

## Mixed reactions to Dubai outcomes

Dubai 15 Dec (Meena Raman and Hilary Kung) – While the main headline news coming out of the Dubai climate talks was the first time historic mention of “transitioning away from fossil fuels” in the final decision adopted on the first global stocktake (GST), the small island developing States criticised the outcome as not going far enough in ambition, with several others saying that it was not equitable, as it did not call on developed countries to take the lead in doing so.

Many developing countries stressed the need for the means of implementation for the transition, while developed countries were in a celebratory mood.

Bolivia chastised the developed countries “who talked a lot about keeping the 1.5 °C temperature limit alive and about this goal being the ‘North Star’, but they “have plans to expand fossil fuels until 2050, and are going against the very science that they have been talking about”, exposing their hypocrisy and called this “carbon colonialism.”

The decision on the GST, adopted under the fifth session of Conference of Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA 5), is a part of a package of decisions hailed as the “UAE Consensus”, was gavelled very quickly by COP 28 President, **Dr Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber** morning of 13<sup>th</sup> Dec, to a jubilant crowd in the plenary.

Al Jaber, who was naturally very elated, spoke immediately after the gaveling of the decision, saying that all Parties “worked very hard to secure a better future for people and our planet”, which was “our historic achievement, which we should be proud of”. He said that the decision was a “comprehensive response” and with all other decisions adopted together, and that “we have confronted the reality and set the world in a right direction to keep the 1.5 °C (limit) within reach, led by science”. The COP 28 President also said that an agreement is only as good as it is implemented and called on Parties to take the steps necessary.

The most focused outcome of the GST decision was on paragraphs 28 and 29, which reads:

*“28. ...recognizes the need for deep, rapid and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in line with 1.5 °C pathways and calls on Parties to contribute to the following global efforts, in a nationally determined manner, taking into account the Paris Agreement and their different national circumstances, pathways and approaches:*

*(a) Tripling renewable energy capacity globally and doubling the global average annual rate of energy efficiency improvements by 2030;*

*(b) Accelerating efforts towards the phase-down of unabated coal power;*

*(c) Accelerating efforts globally towards net zero emission energy systems, utilizing zero- and low-carbon fuels well before or by around mid-century;*

*(d) Transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner, accelerating action in this critical decade, so as to achieve net zero by 2050 in keeping with the science;*

*(e) Accelerating zero- and low-emission technologies, including, inter alia, renewables, nuclear, abatement and removal technologies such as carbon capture and utilization and storage, particularly in hard-to-abate sectors, and low-carbon hydrogen production;*

*(f) Accelerating and substantially reducing non-carbon-dioxide emissions globally, including in particular methane emissions by 2030;*

*(g) Accelerating the reduction of emissions from road transport on a range of pathways, including through development of infrastructure and rapid deployment of zero-and low-emission vehicles;*

*(h) Phasing out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies that do not address energy poverty or just transitions, as soon as possible;*

*29. Recognizes that transitional fuels can play a role in facilitating the energy transition while ensuring energy security;"*

Following the comments by Al Jaber, **Samoa**, speaking for the **Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)** said that it "was confused about what happened and it seems that you have gavelled the decision when the small island developing States were not in the room."

It said that "AOSIS had one objective to ensure 1.5 °C is safeguarded in a meaningful way" and that "the decision contains many good elements." However, Samoa added further that "the course correction needed has not been secured" and that "we have made incremental advancement over business as usual," but "what is needed is an exponential step change".

It said that there is no commitment to peak emissions by 2025, and that the science cannot be ignored in this regard. In relation to paragraph 28 in the text, it said "the exclusive focus on energy systems is disappointing" and that sub-paragraphs (e) (on zero and low emissions technologies) and (h) (on phasing out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies)

"potentially take us backward rather than forward" and "we are being asked to endorse technologies that could result in actions that undermine our efforts." It called for guardrails on this language (which could not be included as the decision had been gavelled).

