

All options on time frames for NDCs remain for COP 26 consideration

Kathmandu, 25 June (Perna Bomzan): At the recently concluded virtual climate talks of the UNFCCC's Subsidiary Bodies (SBs) held from 31 May to 17 June, the final informal consultation on common time frames (CTFs) for nationally determined contributions (NDCs) was conducted on 16 June, with Parties expressing the need to reflect all options on possible time frames for further consideration at the UNFCCC's 26th meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP 26) to be held in Glasgow later this year.

At the second consultation, Parties were asked to consider four new questions which were introduced by the co-facilitators **Kishan Kumarsingh (Trinidad and Tobago)** and **Andrew Rakestraw (United States)** as follows:

(i) For NDCs communicated by 2025, which time frame should Parties apply? Of the various options put forward, which option or combination of options would work best for all Parties? (ii) How strong should the call be (e.g. shall, invite, encourage)? (iii) For NDCs communicated in 2030, 2035, 2040, etc., what guidance should the decision on common time frames provide? Specifically, for Parties supporting the option of a 10-year time frame (whether 10 years, 5 years plus 5 years, or 5 or 10 years), what will Parties communicate in 2030? and (iv) should there be a call for Parties to review and update existing NDCs every five years?

Parties provided views based on their well-established positions and/or preferences on CTFs (See [TWN update](#) for respective positions). The **Like-minded developing countries (LMDC)** and **Bolivia** also provided additional options to be included both, in the informal outcome of the meeting as well as in the informal note prepared by the Chair of the Subsidiary Body for

Implementation (SBI). The **Arab Group** and the **Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)** registered their disappointment over the questions not having received well in advance, hence affecting their ability to respond. **Ecuador** said that the questions do not reflect all particularities of countries and preferred to have all the options on the table.

On the second question not delved into before, **Brazil**, the **Environmental Integrity Group (EIG)**, the **Independent Alliance for Latin America and the Caribbean (AILAC)**, the **Least Developed Countries (LDCs)** and the **African Group** explicitly called for the use of the term 'shall' while the **LMDC** for preferred the word 'invite' as well as the **United States** for 'invite/encourage'. **Australia** noted that the process over the last four months did not have a strong 'shall' requirement in the need to update NDCs but a number of other political processes did lead to updating the collective ambition across Parties generally. **European Union (EU)** stated its understanding that the call "should be rather strong to achieve our goals".

The final informal consultation on 16 June, aimed to receive feedback from Parties on the [informal note](#) published by co-facilitators under their own responsibility, on 15 June. Co-facilitator **Kumarsingh** invited comments which would be relayed to the SBI Chair for consideration.

Switzerland for the **EIG** said that the informal note's introduction provides a factual description of consultations and is in the direction to streamline options which is useful for ministers for political guidance. It appreciated the attempt to capture one communication date of 2025 for the NDCs. It reiterated that its views are best

captured by the first option (5 years) and with regard to second option (10 years), it noted that not many voices supported the longer time frame. Since Parties have already agreed to communicate NDCs every five years, the 10-year option was not really in line with the mandate, it said, adding that it will be useful if future iterations recall provisions under Article 4.3 of the Paris Agreement, viz. for progression and highest possible ambition.

China for the **LMDC** noted the inclusion of its additional options (option 7 & 8) in the annex but expressed disappointment that the options were not reflected in the ‘elements’ section of the note. It also pointed out one missing scenario with regard to communication of 5-year NDCs in 2025 which is for the period 2026-2030.

Referring to the mandate under consideration, China underscored that the discussion was about CTFs and the issue of ‘ambition’ was not part of that. It provided four additional options to be included in the ‘elements’ section which accurately reflects its position (5 or 10 years) emphasizing that flexibility is provided for developing countries. It expected that its detailed suggestions to be well captured in the next iteration and proposed to start the next discussion with the ‘options’ language.

Zimbabwe for the **African Group** reiterated its preference for the first option of a 5-year time frame and expressed disappointment in the process stating the need to do better and recommended a session by the COP Presidency to facilitate work beyond the technical. It stressed the need for political will to get a decision in Glasgow at COP 26 (the 26th meeting of the UNFCCC’s Conference of Parties).

