by developing country non-Annex Parties to the Convention and the support provided by developed country Annex II Parties to the Convention, with no renegotiation or reopening of the principles and provisions of the Convention or its PA.

The LMDC stressed that the key elements of mitigation, adaptation, finance, technology development and transfer and capacity-building constitute a single package and should be addressed in a balanced, comprehensive, inter-linked and mutually supportive manner. This can best be done through a

single draft negotiating text produced in a Party-driven manner, containing the entire package with all the elements and reflecting all Parties' options in a balanced manner. It is only in this way that we will be able to achieve the purpose of the Paris Agreement of enhancing the implementation of the Convention.

Finally, Iran stressed that balanced progress in the treatment of issues is necessary and expressed the deepest concern that the issues related to finance are left far behind, compared with the positive progress made on the other issues.

Mali spoke on behalf of **the African Group**, highlighting that COP 23 should be a COP that provides clarity and results in Parties reaching a decision for advancing our work under the different agenda items. It expects that the negotiations at COP 23 will enhance the implementation of the Convention and its Kyoto Protocol, and the negotiations on the Paris Agreement work programme will advance with a clear road map. The Group pointed to the importance of inclusivity and coherence on negotiating the Paris Agreement work programme.

On the Facilitative Dialogue 2018, Mali emphasised that this should address the pre-2020 emissions gap. It called on developed countries to find opportunities to close this gap, including through a facility to finance emission reductions, international cooperative initiatives, programmes and initiatives, amongst others, so as to avoid shifting the mitigation burden to developing countries post-2020. The Dialogue should also highlight where we are in implementing the roadmap to the USD 100 billion annual goal by 2020. In this regard, the African Group supports the proposed agenda item to discuss the pre-2020 issues.

It further emphasized that the Facilitative Dialogue is a mandated event under the Convention, therefore Parties should keep as closely as possible to the mandate.

On loss and damage, Mali expressed appreciation for the ongoing work on the clearing house for risk transfer, underlining the importance of the work of the clearing house for assisting particularly vulnerable developing countries and communities in implementing appropriate approaches to address risks associated with the adverse impacts of climate change impacts.

It underscored the importance of the mandate given to the Task Force on Displacement and called for expediting its two-year work plan, as well as for adequate financial resources for implementing it. Mali stressed the importance of addressing both cross-border and internal displacement and migration

associated with the adverse impacts of climate change. This important mandate should not, however, be misunderstood as allowing for the securitisation of climate change, it added.

The African Group also called for the acceleration of the implementation of the capacity-building work programme. It insisted on the urgent provision of funding for the Climate Technology Centre and Network process, in order to support developing countries to better access climate technologies.

On finance, it stressed that this is a corner stone for the implementation of the Convention and for achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement. The workshops under the long-term finance should focus on enhancing accessibility of developing countries to financial resources. Mali highlighted that ensuring sustainable and predictable flows of finance should be a clear focus of different workstreams tackling finance issues, and in this regard guidance to the GCF and the GEF should be in line with the eligibility criteria laid down by the Parties of the Convention and its PA. The Standing Committee on Finance should focus more on the issue of securing and mobilizing provisions of finance.

The African Group reiterated its strong position on the importance of the Adaptation Fund serving the PA, while securing predictable and sustainable funds and its existing governance structure.

On finance issues related to the operationalization of the PA, the African Group believes it is important to initiate the negotiations to set a new collective quantified goal from a floor of USD 100 billion per year, taking into account the needs and priorities of developing countries. Those discussions should begin no later than next year. Furthermore, it highlighted that the operationalization of the PA should include the full operationalization of Article 9.5 as the main enabler to unlock the potentials of developing countries and allow for enhancing ambition. It considered Articles 4.5 and 9.5 and 9.7 together with Article 9.3 as main pillars of the post-2020 climate regime, be it under the transparency, the finance or the mitigation discussions with their direct link to enhancing adaptation actions. It further pointed out that the Group shall not be in a position to accept deferring those elements to a never-ending process under a Subsidiary Body or move forward in the clarifications of the Paris rules without significant progress on the modalities, procedures and guidelines of Articles 9.5 and 9.7.