**Bolivia**, in an honest and hard-hitting response to developed countries, said that in the 8 years since the adoption of the Paris Agreement (PA), "developed countries have worked intensively to erode and erase the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) and shift their responsibilities to developing countries," and expressed "great regret and enormous" concern that these principles "are being "deteriorated and diminished even more." It also said that there was a lot of talk (by developed countries) about keeping 1.5 °C alive and about it being the North Star but they "have plans to expand fossil fuels until 2050, and are going against the very science that they have been talking about," expressed Bolivia saying that "the North Star is increasingly out of reach". It said keeping 1.5 °C alive is important, but asked "how is this possible without differentiation and in a world without binding commitments to work for equity and for the defence of Mother Earth?".

Bolivia also said that "developed countries talk about there being no financing for climate change but they put enormous amounts of money into funding an enormous industrial machinery and war on the planet. Developed countries talk about human rights while they provoke the genocide of our sisters and brothers in Palestine,". It also said further that "having targets for all by 2050 goes against the PA and reinforces the path of carbon colonialism in the world" and that "we will need developed countries to take the lead and provide developing countries with the means of implementation if they really do not want to continue lying to the world."

Bolivia also expressed its reservation in respect of the GST decision and on paragraph 28 (on the global mitigation targets), and said that all its contributions to the fulfilment of global efforts to combat the climate crisis depends on the provision of financing".

**Cuba**, in reference to the "goal of the North Star"

(1.5 °C), said that what is true is that there “is a whole constellation of purposes and goals” which have to be balanced, including the goal of eradicating poverty and sustainable development and to do so with equity. The dilemma for developing countries was in contributing to climate actions and also in meeting the sustainable development goals, added Cuba. The main stumbling block is the lack of (adequate) emission reductions by developed countries and their failure to comply until today with the commitment to help developing countries. Among this we must include the absolute unjust financial architecture where developing countries are facing more international debt, it said further, and also drew attention to the growing imposition of unilateral measures which are political in nature and are challenging for developing countries to undertake targets and goals that have nothing to do with their national circumstances.

**Saudi Arabia** for the **Arab Group** stressed that the outcome allows the limiting of temperature rise according to national circumstances, and in the context of sustainable development, and abiding by the principle of CBDR. It called for the reduction of emissions regardless of the source and the need for technologies to support that including carbon capture and storage.

**Colombia** said that this century represents a contest between fossil capital and life. The commitment to transition away from fossil fuel is important, it said, adding that there are loopholes in the decision which also have risks. It said that the transition fuels (such as natural gas) will end up colonising the space of the decarbonisation. Colombia stressed that we do not have the financial structure for this deep energy transition, adding that the finance and technology is needed right now and not rely on transition fuels linked to fossil fuels. It also expressed support for the Palestinian people.

**Brazil** said that the next task ahead is on securing the means of implementation necessary for developing countries and to ensure that just transition is maintained and for developed countries do take the lead to end fossil fuels.

**Venezuela** said that paragraph 28 leaves room for interpretation and also expressed for the record

that “Nothing in the paragraph diminishes the obligations established under the Convention and the PA and that developed countries should take the lead,” adding that it did not want to see this para being use to impose conditionalities, especially with respect to the provision of finance, technology transfer and capacity building, or lead to the use of unilateral trade measures.

**China** recalled that 11<sup>th</sup> Dec was the 8<sup>th</sup> year since the adoption of the PA and the principles of equity and CBDR are the cornerstone of the climate process. It said the GST decision sent a strong positive signal and is an important landmark which was both ambitious and pragmatic, and that the key to deliver on the commitment is the means of implementation to match the ambition. China stressed that developed countries have an unshakable historical responsibility for climate change and must take the lead and substantially reduce emissions and realise net zero as soon as possible, and support the energy transition without delay and enhance the means of implementation to ensure the global just transition and provide developing countries the space to realise their sustainable development. It also called on developed countries to resist the use of unilateral measures that undermine the global climate process.

**Egypt** also echoed that the decision adopted needs to be followed up by a genuine commitment to implement and move forward, and that notion of justice and equity recognised the right of developing countries to a sustainable development and toward poverty eradication.

**Antigua and Barbuda** said that reliance on transition gas is a dangerous loophole and is a fossil fuel that we need to transition away from. It raised the alarm that this will take away investments from renewable energy, leaving poor developing countries with high energy costs and stranded assets, adding that it is easier to get USD 100 million dollars for liquid natural gas than USD 20 million for solar investments, even when solar is cheaper and less polluting. It stressed the need to address the ease of financing for fossil fuels, compared to renewable energy, adaptation or loss and damage and that this inequity needs to be addressed.

