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Developing countries call for rapid operationalisation of Loss and Damage Network

Kathmandu, 23 June (Prerna Bomzan): At an informal meeting organised during the virtual climate talks of the UNFCCC's Subsidiary Bodies (SBs) on June 16, **Guinea**, on behalf of the **G77/China** underlined that the rapid and effective operationalisation of the the Santiago Network on Loss and Damage (SNLD) was of great importance for developing countries, and that this should be done through an appropriate institutional arrangement to enable the Network and its members to respond quickly and adequately to the specific requests and needs for technical assistance.

While developing countries called for a dedicated and organised structure to assist them in relation to their needs to address loss and damage and not merely rely on the setting up of a website, developed countries were opposed to the establishment of new structures, saying that existing arrangements should be sufficient in this regard.

The informal virtual meeting was convened at the request of the **G77/China**, given absence of this important issue in the meeting schedule of the three-week session of the SBs. Consequently, the current and incoming Presidencies of the UNFCCC's Conference of Parties (COP) invited Parties and observer groups to share their views about the modalities for the operationalisation of the SNLD. The meeting was presided by **Gladys Santis (Chile)** representing the COP25 Presidency and **Malcolm Ridout (United Kingdom)** representing the in-coming COP26 Presidency.

(In 2019 in Madrid, Parties decided to establish, as part of the Warsaw International Mechanism

for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts [WIM], the Santiago Network for averting, minimising and addressing loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change to catalyse the technical assistance of relevant organisations, bodies, networks and experts for the implementation of relevant approaches at the local, national and regional level in developing countries).

Santis in her introductory remarks, informed about the activities to date: the first informal consultation held in December 2020 during the UN Climate Dialogues which also included a roundtable on the potential functions of the SNLD; the second informal consultation on 26 April this year involving an input paper as well as the establishment of the 'Friends of President' group. She further stated that a paper arising out of the second consultation has been already shared with Parties for comments and a second paper would be distributed before the next informal consultation scheduled on 28 June.

Guinea for the **G77 and China** provided comprehensive comments on the Presidencies' informal summary paper (resulting out of the 26 April consultation) which outlined the form and function as well as the process of development of the SNLD. It said that the initiative being taken to make the SNLD operational is welcomed, but wanted sufficient time to be able to provide substantive input from all Parties, due to the technical challenges with the internet and time zone differences. It shared that flexibility should be provided for any additional inputs to be provided at any time during the process, adding that this will require a process that is inclusive, country-driven and transparent, avoid

duplication, and benefit from other UNFCCC or Paris Agreement (PA) processes.

Guinea also sought more clarity with respect to the process of development outlined in the summary paper. It pointed out that clarity would be needed in terms of how the results of this Presidency-initiated operationalisation process would be integrated as part of the official outcomes of COP26 and in the UNFCCC/PA institutional framework.

On Network's functions, Guinea stated that the SNLD should enable Parties, particularly, developing countries to easily access the full spectrum of technical assistance that maybe needed for the implementation of approaches to address loss and damage, emphasising that the SNLD's functions therefore should be evolving, dynamic, non-exhaustive, grounded in practical action, and aligned to the challenges and needs faced by countries.

It further recalled that the WIM (under which the SNLD sits), was established under the UNFCCC to promote approaches to address loss and damage. The PA further identified areas to avert, minimise and address loss and damage. It stressed that both will be important in shaping the SNLD and that there may also be emerging areas which will need additional consideration given the limits to adaptation being realised and projected. The SNLD should hence be flexible enough to respond to Parties' technical needs as they arise and evolve over time, elaborated Guinea further.

On the form (institutional design) of the Network, Guinea said it should be fit for purpose and follow the designated functions of the SNLD. This means that the Network will require a structure that is capable of catalysing technical assistance to address Parties' needs for such technical assistance. It underscored that to be effective, the SNLD needs to go beyond a mere connection of actors and a website. A central structured coordination system for the SNLD should be explored to ensure effective functioning, adding that among the options that could be considered to perform this coordination role with respect to the SNLD is a 'secretariat'.

