

Impasse over mandate of the Mitigation Work Programme

June 24, New Delhi (Radhika Chatterjee): Countries were not able to find consensus on the way forward for the 'Sharm-el-Sheikh mitigation ambition and implementation work programme' (commonly referred to as the Mitigation Work Programme [MWP]) at the recently concluded UNFCCC's 60th sessions of the Subsidiary Bodies (SB60) held in Bonn, Germany, from June 3-13.

With seven informal consultations held, the MWP was among one of the most contentious issues at the SB sessions (See [TWN update](#)), with divisions over its mandate. The polarised positions among Parties led to an impasse over how to move forward on the MWP, leading to the matter being transmitted for consideration at the next SB session (SB61) to be held in Baku, Azerbaijan, under Rule 16 of UNFCCC's draft Rules of Procedure.

The key areas of divergence during the two weeks centered on the following issues: whether the MWP conclusions from Bonn should include any high-level political messages or not; whether there should be any linkage between the MWP and the global stocktake (GST) decision from Dubai last year; whether the MWP should be a vehicle for implementation of the mitigation section of the GST outcome; and the relationship of the MWP and the nationally determined contributions

(NDCs), especially in light of all Parties needing to communicate their next NDCs by February 2025 (for the timeframe of 2031-2035).

Most developing countries including the **Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDC)**, the **African Group**, the **Arab Group**, and **Group SUR (Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay)** said that the MWP should not be used for imposing any targets on countries. They instead stressed that the work programme should be operationalised through a "focused exchange of views, information and ideas". Taking stock of the three global dialogues and investment focused events (IFE) held under MWP so far, they said the platforms are useful spaces of discussions which provided an opportunity to share experiences and learn from others.

(The MWP [decision 4/CMA.4](#) adopted in 2022 states that *the "the work programme shall be operationalized through focused exchanges of views, information and ideas, noting that the outcomes of the work programme will be non-prescriptive, non-punitive, facilitative, respectful of national sovereignty and national circumstances, take into account the NDCs and will not impose new targets or goals"*. The MWP is supposed to continue its work till 2026 before

the adoption of a decision on further extension of the work.).

They further highlighted that the purpose of the MWP is to inform the implementation of mitigation actions, and not about future NDCs. Arguing against the imposition of any mitigation targets, especially those detailed in para 28 of the GST outcome document (which is about global mitigation efforts including the transitioning away from fossil fuels), they said it would result in going beyond the mandate of the MWP that was already agreed upon by countries in Sharm-el-Sheikh.

They stressed that developing any linkage between the MWP and the GST under para 186 of the GST decision has to be in line with the mandate of the existing work programme, and should not amount to altering existing mandates. (Para 186 of [GST outcome document](#) states: *"Invites the relevant work programmes and constituted bodies under or serving the Paris Agreement to integrate relevant outcomes of the first global stocktake in planning their future work, in line with their mandates;"*).

Laying emphasis on the need for developed countries to take the lead in scaling up mitigation action, they also said that acceleration of action in this critical decade should also occur in line with para 6 of GST document. (Para 6 of the GST decision states: *"Commits to accelerate action in this critical decade on the basis of the best available science, reflecting equity and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC), in the light of different national circumstances and in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty."*)

On the other hand, developed countries and some developing countries especially the **Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)**, insisted on having "strong outcomes" from the MWP by scaling up mitigation ambition, keeping in mind the "urgency" of the situation. This they said, was to be done through the insertion of key messages under the MWP decision. Some of the key elements they emphasised on included: having mitigation actions aligned with the 1.5 °C goal, creating a strong linkage between the MWP and the GST according to para 186 of GST outcome document, scaling up mitigation action in line with para 28 of the GST outcome document, and using the MWP to inform the process of updating the NDCs of Parties.

Late into the night of June 11 (two days before the closing of the SBs), after the sixth informal consultations had concluded, co-facilitators **Kay Harrison (New Zealand)** and **Carlos Fuller (Belize)** produced an '[informal note](#)' under their "own responsibility". The document said the co-facilitators, "did not have any formal status." A '[draft text](#)' was also uploaded on the website to reflect the conclusions from the session.

On the following day, countries were given a final chance to find consensus on the way forward for on the MWP agenda, by SBI Chair **Nabeel Munir (Pakistan)** and SBSTA Chair **Harry Vreuls (Netherlands)**, who addressed the room for a short while, given the impasse. However, the wide divergences among countries could not be bridged even until the very end of the two-hour long session, and Parties could not agree on the draft conclusions proposed, including on the informal note produced, as some of the developing country groupings like the **LMDC**, the **African Group** and the **Arab Group** questioned the preparation of the draft conclusions and informal note by the co-facilitators, given the divergent views over the mandate of the MWP.

