



Shifting goalposts through new roadmaps and widening inequality

Kuala Lumpur, 29 June (Hilary Kung) – Experts and developing country negotiators spoke of how the goal posts of the climate regime are shifted with new roadmaps, while mitigation scenarios by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) lock in and widen inequities between developed and developing countries.

Panellists spoke at a side event co-organised by the Republic of Cuba and Third World Network (TWN) on 8 June, entitled ‘An Assessment of the Belem Outcomes and the Challenges on the Road to Antalya’, held in conjunction with the recently concluded climate talks in Bonn, Germany.

The side event was moderated by **Meenakshi Raman**, Deputy Director of TWN and was joined by **Ambassador Pedro Pedroso** from the **Republic of Cuba**, **Khaled Hashem** from **Egypt**, who is also the G77 coordinator for the Just Transition Work Programme (JTWP), **Vicente Paolo Yu**, an expert on climate and trade, and **Dr. Tejal Kanitkar**, from the Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research (IGIDR) in India, an expert on climate modelling from an equity perspective.

Dr. Tejal Kanitkar made a presentation on “Who is afraid of roadmaps” and explained why certain developing countries are reluctant to accept the IPCC findings as the “best available science.”

(The COP-30 Presidency, on its own initiative, organised Presidency-led events on the ‘roadmap on transitioning away from fossil fuels’ on June 12, and another on the ‘roadmap on addressing deforestation’ on 8 June, on the sidelines of the Bonn talks).

Ambassador Pedro Pedroso, in his opening speech, underscored the critical need for respecting the institutional architecture of the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement (PA) and cautioned against the recent trend of changing goalposts, explaining why shifting goalposts in the architecture presents a tremendous challenge to developing countries like Cuba, in the current geopolitical environment.

Khaled Hashem recounted the journey of the JTWP and provided reflections on the operationalisation of the Just Transition Mechanism, while **Vicente Yu** spoke about the past, present and future of the climate and trade dialogue.

Further details on each of the speakers’ presentation are captured below.

WHO IS AFRAID OF ROADMAPS?

Speaking about how “a roadmap” becomes the headlines in climate news “as if it is a very new

thing”, **Dr. Kanitkar** said, “There have been roadmaps before....we’ve all spoken about pathways, scenarios, ways in which to achieve the goals of the PA [or the] objectives of UNFCCC, which is far more overarching in terms of an objective, and when we talk about a way to achieve an ultimate target, it is in fact a “roadmap”....[not] because you call something a roadmap, suddenly it becomes something new.”

Kanitkar clarified that the “roadmaps” are not part of the official UNFCCC decision but are independent Brazilian COP-30 Presidency initiatives.

Kanitkar then highlighted two critical questions that needed to be answered: The [first] question is, “What have we done with the roadmaps that we’ve had so far? Were these roadmaps or a particular roadmap itself adequate? You had the Kyoto Protocol targets, you [now have] the nationally determined contributions (NDCs), the net zero pledges.... to implement climate actions. Some of them are part of official submissions of Parties including the long-term low emissions development strategies (LT-LEDS), some are independent pledges and so on and so forth.”

The second, Kanitkar said, is “Was even the ‘inadequate’ roadmap implemented? Having a roadmap is one thing, but the other thing is to actually implement the roadmap.” Referring to the “shifting of goalposts”, Kanitkar stressed that “It is important to remember why it is that we keep arriving at these this new jargon, new coinage, new things that we keep putting on the table in this process. Is it because old things actually do not work, or is it because there are certain sections of the world that do not want old things to work anymore? So, why is it that we need new things,” she asked, adding further that Parties should implement the PA and “see how it works out instead of constantly trying to create new things.”

Kanitkar then presented two charts showing what actually happened to the roadmaps that we’ve had since 1990, and explained the large gaps between what is a fair share target, what is pledged by Annex I countries and what is the actual GHG emissions starting from 1990.

(Annex-I Parties to the UNFCCC include the industrialised countries that were members of the OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-operation

and Development] in 1992, plus countries with ‘economies in transition’ [the EIT Parties], including the Russian Federation, the Baltic States, and several Central and Eastern European States. Non Annex-I are all the developing countries).

Explaining further, Kanitkar said that a fair share target of emissions reductions for Annex 1 countries should be net zero by 2020, based on the fair share calculation of the global carbon budget from 1990 onwards. However, the target that Annex 1 Parties have pledged [is to achieve net zero by 2050]. So, there’s already a big gap between what the pledge is, what the actual emissions are, and what a fair and equitable roadmap would actually be.