Brazil, on behalf of **BASIC** countries (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) welcomed the 169 ratifications to date of the Paris Agreement, reaffirming that the

Agreement is a hard-won achievement by the international community which enhanced the implementation of the Convention in the post-2020 period and strengthens the global response to climate change in the context of poverty eradication and sustainable development, reflecting equity and CBDR-RC, in the light of different national circumstances. The Group urged all signatories to stay the course and maintain their support to the PA for the good of all humankind and our future generations.

It reiterated that the work on both the pre-2020 and post-2020 should be in full accordance with the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, emphasizing the importance of openness, transparency, inclusiveness and the Party-driven nature of the negotiations.

The group recalled BASIC's request captured in the COP 22 report for pre-2020 issues to be given equal treatment at COP 23, including addressing this issue under a dedicated COP agenda item.

It expressed willingness to continue working constructively with other Parties towards the implementation of the PA, hence the need for advancing textual negotiation that reflects all Parties' views and inputs in a balanced manner to produce a comprehensive, Party-driven negotiating text covering all the matters that can serve as the basis for negotiations in 2018. Therefore, it is important that COP23 outcome captures the range of views as a set of alternatives and that the draft guidance operationalises CBDR-RC while not reinterpreting the PA, said BASIC.

The group reiterated that nationally determined contributions should cover mitigation, adaptation and means of implementation, taking into account differentiated responsibilities and obligations of developed and developing country Parties under the Convention and PA while respecting the nationally-determined nature of Parties' contributions. It also emphasized that adaptation is an issue that requires an urgent global response and urged developed countries to provide adequate support to developing countries in meeting the cost of their adaptation actions.

Expressing their deepest concern over attempts by some developed countries to unilaterally apply new eligibility criteria for developing countries' access to funding under the GEF and the GCF, the BASIC group recalled that such criteria are not compatible with guidance from the COP and are a departure from the letter and the spirit of the Convention and its Paris Agreement.

Furthermore, they indicated that such attempts violate the terms of the Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured Global Environmental Facility, as well as the Governing Instrument of the GCF, falling outside the mandate of the GEF Council and of the GCF Board on eligibility criteria. They stressed that such attempts are tantamount to re-negotiating the Paris Agreement and potentially undermine the level of ambition of developing countries in the global effort against climate change.

BASIC emphasized the need for further clarity and robust methodologies to track and account for the provision of finance by developed countries, highlighting the importance of discussing modalities for communicating indicative information on the support to be provided to developing countries. The Group also noted that effective implementation of developed countries' legal obligations regarding support will be paramount for trust building among Parties in order to create an international enabling environment for a successful implementation of the PA.

It urged developed countries to honour their commitments and increase climate finance to at least the USD100 bil per annum goal by 2020 which is to be scaled up significantly thereafter. BASIC called for collaboration among the various mechanisms on adaptation, finance, technology and capacity-building, as well as the Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage.

Noting that the pre-2020 gaps exist not only in mitigation but also in adaptation and support to developing countries, BASIC stressed the urgency of accelerating the implementation of pre-2020 commitments and increasing pre-2020 ambition, underscoring the importance that the Doha Amendment to the KP enters into force without further delay. They stressed further that developed country Parties should revisit and increase their economy-wide quantified emission reduction targets and that enhanced and urgent implementation of pre-2020 commitments is a prerequisite for mutual trust among Parties and for building a solid foundation for post-2020 implementation and ambition, in order to ensure that subsequent NDCs do not become unduly burdensome on developing countries.

The Group looked forward to an outcome in COP 23 that gives clarity in the design of the Facilitative Dialogue in 2018 which will be an opportunity to consider collectively the overall progress made on the implementation of all pillars of the Convention in the global effort to address climate change. They

emphasised the importance of outcomes that lead to the identification of challenges and opportunities to accelerate climate action and support, in the context of Sustainable Development, climate justice and poverty eradication as the overriding priorities of developing countries. Developed countries, they said, must take the lead towards closing the ambition gap so as to avoid transferrring the burden from the pre-2020 to the post-2020 period onto developing countries.

*With inputs from Jade Chiang