(The global dialogues this year under the MWP, is focussed on the topic of "Cities: buildings and urban systems". A three-day event was held in Bonn prior to the SB60 session which took place from 27th to 29th May and a report of the session is to be prepared by the Co-Chairs of the MWP later in the year. The next global dialogue and IFE is scheduled to take place ahead of COP29, which too will be followed by the preparation of a report. As per para 15 of [decision 4/CMA.4](#), the secretariat will also "*prepare an annual report comprising a compilation of the individual dialogue reports for consideration by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement [CMA], the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice [SBSTSA] and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation [SBI]*").

At the closing plenary of the SBs, many groupings of Parties expressed their grave disappointment over the lack of progress on the MWP at the Bonn session.

HIGHLIGHTS OF INTERVENTIONS

Bolivia, for the **LMDC** at the closing plenary, expressed its "deep concern on the lack of progress on this very important matter. The process

followed was poor and the negotiations were in bad faith. This is supposed to be a Party-driven process, but it turned out to be a co-facilitators' driven process. We saw our partners trying to change the mandate that they agreed to in Sharm el-Sheikh. This is unacceptable. We negotiated a decision and arrived at a very delicate balance. It does not help to make attempts to change the mandate each time we meet. We hope to reiterate the importance of respecting and sticking to the mandate." It said further that "the MWP's mandate and scope of work is quite clear. We have had three successful global dialogues and investment-focused events, which include informative exchange of views by all Parties. We also achieved a comprehensive and a balanced decision in Dubai, which presents a good example of our future work."

Referring to the informal consultations, Bolivia said further that the LMDC "have engaged constructively in the discussion during this session, but unfortunately, our partners tried to create new issues (to) overhaul the MWP and start from scratch, ultimately creating a completely new work programme."

Chastising the developed countries who spoke about scaling up mitigation ambition, it said, "for our partners who speak about ambition, let us remind everyone that in this very session, we have seen our partners try to bury reports that project that Annex 1 Parties' emissions will increase in 2030 compared to 2020. The narrative therefore is really strange and shocking. Developed countries should take the lead in emissions reductions, and here we see projections that the emissions of Annex I Parties will increase. And when it comes to conversations on means of implementation for developing countries, they block conversations and go back on decisions agreed to even in the recent past. This hypocrisy must end. We in the LMDC value real action and not empty words," stressed Bolivia further.

During the informal consultations, **China**, for the **LMDC** explained that each agenda item has its own mandate, activities and mission and one item should not be made the mandate of all items, saying that the "GST has its own mandate, including mitigation, adaptation, finance". The purpose of MWP "is not to inform NDCs but to inform current

mitigation ambition...it could be (an) input to the second GST", said China further.

Appreciating the progress made so far through the global dialogues and IFEs under the MWP China said that we should celebrate the progress made under (the) MWP instead of denying it and that the mandate is being fulfilled. Responding to calls for including political messages and targets (from para 28 of the GST decision) in the MWP, it said there are proposals from some Parties that have very clear intentions of imposing new targets on countries, and making the MWP "policy prescriptive." It said this felt like attempts were being made in trying to teach Parties on how to prepare their NDCs.

Expressing its understanding of para 186 of the GST, China said, "we hear some misleading claims that para 186 is our new mandate... we don't believe (that) all original programmes have to change their mandates" because of that. Further, it added that para 186 states "in line with (their) mandates" and countries should therefore follow the existing mandate, instead of changing it. It stressed that the GST cannot replace the Paris Agreement and its implementation.

Other developing countries like **Pakistan**, **Qatar**, and **Kuwait** echoed the LMDC views.

South Africa, for the **African Group (AG)** reiterated the need for respecting the existing mandate of the MWP, adding that "we maintain that we discuss common areas" instead of discussing "issues beyond the mandate." It further added "it is important to respect the original mandate and scope of the MWP as per decision 4/CMA.4... we have not yet fulfilled that mandate... all of this is very premature and (is) confusing for us."

Saudi Arabia, for the **Arab Group** said the scaling up of mitigation ambition under MWP has to be operationalized in line with para 2 of decision 4/CMA.4. Sharing its assessment of the global dialogues and IFEs held so far, it said that in holding these dialogues, countries were actually fulfilling the mandate of the MWP and expressed disappointment that some Parties did not consider this progress. "What we have been hearing is that progress is not achieved unless we are prescriptive, impose targets, dictate NDCs, (and) unless we duplicate mandates," it stressed further.