On the actual emissions, Kanitkar said more than 80% of the GHG emissions (1990-2021) came from the richest Annex-I countries. She also explained that due to the long period of recession in the EIT countries, there was a dip in the chart showing some reduction in emissions. However, if we zoom in to see the actual emissions of the richest Annex I countries, which are the United States, Canada, Australia, Western Europe, Japan and few other countries, there was no substantial reduction in emissions from the year of UNFCCC onwards.

“During the period between UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol (KP), the actual emissions of the richest Annex 1 countries had actually increased. The economic crisis led to a little bit of a dip in the emissions during the first commitment period of the KP, which is around between 2008 and 2012; but otherwise, the emissions weren’t decreasing that fast. There was a 7% increase in emissions by 2008 in the emissions of the richest Annex 1 Parties,” said Kanitkar

Adding further, she said, between 1990 and 2015, which is the year of PA, there was only a 1% decline in the emissions of the richest Annex 1 countries; and when COVID-19 hit, there was a dip again in the emissions, but after that, the emissions stabilised and increased again.

“So, there was basically a total of 23% reduction in Annex 1 emissions; but only 13% reductions in the richest Annex 1 countries till 2021. In total, the Annex 1 countries emitted 500 gigatons of carbon dioxide between 1990 and 2021. Over 80% of this was from the richest Annex 1 countries,” explained

Kanitkar

"How much is 500 gigatons? It is approximately the carbon budget you have [left] for a 50% chance of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius based on the IPCC 6th Assessment Report. So that's the amount of the carbon budget that you have left for the entire world from 2020 onwards till we all reach collectively to net zero. These amount - were [the same amount] emitted by the richest Annex 1 Parties between 1990 and 2021. And now they are telling the rest of the world, which is 82% of the world population, that, that's all [we all] have if you want to keep 1.5 degree-Celsius temperature goal within reach," said Kanitkar

Commenting further, she said, "This is the situation of the roadmaps that we have had, [but now they are asking for] new roadmaps, without equity and CBDR-RC [Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities], there's no climate justice in any of these roadmaps. The best available science, unfortunately, is not yet the science that developing countries need. Equity is not just ignored but actively perpetuated in IPCC's AR6 scenarios."

She said, the IPCC report itself has some qualifiers, but the decision of the global stocktake (GST) decision (in 2023), did not have these qualifiers because developed countries and some developing countries said that these were unscientific and asked to drop the qualifiers, even though they were in the IPCC.

She then presented a chart showing how the IPCC's 6th Assessment Report (AR6), saying that these scenarios violate the principles of equity and justice, with through perpetuating global inequality across all variables covering income, energy and emissions.

"Projected energy consumption continues to be highly unequal, not just total energy consumption, but even fossil fuel consumption continues to be highly unequal in these scenarios, and of course, the impact, in terms of emissions burdens or emissions roadmaps, is that Africa bears the highest mitigation burden in the near term. Now, if this isn't a violation of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC), I really don't know what

is," said Kanitkar

In terms of the near-term (2020-2030) emission reductions, she said that the highest near term mitigation burden is on Africa, followed by Latin America, China, Pacific OECD, South Asia, and then North America and Europe. So, developing regions, in fact, have to take on a higher mitigation burden compared to North America, added Kanitkar further. She explained that this is precisely why certain developing countries are reluctant to accept IPCC as the "best available science."

"But that doesn't mean we do not accept IPCC or the science; the fact that the IPCC is an extremely important body which provides a lot of information to the political process, to the governments in general, and to places where scientific development has to also catch up; but science happens within society, and the inequalities of society are also reflected in the way in which science is produced and the way in which science is assessed, and we must understand that," explained further Kanitkar.

"When developed countries do not act [on mitigation], that burden gets shifted to other countries because [of a limited] carbon budget. If developed countries are slow, others are forced to be fast, and this happens in the face of extreme inequalities," explained Kanitkar on the real impacts and implications for transitions for developing countries due to delayed action from developed countries.

She then explained that "transitions mean very different things to different countries". To illustrate this, she presented three separate charts comparing eight distinct countries: the US, Australia, Germany, China, Brazil, India, Ghana, and Chad, across three metrics: (1) per capita fossil fuel use (Gigajoule- GJ/person), (2) primary energy consumption (GJ/person), and (3) electricity consumption (kWh/person). Some examples she provided to show the inequities was as follows: In the IPCC's C1 scenarios (limit warming to 1.5°C (>50%) with no or limited overshoot), the GDP per capita in the scenarios state that for Sub-Saharan Africa in 2020 was US\$3000 and in 2050, it is US\$9,000; while for North America, it was US\$54,000 in 2020 to US\$ 72,000 in 2050. In terms of per capita energy consumption in 2050, it is

about 20 GJ/person in Sub-Saharan Africa; while for North America it is 160 GJ/person. (For further details, please refer to [TWN Update: IPCC scenarios project highly unequal future between North and South](#))

She said further that “poverty eradication and sustainable development... are not simply buzz words. These are realities that we will contend with on an everyday basis. The provision of clean water supply, the provision of sanitation, building hospitals, schools, providing these services, all of these are real realities that developing countries have to contend with. And what does a fossil fuel roadmap or a deforestation roadmap matter, that ignores history, that ignores justice, that ignores equity? What would it have to offer countries that have to contend with these realities”, she asked saying that “it is important to face this question.”

