

www.twn.my

MONDAY, 21 JUNE 2021

Virtual climate talks end with preparations for COP 26 in Glasgow

Penang, 21 June (Evelyn Teh) - The climate talks held virtually under the UNFCCC's Subsidiary Bodies (SBs) from 31st May 2021, ended on 17 June 2021, with a closing plenary session, where Parties gave their views on both process and substance following an intense three-week session.

The May-June session saw the generation of 'informal notes' produced under the responsibility of the respective chairs of the SBs, following efforts to capture progress and the views of Parties from the various meetings held. According to the Chairs of the SBs, these informal notes do not have any status, but are viewed as helping advance further work in preparation for the 26th meeting of the UNFCCC's Conference of Parties (COP 26) to be held in-person in Glasgow, from Oct 31-Nov 12.

The virtual meetings saw Parties, both from developed and developing countries, often facing connectivity issues, poor quality audio, and technical disruptions, with some developing countries encountering power cuts.

On 17 June, the final plenaries of the SBs were held one after the other. The **Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI)** was convened by Chair **Marianne Karlsen (Norway)**, while that of the **Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA)** was convened by its Chair, **Tosi Mpanu Mpanu (Democratic Republic of the Congo)**

The **SBI Chair Karlsen**, stated that the SBI session was not closed but suspended, so that work can continue, and all agenda items can be considered when the body formally completes work at COP26. She informed Parties that looking forward, she will be preparing a scenario note that will cover all items of the provisional agenda of the SBI, which aims at identifying ways forward, including textual proposals that would be helpful for advancing Parties' deliberations. The Chair will also provide updates of

planned activities to engage Parties to advance work in preparation for COP26.

The **SBSTA Chair, Mpanu Mpanu** stated that the provisional agenda includes all mandates and no issue will be left behind, and emphasised that the informal notes (from the May-June session) capture the work in progress, and that the notes and all its elements have no formal status; are not exhaustive and should not be considered as final in any way. With further work and inputs from Parties and continued engagement, the informal notes can offer the foundation in advancing work in various areas, said Mpanu-Mpanu further. For some items, informal notes are also issued to reflect further views from Parties and serve as inputs for further deliberations, he added further.

United Kingdom on behalf of the incoming **COP 26 Presidency** stated that it will, together with **Chile** (the COP 25 Presidency), continue to set out plans for activities taken forward under their authority as presidencies. Consultations, calls for submissions and other tools will be utilised, while remain guided by the principles of transparency, inclusivity and accelerating progress towards outcomes at COP26. These plans will build on the monthly series of multilateral heads of delegations' consultations that the presidencies have conducted since January - including the stocktake on the way forward to be held on June 30th, and the focus on the 'Loss and Damage' issue in late July.

A joint plenary of the SBs was convened to hear statements from groupings and countries.

The **Republic of Guinea** speaking for the **G77 and China**, expressed that the multilateral climate finance architecture must be adequate and predictable in terms of both financial and technical support and that this includes building the capacity of developing countries to report, implement the reporting requirements under the Convention and the Paris Agreement, as well as the Enhanced Transparency Framework.

With regards to the Nairobi Work Programme, Guinea said that the virtual meetings proved to be a challenge for some developing countries, in addition to the insufficient time to peruse the 2021 progress report as it was issued only on the first day of the virtual SB session. The Group also said that it expects the informal note on the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) discussion to reflect appropriately the issues captured during the session.

On matters relating to the Fourth Review of the Adaptation Fund (AF), the G77 stressed that AF is the only fund fully dedicated to concrete adaptation efforts via full cost grants. Hence, the Group hoped that the informal note will capture the needs on adequacy and predictability of the finance available and the sustainability of the AF, and emphasized that the note produced is not exhaustive, has no formal status and should not be considered final in any way; nor does it prejudice further work or prevent Parties from providing additional views.

As regards to matters on loss and damage, the G77 stated that rapid and effective operationalization of the Santiago Network is invaluable and welcomed an informal process that can help the COP Presidencies obtain inputs from Parties and other stakeholders on how to move forward its' operationalization.

The G77 raised its grave concern about the progress on implementing the work plan activities of the response measures forum and the Katowice Committee of Experts on the Impacts (KCI) and underscored the need to make up for the time lost and ensure progress on the technical work related to the work plan activities and the recommendations.

As for the Enhanced Transparency Framework (ETF), the G77 reiterated that the virtual format posed challenges for Parties to discuss and resolve differences due to the highly technical nature of this topic. It also expressed disappointment that some developed countries' objected to discussions on the provision of enhanced financial, technical and capacity building support for developing countries to cover the cost of ETF requirements.

