

Parties exchange views on common time frames for NDCs

Kathmandu, 3 June (Perna Bomzan): The first informal consultation on common time frames (CTFs) for nationally determined contributions (NDCs), was conducted on 1 June, under the UNFCCC's Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI). The Subsidiary Bodies are meeting virtually from 31 May to 17 June.

[Under Article 4(10) of the Paris Agreement (PA), Parties agreed to consider CTFs for NDCs. Most Parties have communicated their first NDCs with a ten-year time frame from 2021 to 2030, with only the Marshall Islands with a five-year time frame up to 2025. At the 24th meeting of the UNFCCC's Conference of Parties (COP 24) in Poland in 2018, Parties agreed to apply common time frames to NDCs to be implemented from 2031 onwards].

Parties could not agree to conclusions at the 51st session of the SBI, held in conjunction with COP 25 in Madrid in 2019, and hence 'Rule 16' was applied. [Rule 16 refers to the UNFCCC Rules of Procedure, where if an item on the agenda of a session's consideration has not been completed at the session, it shall be included automatically in the agenda of the next session].

The SBI Chair provided an informal note dated 29 May to assist Parties. The note informs that the proposals contained in the annex of the note are from SBI 50 (Bonn, June 2019) as Parties were "unable to agree conclusions" at SBI 51. The annex contains "six options" with "possible elements of a draft decision". The note further states that "a key first step in 2021 is for Parties to consolidate the many options proposed" and its aim is to "facilitate this process by laying the foundation for a solution by setting out all the existing options".

The informal note also presents "possible elements in consolidating the options" as follows: "The

elements below are without prejudice to the structure or elements of any draft conclusions or draft decision or to the placement of any provision within that structure.

1. NDCs referred to in Article 4(10), of the PA and communicated in accordance with Article 4 (9), to be communicated from 2025 and every five years thereafter shall/will/should/may have common time frames of:

(a) Five years;

(b) Five years plus five years;

For NDCs to be implemented from 2031 onward, Parties shall/will/should/may communicate two successive NDCs with starting points of 1 January 2031 and 1 January 2036, respectively

(c) 10 years;

Parties whose NDCs to be implemented from 2031 onward contain a 10-year time frame shall/will/should/may include an indicative [waypoint] [target] at the five-year mark or shall/will/should/may update their NDCs five years after they were communicated so that their NDCs can be informed by the latest global stocktake

(d) 5 or 10 years.

Parties may choose either a 5- or a 10-year time frame for their NDCs".

Facilitator **Kishan Kumarsingh (Trinidad and Tobago)** opened the informal consultation clearly stating "we know what the options are and each other's positions" expecting that the current session would conclude with at least an agreement of a minimum set of options articulated in clear and unambiguous terms for Glasgow (COP 26).

Kumarsingh expressed that his engagement on the issue with Parties until now has shown a willingness to resolve it in Glasgow and his co-facilitator **Andrew Rakestraw (United States)** also shared his optimism.

China for the **Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDC)** shared its strong concern about the “imbalanced approach” in Madrid at COP 25 which was adopted a “pick and choose” approach which did not include the group’s options in the final version of the informal note. It sought clarification on why the imbalanced Madrid informal note was published by the secretariat on the UNFCCC website given application of Rule 16 and that therefore, the document had no status.

(In response, the secretariat explained that the informal notes were in-session documents and that the CTF agenda in Madrid did not have any conclusions).

On the linkages between the CTF and other aspects of the PA, China said that the NDC communication is done every five years while the global stocktake (GST) is carried out every 5 years. It also pointed out that there is nothing that says that a 5-year time frame is more ambitious than a 10-year one.

Referring to the current updating of NDCs, it said that there are NDCs which have been improved (from when they were first submitted). It reiterated its position that both 5 and 10-year time frames will definitely enable ambition with the key issue being the implementation of NDCs rather than about the timeframes. It also stressed the need to take into account the different national circumstances and domestic policy timeframes of countries, adding that developing countries have just started implementing their NDCs and they will gain more confidence as they learn by doing.

It said that the LMDC’s proposal of having the option of a 5-year or 10-year time frame works for all Parties and borrows from the PA decision to accommodate the different national circumstances. It also pointed out that the PA refers to common time frames and not a common time frame. The logic for its proposal was to set up what Parties needed to do in 2025 and was appropriate for all countries.

China also underlined that it preferred the previous version of the informal note from Bonn, 2019 as a starting point for discussions with the condition that all views of Parties must be captured. It expressed its expectation of a “balanced, comprehensive outcome with no pick and choose approach” at the current session.