South Africa aligned with the African Group on the process, expressing frustration at the pace of progress. It reiterated its position on a single CTF of 5 years and underlined that it requires political will from all Parties to take a decision at the COP. It said further that placing brackets (not agreed language) and proliferation of options will not take the process forward and highlighted that a single CTF is very important and a longer time frame is not consistent with environmental integrity, adding that there is no need for further

technical work as the key problem is lack of political willingness. It did agree that the discussion is about CTF and not ambition. It appealed to the LMDC and the EU to provide a clear position as the matter required political attention.

Saudi Arabia for the **Arab Group** pointed out that Parties are just expressing views and not engaging on negotiating texts, emphasizing that the informal note had no status. It noted how NDCs must reflect the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC) and that the options reflect this must be included in the ‘elements’ section. It echoed LMDC that ambition is beyond the mandate of Article 4.10.

Russia said that the informal note has no status and will engage in further discussions in Glasgow. It stated that neither of the options reflected its position and expected to see proposals that addressed its concerns rather than make a choice among the options. It also suggested a similar of repetition of paragraphs 23-25 of the Paris decision in 1/CP.21, which it said would allow different views of Parties on the different approaches for CTFs.

Indonesia said it was open to the option of 10 years with a mid-term review as well as to multiple time frames.

The **EU** said that it could live with the informal note in the spirit of compromise which provided a good start with clear options for consideration in Glasgow. In response to South Africa, it said that the EU has not legislated on the CTFs and that it was analysing the options in relation to the EU climate law including in preparing for a solution at COP 26.

Ecuador stressed that some options were not reflected in very well in the ‘elements’ section of the text and also shared the view that the issue of ambition not within the mandate of discussions.

Bangladesh for the **LDCs** expressed frustration that the discussions were moving in circles with no progress and called for clear options for the ministers, so that it was understandable to them and for clarity in deciding the most appropriate

option, taking into account the national contexts. It reiterated its position that multiple time frames are not compatible and consistent with the PA, with a 5 or 10-year option significantly weakening the function of the Agreement.

Colombia for the **AILAC** suggested the 'elements' to have cross references with the options in the annex in order to give assurance to Parties that their options are on the table.

Following the interventions, co-facilitator **Kumarsingh** informed that since the meeting was the final one, there was no time to issue another version of the informal note, but said that the comments and views of Parties would be forwarded to the SBI Chair.

On 16 June, an [informal note](#) by the SBI Chair was published bearing the caveat: *'The elements outlined in this note are not exhaustive, have no formal status and should not be considered final in any way. They are offered to assist Parties in advancing the discussions on this matter and do not prejudge further work or prevent Parties from expressing their views at any time.'*

In the earlier informal consultations, discussions were mired in conflict between Parties over procedural issues. It started when the first informal consultation on 1 June concluded with co-facilitator **Kumarsingh** encouraging Parties to meet informally in 'informal-informal' ('inf-inf') mode by requesting **Brazil** to lead those technical discussions (See [TWN update](#)).

At the second informal consultation on 10 June, **Saudi Arabia** on behalf of the **Arab Group** strongly expressed its objection over the 'inf-inf' proposal and stressed on adhering to established organisational procedures, pointing out that the 'inf-inf' format was not part of the agreed plan as stated in the scenario note by the Chair of the SBI. It said further, that the inf-inf discussions were totally mismanaged as it was not given the floor despite multiple requests. Attempts were also made to remove its known preferred option on the CTF, it added and that another inf-inf was also planned to be conducted with limited invitation in a manner that was not transparent and Party-driven. It called for keeping all options on the table especially when the SBI Chair also

had assured many times that no options would be eliminated with all views of Parties preserved.

China for the **LMDCs** also raised concerns that the inf-inf meeting was not conducted in a Party-driven manner.

Brazil provided clarification about the inf-inf meeting under its leadership, stating that it was very constructive, and that there had been some kind of grave misunderstanding on the matter of the second inf-inf proposed.

Co-facilitator **Rakestraw** took note of the concerns over the inf-inf which had also been raised with the SBI Chair and encouraged Parties to resolve misunderstandings amongst themselves.

The CTF issue is expected to be discussed further in Glasgow in November this year.

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