Since raising adaptation ambition is a priority for developing countries alongside mitigation, the G77 and China called for a balance between adaptation and mitigation in the 2022-2023 programme budget of the secretariat.

Bolivia on behalf of **Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDC)** said that this virtual setting cannot be the format or substitute for actual in-person negotiations in order for COP 26 to succeed. On adaptation, the LMDC said topics such as the global

goal on adaptation, the recognition of efforts and other key elements of adaptation to operationalize the Convention and the Paris Agreement were left out and efforts to compensate this unbalanced treatment were attempted by adding more hours to ongoing discussions in a virtual mode, which burdened small delegations.

On the common time frames of nationally determined contributions (NDCs), the LMDC was very disappointed to see the elements for further consideration in the informal note which did not capture all Parties' views.

On Article 6 of the Paris Agreement (on cooperative approaches), the LMDC believed that no progress was made on resolving the outstanding issues, adding that have been repetitive statements with some calling for a compromise on the variety of issues but these same Parties, did not offer compromises. No solutions are emerging despite discussing these issues for more than 5 years, it added further.

On finance issues, the LMDC said that the informal note shared on financial and technical support neither reflected the interventions nor the inputs presented by developing countries and the revised version came as a text which was previously rejected by G77, adding that this was highly irregular and unacceptable.

Reflecting on the workshop held on the biennial communications by developed countries under Article 9.5 of the Paris Agreement, the LMDC said that exchanges clearly reflected that the required transparency of ex-ante information of finance is severely lacking, do very little to improve predictability of finance. Trust, ambition and predictability of finance, are not supported by these reports.

The LMDC stated that the virtual discussions for the complex issues under transparency were not very productive and therefore physical meetings.

On the Second Periodic Review and the Structured Expert Dialogue (SED) held under it, the LMDC said that the equity issue was not prevalent in the discussions. The literature being considered in the SED is not based on equity and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC). It highlighted the need to not only focus on the Paris Agreement, but also include the long-term global goal of the Convention, adding further that the operationalisation of the principle of equity also applies on the work for Global Stocktake.

Gabon on behalf of the **African Group** emphasised the challenges of virtual negotiation, which were noticeable. The Group also stressed the need for support to be provided by financial entities for the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture, to increase adaptation actions and projects on the ground, ensure food security, and reach the expected co-benefits.

The African Group also emphasised the need for strengthening the engagement of African Parties, national focal points and experts in the different modalities of work of the Nairobi Work Programme and expand its thematic focus and knowledge products to address areas related to drought, water scarcity and land degradation.

Saudi Arabia on behalf of the **Arab Group**, stated that the challenges posed by the virtual meeting has impacted the ability to follow discussions and participate efficiently and therefore, this mode of virtual discussion should be exceptional. It expressed concern with the various procedural problems, seeing attempts to bypass the rules of procedure that had been agreed upon before holding this informal session. It added that the remarks made by the Arab Group were not reflected entirely in the outcome notes of this session and therefore, underscored that the documents will have no legal status, as they were not negotiated, and are not a basis for negotiations and for making decisions.

With regards to the response measure agenda, the Group underscored the need to achieve progress on technical work on the impact of response measures and the need to make necessary arrangements to achieve further progress on this item. On Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, it echoed similar views as that expressed by the LMDC. On the transparency framework, it also said that it was very difficult to achieve progress because of the highly technical nature of the work did not support work in a virtual mode for these items.

India on behalf of **Brazil, South Africa, India and China (BASIC)** emphasized the need for balanced progress across all agenda items as they are intrinsically linked to each other. On Article 6, the BASIC group said that it needs to be operationalised as a package with provisions for environmental integrity, transparency, and governance which must be equally robust and balanced under all sub-articles. On the issue of common time frames for NDCs, India emphasized the need to be cognizant of the nationally determined nature of NDCs and to keep all options available.

It also expressed disappointment that the informal notes and the texts for the different finance agenda items often came as either decision text format or including elements which were not decided following due process. In addition, it stated that more time slots should be allocated for discussions on financial and technical support for transparency and that the virtual mode is not conducive for discussing the technical issues on common reporting tables compounded by the great challenges faced by developing countries when accessing online meetings. It also emphasized the need for enhancing finance for adaptation and a strengthened role of the AF.

Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of **Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)** stated that in relation to Article 6, more technical work is needed on the quantitative implications of different proposals on the table for global emissions and other indicators, including funding for adaptation. AOSIS also stated that a prompt start to the work programme on non-market approaches could help Small Island Developing States (SIDS) with a just transition.

