

## UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies launch work after a rough start at talks

Bonn, 7 June (Prerna Bomzan): The 56th session meetings of the Subsidiary Bodies (SBs) under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) launched work on 6 June, following a rough start at the opening of the talks.

As expected, there was a delay in the adoption of the provisional agendas for the SBs and the organisation of work over proposals from developing countries for the additional agenda items relating to the global goal on adaptation (GGA) and the Glasgow Dialogue on loss and damage, two issues of priority for developing countries. The need for balance in the treatment of adaptation and mitigation was stressed several times by many developing countries and their groupings.

While the GGA agenda item was eventually adopted as an additional agenda item to be considered by Parties, the agenda item on the Glasgow Dialogue on loss and damage was kept in abeyance, following a proposal by the Chair of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) to conduct informal consultations on the matter among Parties on the way forward, which was agreed to.

### *Global Goal on Adaptation*

The 'Glasgow-Sharm el-Sheikh work programme on the GGA' was established last year at the 3rd meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA3). It was also agreed that the

comprehensive two-year work programme will be carried out jointly by the SBs under the SBI and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA).

However, the initial provisional agendas of the SBs did not contain a dedicated agenda item on the GGA, which led the **Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDC)** to submit a proposal on 19 April this year, requesting the addition of the GGA as an additional agenda item to fulfill the mandate agreed to in Glasgow.

During the pre-meetings held prior to the official opening of the sessions of the SBs in Bonn, the request of the LMDC for the inclusion of the GGA item drew unanimous support from all the sub-groups of developing countries and was a common position adopted by the **Group of 77 and China**. Some developed countries however were heard to be not in favour of the proposal put forward.

However, before to the opening of the SBs on June 6, both the SBSTA Chair **Tosi Mpanu-Mpanu (Democratic Republic of the Congo)** and SBI Chair **Marianne Karlsen (Norway)** held consultations in the morning with the heads of delegations (HODs) that led to a consensus for the inclusion of the GGA as a joint agenda item under the two bodies.

The SBSTA opening was then held first, which was then followed by the SBI plenary.

When inviting Parties to adopt the SBSTA supplementary provisional agenda with the inclusion of the GGA, **Mpanu-Mpanu** informed that the HOD consultations had shown “flexibility and willingness by all to move forward”. Subsequently, the agenda was adopted with no objections and with agreement for the inclusion of the GGA agenda item as the ‘Glasgow-Sharm el-Sheikh work programme on the GGA as referred in decision 7/CMA.3’.

When it came to the consideration of the organization of work, when the SBSTA Chair spelled out that “as per general understanding with the HODs”, the informal consultations on the GGA will comprise of “at least two meetings”, **Switzerland** on behalf of the **Environmental Integrity Group (EIG)** took the floor to state that the agreement was to have “two meetings” only. **Mpanu-Mpanu** in response clarified that his understanding was that there would be “at least” two meetings – one meeting to open and one meeting to close the informal consultations, implying room for more than two meetings if required.

**Zambia** speaking for the **African Group of Negotiators (AGN)** expressed support to the SBSTA Chair’s proposal, stating that adaptation is “very important” for the group and that adaptation under the UNFCCC is lagging behind, particularly, the GGA for seven years. It further cautioned that Parties should not be requesting for issues that are clear from decisions taken to be placed on the agenda, adding that “this should not set a precedent”. It said further that the decision adopted in Glasgow was “straightforward” and provided for the implementation of the GGA work programme. It stressed that adaptation cannot be delayed, which included mandating further work on the GGA as well as identifying draft elements for decision at the upcoming meeting of the CMA in November in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.

**Bolivia** for the **LMDC** also fully supported the Chair’s “understanding” of having at least two meetings and elaborated that considering the importance of the discussion it was likely that we may need more than two meetings as there was a need for a “balanced discussion between all elements of mitigation, adaptation and the means of implementation”. “We cannot

ensure a fair and balanced implementation of the Paris Agreement if we only fulfill one element which is mitigation and undermine all other elements”, it underscored. It also extended appreciation to the G77 and China for supporting the LMDC proposal on this important issue for developing countries.

**Mpanu-Mpanu** while urging for flexibility from Parties to move forward suggested to keep the number of sessions “demand driven” and “realistic, and not necessarily restrict it to two” and further proposed to create more space for consultations in “informal” mode (informal-informals), if required.

**Switzerland** however maintained that its understanding was for only “two sessions” as agreed as a “compromise” at the morning meeting of the HODs.

**Pakistan** for **G77 and China** then took the floor recalling that the Chair had specifically said “at least two sessions” at the morning HOD’s meeting and hence, “if required, there will be more sessions”. It shared that “when we accepted the compromise, we spoke of balance” and it has to be a “balance between adaptation, mitigation and loss and damage”. It reiterated not to limit discussions to only two sessions.

**Saudi Arabia** for the **Arab Group** echoed G77 and China, the AGN and the LMDC on the importance of ensuring balance across all agenda items and called for “sufficient time and space” to discuss the GGA agenda item.

**China** said that Parties were being put in a very difficult situation and recalled that in the spirit of compromise, the LMDC had agreed with the proposal from the Chair and if this could not be agreed to, then it asked the SBSTA Chair to suspend the session to continue discussions to find a solution. It also underlined that the meeting hours for adaptation cannot be “shorter or less” than on the mitigation work programme, to ensure a balanced agenda.

