

## Developing countries convey difficulties faced in virtual meetings

Penang, 7 June (Meena Raman) – Developing countries at the climate talks held under the UNFCCC's Subsidiary Bodies (SBs) to take stock of the first week's meetings, conveyed the challenges they faced with the virtual format. The stock-take session was held on Saturday, 5 June.

The **G77/China**, as well as some of its sub-groups of developing countries, highlighted challenges dealing with internet connectivity, poor audio, power-cuts, as well as different time-zones and other problems in capitals, that hampered their effective participation and engagement.

The stock-take session of the SB sessions was conducted in joint plenary by **Marianne Karlsen (Norway)**, who is Chair of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and **Tosi Mpanu Mpanu (Democratic Republic of Congo)**, who is Chair of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA). The SBs began meeting on 31 May, which will end on 17 June.

**Guinea** speaking on behalf of the **G77/China** said that the past week experiment using virtual means, while allowing Parties to continue discussions on issues, has also exposed the challenges such as internet connectivity and technological problems. This, in addition to working with different timezones, posed difficulties and heightened the inequalities in Parties' level of participation and engagement.

The G77 said that the conclusion was clear that in-person meetings and negotiations are indispensable to credible and legitimate decision-making, that is based on transparent, inclusive, and Party-driven processes, and called for the current limitations to be addressed to comprehensively enable this.

**Bolivia** for the **Like-minded developing countries (LMDC)** said that the concerns it had with the virtual talks were justified, adding that key members of its delegations were logged out of sessions at critical moments, thus losing the thread of the discussions. They also encountered power cuts in their parts of the world, which prevented them from being able to engage and witness the discussions that were going on. It also added that it was not easy to understand some of the Parties, given the poor quality of the audio on important agenda items and some countries were not able to engage due to connectivity issues, and were therefore not heard.

It also said that many of delegations were also having to attend to pressing challenges at home, including that of the pandemic, that has not abated in many countries. Checking the box of having met - albeit virtually - is not the same as in person constructive engagement on pending issues under the SBs, said the LMDC further, adding that this goes to show that this virtual process is not ideal for a process that must be party-driven.

The **Least developed countries (LDCs)** also highlighted challenges of connectivity, saying that it was a significant barrier for engagement, where its lead negotiators had to communicate via the chat function and emails to get their views through during the consultations.

**India** for the **BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India and China)** also said that delegates continued to experience technical glitches which resulted in missing out on key discussions. It also said that technical level discussions via virtual platforms was challenging, and that decision-making was not conducive through such means.

Concerns were also expressed over the conduct of the consultations and included how informal notes

were prepared even before Parties had a chance to begin discussions as was the case on the Adaptation Fund (AF) review, which prejudiced the outcome; and informal notes that did not capture the views of all Parties as was the case in the Article 6 discussions (of the Paris Agreement relating to ‘cooperative approaches’). They also gave their views on the substance of the discussions on various matters. (See further details below).

The **G77** said that as regards National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), there seemed to be some disconnect between what is being planned and implementation on the ground. The discussion should be elevated to bridge the gap between the full continuum of adaptation actions and reliable financing for adaptation implementation. It added further that NAPs are connected to the nationally determined contributions (NDCs), adaptation communications and long-term sustainable development strategies. It said that the UNFCCC processes should enable the building of strong synergies between the various adaptation-related items under the Convention and its Paris Agreement (PA). It also underscored that challenges remain in accessing Green Climate Fund (GCF) support for NAPs, due to a myriad of complexities surrounding the GCF NAP Readiness Support Programme.

On the review of the AF, it called for the process to be inclusive and party-driven. The results of these SB session should capture all the views expressed in an informal manner which will serve as basis for further sessions, said the G77. It requested the co-facilitators to use the next session as an opportunity to get the various proponents of the submissions to provide clarity, which would allow all Parties to have a better understanding of positions.

On technology transfer, it said that all Parties were actively engaged in expressing their views regarding the ‘Alignment between the Independent Review of Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN) and the Periodic Assessment of the Technology Mechanism’ and agreed that the alignment was essential to make the processes more efficient and effective. It also reiterated the long-term vision in fully realizing technology development and transfer in order to improve resilience to climate change and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs), and urged for the provision of adequate support, including finance, to enable developing countries Parties to implement their NDCs.

On capacity building, the G77 welcomed the successful hosting of the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Durban Forum on capacity-building focusing on building capacity to facilitate the coherent implementation of NDCs, in the context of national development plans. It called for the outcomes of this event to contribute significantly to inputs of the report of the Paris Committee on Capacity Building (PCCB), taking into account challenges faced in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic.