Guinea further said that engagement with the SNLD should be open to experts and

organisations within and external to the UNFCCC process, including those which self-identify or are identified by Parties, must therefore be extensive (with a wide range of expertise) and inclusive (such as humanitarian and disaster risk organisations among other entities covering a wide of focus areas). The dynamic nature of the Network should allow for the technical assistance from organisations and experts to be based on country priorities and needs for technical support.

It said that the real value of the SNLD will be in how to catalyse effective technical assistance to developing countries in a timely and sustained manner. And its role in catalysing the provision of the means of implementation under the UNFCCC and the PA such as finance, technology transfer, and capacity building, to developing countries would also be valuable and important.

Guinea also reserved its comments on the Presidencies' proposal in the summary paper to take up the offer of the Red Cross Climate Centre to convene technical agencies to discuss the Network, adding that Parties should be invited to participate in such convening of technical agencies.

Santis (Chile), in response to questions posed by the G77/China, informed about the specific next steps leading up to COP26. She said that a second version of the paper prepared by the Presidencies will be distributed as soon as possible, before the next informal consultation scheduled on 28 June. The Presidencies expected to receive written feedback from Parties and are open to ideas for further discussions and bilateral meetings. A third version of the paper will be prepared taking into account Parties' inputs which will be then circulated to the heads of delegation meeting. Depending on reactions to that proposal, the Presidencies will convene further informal consultations and bilateral meetings to build consensus over further action needed to develop the network, including at COP26.

On the role of Parties in such a process, Santis said that operationalisation of the SNLD should be a Party-driven process and the Presidencies will lead the process expecting a full engagement of Parties and observers. On how to ensure a Party-driven process, Santis said that consultations are

going on, to reflect back ideas that represent points that will find consensus, including with non-Party stakeholders and this will include a check with heads of delegations. She suggested that the COP/CMA (Conference of Parties to the PA) might like to take a view on the process and endorse further intersessional work to develop the Network, if required.

On the modalities that the Presidencies have put in place to ensure Parties' views are reflected, she mentioned about informal consultations, written inputs and bilateral meetings that have been existing so far, saying further that they were open to more consultations, together, in groups, and bilaterally, on the way forward. On opportunities to provide additional inputs, Santis said that they will be happy to receive proposals on how to move forward.

Once the Network is operationalised, Santis said that Parties should be involved in the future in an active manner to ensure that the Network is useful for developing countries and revise and evaluate the progress of the Network, adding that they will be able to make recommendations and provide more mandates in future decisions through: (i) formal negotiations of the ExCom (WIM Executive Committee) annual reports, in which the ExCom has been called to include information from the organisations, bodies, networks and experts that have reported on their progress in providing technical assistance to developing countries; and (ii) formal negotiations of future reviews of the WIM, since the SNLD is established under the WIM. She added that the next WIM review will take place in 2024.

Timor Leste for the **Least Developed Countries (LDCs)** said that the process of operationalising the SNLD needs to be transparent and Party-driven and should be accountable to Parties. It said that the form and functions of SNLD should be deliberated by Parties and the result captured in a COP/CMA decision. The Network should have two distinct implementation and coordination functions, it added and that the implementation function needs to support action on the ground. On the involvement of organisations and experts on technical assistance, it added that merely putting organisations into one space will not add to existing support. In view

of projected losses in developing countries, this will not be enough and that technical assistance needs to be sensitive to needs, it elaborated further.

Sudan for the **African Group** highlighted that operationalisation of SNLD needs a COP/CMA decision through an inclusive, transparent, Party-driven process, pointing out that many of its members are not even following the current discussions due to challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, modalities of virtual work, internet connection issues and other problems. It added that function of the SNLD should be dynamic to match the dynamic nature of loss and damage and should be tailored to meeting the needs of developing countries. It said further that operationalisation of the SNLD should be done through appropriate arrangements and that having a website only is not sufficient.