**Bolivia** for **LMDC** took the floor again and lamented about the lack of balance in the agendas of the SBs with full space given to some items (referring

to mitigation work programme) and not on issues of priority for developing countries. It clarified its understanding of adopting the supplementary agenda as a package and requested the EIG group to reflect on the priorities of the G77. Bolivia also bemoaned how it was very tiring to fight for balance in the treatment of issues at every session, and urged to initiate discussions in a balanced way.

**Brazil for Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay (ABU)** underlined that at the morning HOD meeting the agreement was on a “very delicately worded and carefully crafted compromise” proposed by the Chair who had clearly proposed “at least two sessions” thus expressing dismay that the understanding is being questioned in the plenary. It provided full support to China, LMDC, AGN, G77, Arab Group echoing China on the need for “perfect balance” among all issues.

**Chile for the Independent Alliance of Latin America and the Caribbean (AILAC)** and **Ghana** in its national capacity called for sticking to the agreement reached at the morning HODs’ meeting with **Senegal** for the **Least Developed Countries (LDCs)** pointing out that the proposal of ‘inf-infs’ would be difficult for small delegations thus preferring for “more sessions” for the GGA agenda.

**Norway** was also happy to go along with the Chair’s approach to move forward, including **France** for the **European Union (EU)**.

Following the protracted discussions on the organisation of the GGA work, Parties agreed with the SBSTA Chair’s proposal of having “two meetings with the opportunity for inf-infs”. **Mpanu** also said that further consultations with the HODs may be convened as well to see if there is “appetite for more slots”.

The SBSTA then proceed to launch its work on the various agenda items as agreed.

Following the SBSTA session, at the SBI opening and adoption of agenda, the Chair **Karlsen** proposed for the adoption of the supplementary agenda with inclusion of the GGA agenda item as was done in the SBI.

**China** then took the floor and wanted assurance that the GGA agenda be given similar treatment as the mitigation work programme agenda item to ensure balance between the two.

**Karlsen** however urged for the adoption of the supplementary provisional agenda first before dwelling with the organisation of work, to which **China** disagreed. **Bolivia** for **LMDC** also supported China while the **United States (US)** expressed objection.

**Karlsen** stated that the Chairs want to ensure “coherence” in the process for joint-items of the SBs and proposed for the agenda to be adopted, for the organization of work to be dealt with later. The SBI supplementary agenda was then adopted with the GGA item included.

When it came to the organisation of work on the GGA agenda item, **China** asked the Chair to link it with the agenda item on the mitigation work programme, in order to allow for more balanced treatment between both issues. It also proposed that a contact group be established to conclude some draft recommendations on the GGA. **Bolivia** for **LMDC** and **Saudi Arabia** for the **Arab Group** echoed China’s proposal while the **US** expressed objection, saying that mandates for the respective items should be followed and there should not be linkages established, as was being done.

Given the impasse, the SBI Chair suspended the meeting for further informal consultations on the way forward. A second consultation among the HODs was conducted by both the SB Chairs and the matter was eventually resolved with an appeal from the Chairs for Parties to “trust” them on the way forward in the process.

When the SBI resumed, the SBI Chair thanked Parties for the confidence “invested in us” and proposed the organization of work with informal consultations to proceed on the GGA agenda item with appointed facilitators, (one from Ghana, while the appointment of the other is pending). On the mitigation work programme, informal consultations will be carried out by two facilitators from Belize and New Zealand. This was agreed to by Parties.

### *Glasgow Dialogue on loss and damage*

The **LMDC** had also submitted another proposal calling for inclusion of a dedicated agenda item on ‘Matters relating to the Glasgow Dialogue on loss and damage’, similar to the GGA proposal as mandate was decided in Glasgow under the SBI agenda. (See [TWN Update 1](#)).

The proposal of the LMDC also drew support from the **G77 and China**, while it has been learnt that developed countries were not in agreement with the proposal.

Following agreement among Parties during the consultations with the HODs morning of June 6 on the matter, the SBI Chair during the official plenary informed that this proposed additional agenda item will be kept in “abeyance”, pending informal consultations by the Chair, with the outcome to be reported back to the plenary at the Bonn session.

In response, **Pakistan** for the **G77 and China** made a statement for the record that the Group accords “high priority to the issue of financing for loss and damage” and that the Group has agreed to the Chair’s proposal of continuing consultations “in a spirit of compromise”. It reiterated that the G77 and China fully supported the inclusion of the agenda item and it is “united in its ask for the establishment of a dedicated loss and damage finance facility as an intended tangible outcome of the Glasgow Dialogue on loss and damage”.

Prior to the commencement of the SBSTA opening plenary, the Chair gave the floor to the retiring UNFCCC **Executive Secretary, Patricia Espinosa**, who shared her reflections of her role and experiences in the UNFCCC process. She reminded Parties that mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage and the means of implementation urgently require “political level” interventions in each of these areas in order to achieve a “balanced package”. She highlighted that the controversial issue of loss and damage must be addressed constructively and hoped that on means of implementation, there would be substantial increase in climate finance, in particular, adaptation finance as the lack of finance is seen as an “obstacle” time and again. In closing, Espinosa appealed to all Parties to “not to lose hope, not to lose focus but to use our united efforts against climate change as the ultimate act of unity between nations” encouraging to make the most out of the Bonn SBs session. She also stressed the importance of multilateralism in addressing climate change.

Many delegations expressed their thanks to the Executive Secretary in their opening remarks at the Bonn session.