AOSIS also stated that it has taken note of the G7's restated intention to deliver on the USD 100 billion goal, originally promised for 2020. This is a contrast between the long struggle to reach this goal and the fact that USD189 billion of the G7's combined economic recovery funds were spent on fossil fuels, during this pandemic, despite pledges to cut emissions. The USD 100 billion goal is clearly inadequate, it said further. In the context of adaptation, AOSIS said it would like to see more adequate, predictable and accessible financing to formulate and in particular to implement NAPs. This includes having the Global Stocktake adequately capturing the progress on adaptation.

It also indicated that climate finance needs to be truly accessible and not restricted by arbitrary criteria, like GDP per capita, that do not reflect Parties' inherent climate and economic vulnerabilities. Meanwhile, COVID-19 remains a serious concern and travel restrictions continue for many countries – therefore, access to vaccines and testing facilities is still a challenge in SIDS, and the safety of its delegates was a priority, it added further.

Argentina on behalf of **Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay (ABU)** stressed the importance of having an inclusive and equitable process in the Global Stock Take, that leads us to the future but also looks backward at implementation gaps and challenges, especially regarding pre-2020 implementation. On the Fourth Review of the AF, ABU also said that the membership, representation, eligibility criteria or

further differentiation among developing countries on the AF Board should not be discussed.

Bhutan on behalf of **Least Developed Countries (LDC)** said that on the transparency framework under the Paris Agreement and the domestic preparations to transition to the Enhanced Transparency Framework by 2024, Parties must ensure that developing countries, especially LDCs, are provided with the resources and capacity building support needed to produce the reports and to sustain reporting capacity on a permanent basis.

Paraguay on behalf of the **Independent Alliance of Latin America and the Caribbean (AILAC)** stated that on the transparency framework, the informal notes contain most of the technical elements that Parties need to further progress in their deliberations, so this is an effort that should not be lost. AILAC also stated that the second periodic review of the long-term global goal must serve as a key input to the global stocktake, and that the third SED must include the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Changes' reports expected in the first half of 2022.

Nicaragua for the **Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA)** stated that the financial obligations and commitments to provide finance by the developed countries under the Convention and the Paris Agreement must be implemented fully, including the goal of mobilizing USD 100 billion annually by 2020, since there has been a deficit in ambition that must be corrected quickly. Likewise, it reaffirmed that ambition must also include ambition in adaptation, with developed countries taking initiative and leadership in the provision of financing and means of implementation. On that note, ALBA stated that is necessary to accelerate the launch of negotiations on a new collective quantified goal on finance by 2025. It also called for a review of the overall progress and implementation of the actions of the Parties in the period before 2020 under the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol to be started immediately without having to wait for the Global Stocktake. It also denounced unilateral coercive measures, which are illegal and violate international law, and deepen the devastating effects of climate change (on countries impacted by such measures).

Australia on behalf of the **Umbrella Group** stated the need to urgently accelerate work on transparency, including through technical work in advance of COP26, while ensuring the need for a consistency of outcomes with the decisions agreed at COP 24. It also stressed the need to redouble efforts on matters related to Article 6 to reach an agreement in Glasgow, as

Parties pivot to resolving the key political questions. It expressed support to Singapore and Norway to lead the implementation of the UK Presidency's ministerial initiative in this regard. On the first global stocktake, it noted that Parties will be having discussions at the first technical dialogues to be held next year and that the non-paper by the SBSTA and SBI Chairs are a good foundation on which to build and use as a key process to highlight the urgent need to increase ambition.

The **European Union (EU)** acknowledged that this virtual session presented many challenges and constraints, particularly for developing countries. On matters related to Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, the EU recognized that key differences remain between Parties that can only be resolved at a political level. To find common ground on this, it stated that technical exchanges must continue with intersessional work in the coming months. However, the EU stated that the note on the AF represented a step backwards. It welcomed the offer of the incoming Presidency to convene ministers to begin to narrow differences on the key political issues.

Switzerland on behalf of the **Environmental Integrity Group** stated that it will only support holding an additional SB session if there is a substantial change in format. These include the ability to work on draft decision texts, the availability to work through informal- informals for technical work; to take procedural and substantial decisions, and all these is independent of whether the sessions take place face to face or virtually. Otherwise, the Group stated that it would be more useful to hold technical workshops to progress technical aspects of work.

Edited by Meena Ram an

More information about the outcomes and negotiations at UNFCCC from 2007 to 2019: <https://tinyurl.com/3p6tw5vx>