(For further details on Dr. Tejal Kanitkar’s work:

- (1) Kanitkar, T., Jayaraman, T. & Lavanyaa, V.P. (2026). [Projected global and national energy and climate futures using an alternative integrated assessment framework](#). npj Clim. Action 5, 41, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s44168-026-00368-0>
- (2) Kanitkar, T., Mythri, A., & Jayaraman, T. (2024). [Equity assessment of global mitigation pathways in the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report](#). *Climate Policy*, 24(8), 1129–1148. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2024.2319029>

CONSTANT CHANGING OF GOALPOSTS

Ambassador Pedro Pedrosa of **Cuba** highlighted the importance of “unity and cohesiveness to push for the outcome [that] we want, ” and “respect the institutional architecture that we have collectively built in the UNFCCC and the PA because we cannot rely on a system that is systematically changing goalposts, and we have seen attempts in the recent past in our process to continuously move and change the goalpost that is multilaterally agreed.” Pedrosa said in general, COP30 in Belem “demonstrated the importance of real dialogue, real multilateralism that respects the institutional architecture”, especially against the backdrop of

the “whole geopolitical context”, which was “not favorable” to COP30 in Belem last year. Reflecting on the geopolitical context last year, Pedrosa recounted that “we have had major emitter withdrew from the PA and UNFCCC and having questioned the fundamentals of multilateral consensus or multilateralism” and the failure of multilateralism [process] to produce consensual agreement like in the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the Plastics treaty. He then said that it is against this backdrop that COP 30 delivered a good outcome in favor of developing countries owing to their unity and cohesion.

The Cuban ambassador also highlighted his expectations of the Climate Finance Work Programme (CFWP), to focus on Article 9.1 of the PA, which refers to the obligation of developed countries to provide financial resources to developing countries, and the climate and trade dialogue to focus on discussing the impacts of unilateral measures. He then spoke on why the “shifting goalpost” presents a tremendous challenge to developing countries like Cuba in the current geopolitical environment.

“There is a very significant setback in the international finance flows”, to which he was referring to the official development assistance (ODA) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), saying that “these are the issues that we, as developing countries, have to look at”, in a context where the shifting goalposts in the architecture continues to place more demands on us, said Pedrosa.

He said ODA recorded a second consecutive year of decline, commenting that major donors like the US administration and the EU have made significant cuts, not only in development assistance budget but also their climate budgets and with funding increasingly being redirected to defense spending.

Commenting on the latest replenishment to the GEF which saw a 27% cut from the previous cycle, Pedrosa said, “And we have seen it in the Green Climate Fund [too]. We have seen that developed countries have not channelled what they promised to do in relation to the Loss and Damage Fund. So, all this is the challenge that we as developing countries are facing right now in order to ...carry on a more ambitious climate action. That is why we

say ambition has to go in parallel with the support that we need and not as a gift; it's a support based on historical responsibility and obligation; it's a legally binding obligation of developed countries", emphasised the Cuban representative further.

Pedroso ended with explaining that it is particularly a major challenge for his country, "because Cuba has been suffering for almost 70 years of the most stringent economic, financial and trade blockade or embargo as they call it...unilateral measure which has been intensified to an unprecedented level since January, which means that Cuba is almost paralysed, as an attempt to produce a change in the political and economic order."

"Since January till June, we have received just one single shipment of oil into the country...[The] energy blockade on the country is having very serious and significant humanitarian impact. That is what allows hospitals to run and we have queue of patients waiting in line for surgery. We have children who suffer from cancer in waiting lists for surgery. And on the top of that, on 1st of May, they came with another executive order by which they will be imposing what they call complementary sanctions, or secondary sanctions on the major investors, foreign investors in Cuba....Just to cut off Cuba from the international economic system in the 21st century....this is genocide... So, this is the geopolitical context in which we are moving right now, " adding that there is increasing aggressive rhetoric threatening Cuba with the military action, which they could do (in an apparent reference to the US action). "They could do of course; they are the first superpower in the world...but what they could not do is to break our resilience, is to bring our will, is to break our resolution....we will not give up on our independence and sovereignty," said the ambassador further, which drew a round of applause from the audience showing solidarity with Cuba.