Switzerland for the **Environmental Integrity Group (EIG)** said that the 5-year term is the only option, thus going with option A in the SBI Chair’s informal note. It also urged for drafting a decision text as clearly and unambiguously as possible, stating that it is fully committed to reaching a decision in Glasgow.

Panama for the **Independent Alliance of Latin America and the Caribbean (AILAC)** hoped to complete negotiations on the issue in Glasgow with a decision that is coherent and strengthens ambition. It stated that the CTF is necessary to implement the “ambition mechanism” and drew functional connections to the 5-year NDC communication cycle with progression, as well as the GST.

Bangladesh for the **Least Developed Countries (LDCs)** called for a single 5-year time frame starting from Jan 2031 onwards to avoid locking in low ambition and stressed on building common understanding as regards implications of single versus multiple time frames, with the latter leading to different target years. It was concerned about the lack of consistency, comparability and transparency of NDCs with different time frames.

Zimbabwe for the **African Group** reiterated its position for a 5-year CTF that is ideal for environmental integrity and ambition. Given that other Parties are also calling for a 10-year time frame, it stated that the group could be flexible for a 5+5 years’ time frame and looked forward to a decision in Glasgow.

Saudi Arabia for the **Arab Group** said that a 10-year time frame is the most suitable option, with NDC communication in 2025 for the period 2030 until 2040, and with future time frames to be assessed “based upon learning”. It also highlighted that each NDC represents the unique national circumstances of countries and alignment with domestic planning, as well as reflecting the common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC) principle of the

PA. Hence, the decision on the issue should be inclusive, taking into account differences among Parties.

Singapore for the **Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)** expected a substantive outcome at COP 26 with a decision to ramp up ambition. It said that the group saw redundancy in some of the options proposed. In its national capacity, it agreed to “consolidating the six options into a single one” and echoed Brazil’s comment on having clarity on start/end reference points of NDCs.

India said that CTF does not equal to one common time frame, adding that there can be more than one option which can help everyone. It said further that the CTF is also linked to the availability of climate finance and technology transfer, which also needs to be taken into account. The availability of climate finance will help to assess the prospective NDC formulation and its achievability. Hence, a breakthrough in the climate finance decision is equally important for the CTF agenda.

Brazil, referring to the SBI Chair’s informal note said that it was ready to engage with the elements in consolidating the options. It pointed out that options in the annex of the note did not reflect the “current” status, referring to the decision adopted in Poland where Parties agreed to apply CTF from 2031. It underscored that the decision in Glasgow should provide clarification on the year to communicate successive round of NDCs, as well as the end point of the NDCs, clarifying that for Brazil, the next communication will be in 2025 and the end point will be 2035.

South Africa called for a decision on the issue, stating its preference for a 5-year time frame.

Russia called for a 10-year time frame as this was adequate time for sustainable development and low-carbon strategies, stressing that NDCs are nationally determined; so national features and peculiarities needs to be taken into account.

The **United States** said that the informal note contained potential building blocks and suggested for “textual options” based on it, including other inputs reflecting Parties’ views. It hoped to see an outcome that recognises the nationally determined nature of NDCs and further stated that a 5-year time frame gives the option for ambitious NDCs.

Japan made specific comments on the 10-year option (option c) with regard to bracketing the ‘waypoint’ and ‘target’ calling for a simple 10-year option (just like an option a for 5 years) as a sub-option under option c. It also suggested adding elements of start/end points of NDCs in the 10-year option.

The **European Union** said that the CTF is part of the PA ‘ambition cycle’ so as to put in place the highest possible ambition by Parties. It looked forward to exploring the options saying that the informal note provides a good basis for continued discussions, and at COP 26, the options could be whether merged or combined for highest ambition, including accommodating different domestic capacities.

Australia said that there is need to focus on consolidating the options, in order to make the political resolution to take place and to have a decision well in advance of next NDC submission. Although it preferred the 5-year option, it also recognised the nationally determined nature of NDCs.

Facilitator **Kumarsingh (Trinidad and Tobago)** in his sum up, recollected that there was general agreement that a decision on the issue in Glasgow is required. He also highlighted the need for clarification in terms of the year of communication of NDCs and the end point/date of NDCs. He encouraged Parties to further meet informally in “inf-inf” mode via the ‘self-service meetings’ menu made available online and further requested **Brazil** to lead the technical discussion in those inf-inf meetings.

The next informal consultation is scheduled on 10 June at 11:00 pm (Central European Summer Time).

Edited by Meena Raman

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