**Honduras** urged developed countries to meet their financial obligation, as it could not take on more debt, that hampers its sustainable development and poverty eradication.

Speaking for the **Coalition of Rainforest Nations**, it referred to negotiations under Article 6 of the PA in relation to the carbon markets and denounced those Parties “who are working to undermine its transparency, integrity and structure, which is opening the door to climate fraud, as seen in relating to the voluntary carbon markets.” It added that the carbon market can play a role but only if it has a transparent regulatory structure.

**Philippines** noted with concern that the GST did not result in a stronger outcome on matters relating to equity and CBDR, and that “we heard clearly many calls about what should be the North Star of this process”, but said that for many, the North Star is “far from us”, referring to “Orion, the Hunter, that can be seen all over” and that “collectively, we need to be hunters together searching for climate justice, based on equity and science as we strive to achieve sustainable development and eradicate poverty.”

**Qatar** supported the need for urgent action, but expressed deep concern with paragraph 28 of the GST decision and said that we must not lose sight of the PA and the principle of CBDR. It said the decision defines a timeline instead of allowing Parties define their own timelines, and lacks mention on the role of developed countries. It also expressed its reservation on paragraph 28, as there was an absence of equity and CBDR, adding that that the goals and timelines cannot be imposed without equity and the PA principles being taken into account.

The **United States (US)** underscored the difficult challenges for 200 Parties to find consensus in a world of the Ukraine war and others, adding that “multilateralism made this come together.” It said that while nobody here will see their view completely reflected in the consensus document but the decision sends strong messages to the world. In keeping the 1.5 C limit within reach and that the next nationally determined contributions (NDCs) will have to be aligned with the temperature limit, said the US further. It also added that it wanted “clear language on the peaking of

emissions, but we know this is the compromise.” On finance, it said there is need to transform the international financial system and that the GST outcome needs to continue to drive investment and shift finance.

The **European Union (EU)** welcomed the GST outcome and that it was time to do much more in keeping in line with the 1.5 °C. It regretted that there was no mention of the peaking of emissions, although there was reference on the need to reduce emissions of 43% by 2030 and 60% per cent by 2035 relative to the 2019 level, and reaching net zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2050. (The EU had the previous day threatened to walk out of the talks if there was no strong decision on the phasing out of fossil fuels.)

**Australia** speaking for the **Umbrella Group** praised the COP 28 President for delivering “a strong result,” with “important milestones to combat the climate crisis”. It said that all nations in the world have acknowledged that the future is in clean energy, and that fossil fuels will end, adding that “future NDCs need to align with 1.5 °C, which was the guiding North Star”. It welcomed further dialogues in respect of Article 2.1(c) of the PA and that for the new collective quantified goal on finance (to be determined next year), “a widest range of sources” is needed to provide and mobilise finance to “deliver system transformation because the world has changed a lot since 30 years ago” and that the capacity and circumstances of countries have evolved since 1992 (referring to when the UNFCCC was conceived). It concluded that this was “undeniably a historical COP”.

**Switzerland** for the **Environmental Integrity Group** said that this was the first time humanity came together to respond to science and that “the future is not fossil fuels”, adding that there could be no equity in a world above 1.5 °C. It also said that “the energy package is a start but is not enough” and that there is need for a commitment to follow up to determine our accountability.

**Germany** said that with this COP, “we can save the future” and in response to AOSIS, it said this decision may not be enough but this is the “starting point” and that Parties are “walking on a path of climate justice.”

The **United Kingdom** said the “outcome was not perfect” but reflected a commitment on “beginning of the end of the fossil fuel era”. It was disappointed that there was no mention of not having “new coal generation”, but that the unified message is to move away from fossil fuels and said that “this outcome is something we can genuinely celebrate.”

The CMA and the COP also adopted other decisions on the Mitigation Work Programme, the Global Goal on Adaptation, Just Transition Pathways Work Programme and several decisions on finance.

(Further articles on these matters will follow).