On linking the GST with the MWP in accordance with para 186 of the GST outcome, it said that the claim that para 186 is the new mandate of the MWP “is misleading” adding further that “this is a clear example that solidifies our concerns about attempts to change the mandate.” It explained further that the GST is about the assessment of the collective progress of Parties of the Paris Agreement. It also said that it was “puzzled” as to how linking the GST to MWP would scale up mitigation ambition, “especially if those actions are not feasible and taken out of (the) context of equity and CBDR”. It added further that the GST too has to take into account the principles of equity and CBDR and inform the preparation of NDCs in a bottom up manner.

It said further that the mechanism for tracking the implementation of NDCs is provided under the Enhanced Transparency Framework (ETF), which also looks into the financing provided. It said para 186 of GST outcome is an “invitation” to Parties and “is not a mandate” and “has an important caveat” that integration of GST outcomes with existing programmes has to occur in line with their mandates.

Saudi Arabia also stressed that “the invitation” (in para 186) is not only about para 28 of the GST outcome, but “is about all relevant outcomes”, including that on finance and the new collective quantified goal on finance. It also highlighted para 6 of the GST decision which commits countries to “accelerate action” on the “basis of the best available science, reflecting equity and the principle of CBDR-RC, in the light of different national circumstances and in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty.” **Kuwait** and **Qatar** aligned with the Arab Group.

Brazil for **Group SUR** said that the global dialogues held under MWP provide “valuable inputs for experts” and a space for different participants to engage with each other. “In a situation of climate urgency, the MWP has to deliver on its mandate of urgently scaling up MWP implementation”, but instead “(we) are seeing progressing efforts to separate mitigation from means of implementation (MOI)”, it added. It said a “holistic approach” is needed for upholding the

Paris Agreement and the UNFCCC, which includes the principle of CBDR-RC. “We cannot accept cherry picking,” it said. Stressing the importance of MOI, it said there exists a “huge gap between MOI provided by developed countries and (the) rapidly rising needs of developing countries... developed countries must take the lead in raising ambition and enhancing support to developing countries. We need developed countries to fulfil their commitments under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement.”

On the proposal to use the MWP as a vehicle for following up on GST it said, “this work programme is not capable of doing that,” adding that “it could be a space where Parties can share ideas and promote experimental approach”. It added that there is a need for establishing “closer links of global dialogues to the investment focused events” such that “matchmaking of investors with specific projects including national development banks and multilateral development banks” could occur. It also asked for the organization of workshops “with the aim of technology transfer and capacity building”.

Brazil, for **South Africa**, **India**, **China** and **itself (BASIC)** said at the closing plenary, that they are disappointed that once again some Parties attempt to re-open the mandate for the MWP. “We urge Parties to build a safe environment based on trust to make progress in this agenda item. We would welcome signals by developed countries on how they intend to anticipate their climate neutrality targets at least by 2040. They should also give explanations on how recent unilateral measures against developing countries sustainable development may in any way benefit fighting climate change.”

“We are extremely worried that developed countries still have not clarified information under the Convention on the compilation and synthesis of (their) fifth biennial reports of Annex I Parties that refers to projected increases in their aggregate emissions from 2020 to 2030,” added Brazil further.

India, stressed the need for avoiding “conflation of substance and changing (the) mode of dialogues”. The linkage of GST outcomes to the MWP “don’t respect boundaries of national circumstances, nor does it respect CBDR-RC”, it added. India said

remaining “faithful” to the mandate of MWP as decided in 2022 is “pivotal for fostering trust and cooperation among Parties” and that the “MWP must not impose new targets”, adding further that “the essence of (the) MWP is to exchange information and help countries learn from each other.” Highlighting the technical nature of the global dialogues, it said it was important to respect their “collaborative spirit”. It also said that aligning the MWP with GST decision is “out of scope” because the “MWP is an information sharing platform.” It said further that linking the GST to the global dialogues “narrows the scope of the global dialogues” and Parties should be able to submit any topics on mitigation and the exchange of views should not be restricted to specific sectors. The global dialogues “are valuable to gain insight and build capacity for climate action” and should not be used for “shifting the goal post for target imposition” it added further. Highlighting the importance of MOI, it stressed further the IFES “should be about grants” and not for “increasing debt.”

Malawi, for the **Least Developed Countries (LDCs)** at the closing plenary expressed concern “about the lack of progress on this agenda item (MWP) here in Bonn. The failure to advance the work programme places the most vulnerable among us in a challenging position for sustaining climate-resilient development, and it jeopardizes the pathway to limiting temperature rise to well below 1.5 °C.”