Jamaica for the **Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)** said that the function of the SNLD should be flexible and not limited and that on institutional arrangements, organisations and experts should be extensive, self-identified or identified by Parties. It believed in the usefulness of a core document such as a 'terms of reference' and said that the Network is certainly more than a website. It added further it will explore issues relating to whether a COP or CMA decision is needed and what role the ExCom would have, also saying that Parties should be able to reflect their needs, articulate them, and be able to get the required technical assistance.

Colombia for the **Independent Alliance of Latin America and the Caribbean (AILAC)** said that it did not envision the SNLD to be merely a virtual website and stressed the need for a dedicated secretariat or coordinating entity with a permanent structure. A dedicated secretariat or structure should provide advice on the technical assistance that would be needed and this function should not only be limited to creating spaces for countries to enter into contract with providers, it said further. It looked forward to more personalised service and shared concerns that one of the functions of the SNLD should not be just relegated to gathering information while the overall function is to catalyse technical assistance. It strongly urged involvement of organisations

outside of the UNFCCC such as disaster and humanitarian organisations. Further, it expressed interest for the SNLD to have a structure capable of delivering in an efficient manner, for instance, building on the Climate Technology Centre and Network's experience which could be carried forward through the vehicles of COP/CMA as deemed suitable.

Ecuador for the **Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDC)** said that the views expressed in the implementation of the SNLD has evolved since the first discussion and hoped for its operationalisation in the next iteration of exchanges. It emphasised the need to have an organised institution that can provide enhanced action and include different approaches on the ground. It said that other organisations that are interested in housing this kind of coordination should be linked to the process of the UNFCCC and PA in order to reflect and fulfill the needs of developing countries in terms of addressing loss and damage. It also saw benefits from further exchanges in terms of information in pursuing a COP decision.

Kuwait for the **Arab Group** said that it had hoped for more than one meeting on this issue at this session and looked forward to further elaboration in the second version of the paper for exchange of views and to get a decision at the COP26.

India highlighted that for technical assistance to be implemented, there is need for technologies and associated capacity building and finance support, which is very critical and also stressed the strong association and interaction between the SNLD and the WIM.

Sweden for the **European Union** said that technical assistance will be done by the members and not by a central organization, and that making the SNLD an implementation function is not desirable and not within the mandate. It said that the Network should be light and operational, making best use of existing programmes and instruments to provide added value while minimising duplication. It preferred to have rapid progress rather than delay through discussions among Parties, building on emerging common ground and using the momentum to

make the Network operational by the end of the year.

The **United States** said that existing bodies and organisations under ExCom who are already doing important work should be the starting point for the SNLD. On a secretariat and form of it, it considered that as a limiting approach, and said that it would not doubt the utility of a website.

Australia called for operationalising the SNLD as quickly as possible without engaging in further long negotiations. It did not want to start from scratch on the issue of a secretariat but rather build on existing models, saying further that otherwise, it would be time consuming and a very costly exercise.

Switzerland said the structure of the SNLD should be light, flexible and agile ensuring that it is open to new members and changing needs. It did not agree on having a dedicated secretariat.

In response to the developed countries who were not in favour of having a secretariat or a central coordinating body, the **G77** explained that if there is no body or organisation that is running the website, who knows what the needs of developing countries are and what providers can provide, adding that then, the website might be static and not match what the SNLD is supposed to do, which is going beyond merely connecting organisations and is about its operational function.

In closing, **Ridout** as the in-coming COP 26 Presidency, informed that the next iteration of the paper will be issued early on, as a basis for the 28 June meeting and in seeking to build consensus on the way forward. **Santis** expected substantial progress so that the SNLD can be made operational.

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