UNITY OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES CRUCIAL FOR FULL OPERATIONAL JUST TRANSITION MECHANISM

Khaled Hashem noted that what Pedroso has said "laid the ground and put in front of us many questions with regards to 'justice' at large, not just climate justice but also in the context of international relations and geopolitical challenges that our multilateralism is facing, [which is] also evident and reflected in so many occasions of our negotiations."

Focusing on the JTWP, Hashem said the JTM was seen as a good achievement for developing countries last year, recognising the efforts from developing countries, as well as thanking many NGOs who "provided insights on how to link the question of climate justice, sustainable development and poverty eradication to the obligation under the PA and the UNFCCC, which we call climate action".

"Just transitions are not an optional add-on to climate action; rather they are a foundational requirement for achieving the goals of the PA in a manner that is equitable, development oriented and fully aligned with national circumstances....For developing countries, just transition must support poverty eradication, economic diversification, industrialisation, social protection and the right to development while recognising the pathways will differ across countries," commented Hashem.

On JTM, he said, "We hope that by COP 31, we have a full operational mechanism that would enable developing countries to access to the means of implementation...so that it would assist them and support them in implementing their climate action." Recounting the journey of the JTWP, Hashem said it has enabled and enriched our understanding of just transitions, beyond the direct association of just transition and the workforce, but also bringing in other perspectives from developing countries including energy poverty, energy access and the provision of clean cooking as being integral to the right to development for these countries.

"From our side, we would like to focus more on how this mechanism (JTM) will be able to translate the opportunities with the transition and to mitigate any challenges that could also be associated with the transition, especially on the developing countries. We also want to elevate the mechanism to provide us with a dedicated space to

operationalise support for developing countries as they navigate the complex socioeconomic and address the structural vulnerabilities during the transition, and pursue development pathways that are both climate compatible and people centered - these are our overarching objectives towards the JTM,” said Hashem further, adding that the power of the G77 and China unity would be important in advancing just transitions.

THE CLIMATE AND TRADE DIALOGUE

Vicente Yu said climate and trade has been percolating within the system for quite some time and the first time this came up was during the negotiation of the UNFCCC in the early 90s, which it led to Article 3.5 of the Convention. “Article 3.5 of the UNFCCC provides that ‘Parties should cooperate to promote a supportive and open international economic system that would lead to sustainable economic growth and development in all Parties, particularly developing country Parties, thus enabling them better to address the problems of climate change. Measures taken to combat climate change, including unilateral ones, should not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade’,” he said further.

He said that Article 3.5 of UNFCCC is always referenced whenever developed countries put in place climate-based barriers for goods and products from developing countries. He said further that when the EU started implementing the carbon border adjustment measures (CBAMs) and other G7 countries are starting to follow suit, BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India, and China) in 2023, suggested including an agenda item on trade at COP28 in Dubai. This then led to the para 154 of the Global Stocktake 1 (GST1) outcome, which was seen as an “initial step in revitalising the use of Article 3.5 of the Convention”. In 2024, BASIC asked for an agenda item on trade and then going into Belem in 2025, we had an agenda fight with the Like-minded developing countries who asked for an agenda item.

Elaborating further, he said, “Many of the

developing countries were pushing it, because what needed to be done was to move the conversation on trade and climate from the decision text into a concrete process, similar to what we did with the JTWP, and with loss and damage.”

“Do we talk about it as a way of undertaking a true multilateral action or is it more about competition and competitiveness? Is it more about some parts of the world imposing their standards onto other parts of the world? And so that kind of conversation is what the climate and trade dialogue intends to trigger....For example, is there a better way that the EU could have done their CBAM? Should they have consulted developing countries first? Should the revenue they expect to get from CBAM be rechannelled back as climate finance? It's a conversation that finally has a home here. (This kind of) conversation tends not to happen in the World Trade Organization [WTO], (as) the talk (there) is about trade regulations, not this broader principles, political conversation that we are trying to have,” said Yu further.

“The mandate (from Belem) is to have 3 dialogues (on climate and trade) in 2026, 2027 and 2028. It is important for developing countries to grasp this opportunity and make sure that this does not end up with a talk shop, but rather that the conversation is recorded so that we build up a record of issues that we are raising this year, add on to it next year with some other thinking about trade and climate that might come in after having had a year and a half of implementation of the CBAM, and then end up in 2028 with the final dialogue where we could have maybe a set of ideas or messages or principles that could go in into the second GST as inputs into what we could then come up with. Maybe that way we actually shift the conversation away from talking about competitiveness and competition into a conversation about trade and climate as a mutually integrated system where we are trying to cooperate and help each other rather than trying to compete with each other,” concluded Yu.