Samoa, for the **Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)** said at the closing plenary that “instead of creating the space and opportunity for high mitigation impact on the ground, the MWP appears to be taking a ‘U’ turn away from what our small islands and the global community really need. We are extremely disappointed that after two weeks of hard work, there were no results, and we will have to work even harder to ensure we get results in Baku. Only a substantive decision that implements the outcomes of the GST and talks to NDCs will be acceptable to AOSIS. As we move forward to Baku, we need to ensure that we truly deliver 1.5 °C - aligned high mitigation ambition in our NDCs as this is the only way we will be able to stay within the...temperature goal that is critical for our survival.” Further emphasizing on the need for linking MWP and GST outcome, it said, “the

outcomes of the first GST clearly tell us that we need to be far more ambitious in driving climate action and the urgency required to reduce emissions to ensure we keep 1.5 °C within reach. Therefore, through you we call on the SB chairs and the COP Presidency to prioritize highly ambitious NDCs that are in line with the Paris temperature goal as we head to Baku and Belem (in 2030, where COP 30 will be).”

Honduras for the **Independent Alliance of Latin American and the Caribbean Nations (AILAC)** said that implementing MWP should involve a scaling up of mitigation action for the MWP to reach its “full potential”. It said “the dialogues’ full potential cannot be reached unless the link between the GST and the MWP is established.” Calling itself “advocates for substantial results” it said, “this programme has potential” which is “still undelivered”. It further added that “countries can find better conditions to deliver mitigation”.

The **European Union (EU)** at the closing plenary said, “to avoid the worst, to keep 1.5 °C alive, we need emissions to drop by 43% by 2030 and by 60% by 2035. We need strong action on mitigation urgently... A vast majority of developed and developing countries is determined to engage in robust and ambitious mitigation outcome. Regrettably our efforts over the past weeks have left a void.” It added further that it “had hoped that Dubai had set us on a path for reaching 1.5 °C, the shared understanding of a global economic development free of fossil fuels, with competitive clean industries, a just transition, leaving no one behind. We need a space to discuss mitigation opportunities; a space that advances the global goals on energy transition; a space to provide the drive for high ambition NDCs that deliver new jobs and green growth to the benefit of all.” The EU added further that the MWP is that space.” It called on “the SB Chairs, the presiding officers and the COP presidencies to exert political leadership to keep us on track towards implementing the ambitious climate action we agreed in Dubai. There cannot be a good outcome of COP29 if it doesn’t include a good substantial outcome on mitigation”, which is important for “the integrity of our multilateral process and its credibility.”

Australia for the **Umbrella Group** said at the closing plenary, “we are deeply disappointed and

concerned about the lack of progress under the MWP,” adding that “the continued and concerted efforts by some Parties to block substantive discussions in such a critical issue is extraordinary.” It believed that this “does not reflect the urgency of the climate crisis, nor the spirit of a multilateral process. We urge these Parties to come to Baku with a different mindset. Accelerating global mitigation ambition and implementation should be a shared priority for all countries in this forum. A substantive outcome in this work programme that drives forward mitigation opportunities and actions will be a key deliverable to a successful COP29,” stressed Australia.

Switzerland for the **Environmental Integrity Group (EIG)** said at the closing plenary that the SBs are a space to “make progress on substantial matters and not fight on process.” It added that “Our group stands by a Party driven process. A party driven process means we entrust our presiding officers proposing (a) way forward including (in) producing texts.” It also asked for trusting presiding officials in doing “their jobs” and allowing Parties to engage with each other and “to express agreement or disagreement.” “This process must be transparent. We are highly concerned to see some groups push back on the very modalities that have contributed to the success of our process and engage with SB Chairs and secretariat directly in attempts to stall progress,” said Switzerland further. “It was useful

to have clarity this week that presiding officers are entrusted this responsibility to put forward text suggestions and don’t need specific mandate by Parties in the room.”

On mitigation, it said, “last year we made tremendous achievement with the conclusion of GST. We made headlines on the importance of 1.5 °C aligned NDCs as we all committed to tripling renewable energy, doubling energy efficiency, and transitioning away from fossil fuels at the global level. We are committed to new adaptation objectives, and to progress loss and damage as well as the means of implementation. We count on incoming presidency to uphold the legacy of the UAE Consensus. The world will be looking forward to signals and collective targets that were agreed at COP28. We are concerned that some Parties refer to the GST as a menu of options. It is not. It is a joint commitment that we need it implement in its entirety at the global level. COP29 must provide a space to demonstrate progress. This is of particular importance as this year marks the importance of NDCs. We have to show we are serious about mitigation action and present ambitious 1.5 aligned NDCs, in particular key players,” said Switzerland further.

The battle over the mandate of the MWP will continue in Baku. It will indeed be another major flashpoint on what the role of the MWP is and will be.