On response measures (as regards the effects of measures taken to respond to climate change), the G77 expressed that only one meeting of the Katowice Committee of Experts (KCI) took place in 2020, despite two meetings being required and the activities under the workplan were not fully implemented. It called for the time lost to be made up to ensure that the work plan is fully implemented and for an additional meeting of the KCI to take place.

As regards loss and damage, the G77 said that it would be useful to have space during this session for an informal conversation among Parties about the modalities for the operationalization of the Santiago Network, while noting that the COP Presidencies already have an initiative taking place in this regard. Such a meeting could help clarify views and can be convened under the auspices of the Presidency of COP 25 (25<sup>th</sup> meeting of the UNFCCC’s Conference of Parties) given that this issue was not on the agenda of the SBs at this session, it added further.

**Bolivia** for the **LMDC** said that despite the claim that the SB sessions are solely for the purpose of discussions and compilation of ideas, there was always a veiled reference to go beyond discussions and to aim at negotiated outcomes.

On the issue of the fourth review of the AF, it expressed concerns that the first informal note prepared by the SBI Chair prior to the start of informal consultations was premature, jeopardizing trust and putting into question the inclusiveness, transparency, and Party-driven nature of the process. It reiterated the need for the SB Chairs to be more mindful about rushing to produce conclusions at this session, when this process is about capturing the views of all Parties and nothing more.

It also said that there should not be any text and material presented on the screen before discussion

and overall acceptance is established, adding that the conversation is being prejudged and pre-empted by posting documents on the screen and on the website. It was also against the holding of ‘informal-informal’ sessions which it said were not acceptable given the current working environment. (An informal-informal session was convened on the issue of the common time-frames for NDCs).

As regards consultations on Article 6 of the PA on ‘cooperative approaches’, it said that the SBSTA Chair’s summary of the informal consultations held on June 4, were clearly attempting to move forward some options while excluding others, while stating that the document did not attempt to provide a record of all views. On response measures, the LMDC also stressed the importance of ensuring the full implementation of the 6-year workplan.

As regards adaptation, it said that developing countries are struggling to get funding to formulate their NAPs as well as for their implementation. It was said that an opportunity was lost at this session to discuss key areas on the adaptation architecture such as the global goal on adaptation and hoped in following sessions, this would be advanced.

**Saudi Arabia**, speaking for the **Arab Group** expressed strong concerns on procedural matters, adding that in many sessions, text and tables were presented on the screen without having a general agreement by Parties to display such material. Such display of text and tables is pre-empting and prejudging the conversations and limit conversations to specific views expressed in these materials, it said further, adding that this was the case in the session on ‘Common Tabular Formats for tracking progress of NDCs’ which resulted in a number of calls for ‘points of order’.

It also said that not all interventions and contributions were reflected in the discussions and that selective views were treated favorably, which was the case in the session pertaining ‘Enabling Ambition in Article 6 Instruments’. It added further that in many sessions, they were tendencies to go beyond the allocated time for the sessions, which posed challenges for Parties who needed to attend to other planned sessions, which was particularly difficult for small delegations.

It expressed concerns with informal-informal meetings outside the agreed organization of work, that led to a bad experience with discussions on common time-frames for NDCs, which was

organised very last minute without the consent of Parties. On the informal-informal meeting itself on this issue, the Arab Group said that it was mishandled and was not in line with inclusivity and Party driven process principles, where the facilitator was controlling giving the floor to Parties, ignoring calls for the floor altogether, and totally dismissed views expressed by Parties. The Arab Group said that the (informal-informal session) facilitator took matters into his own hands and decided to convene another session that is limited to 30 participants and by invitation only. This is objectionable, unacceptable and was not tolerable in the conduct of business, it stressed further.

**Gabon** for the **African Group** said that on the transparency framework, there was a lack of balance in how examples were presented by the co-facilitators and added that while there were very detailed examples of common reporting tables (CRTs) for GHG inventories presented, there were no detailed examples of CRFs for support and tracking progress presented for discussions. It said that beyond the level detail, the comparability of the information reported by Parties should be an essential parameter of the new reporting table, to ensure that the figures can be aggregated to inform ongoing discussions, such as the new collective goal on finance or the global stocktake.

On process, the African Group said it had shared concerns on the process following the publication of an informal note prior to any form of consultations, in reference to the AF review. It stressed the importance of respecting the integrity of the process by following the UNFCCC rules and established practices. On the review of the AF, it was concerned with attempts to redefine already agreed decisions in a way that complicates work.

It also called upon the SBs Chairs and co-facilitators to organize their work in a manner that adheres to the mandates of the SBs, with equal and balanced consideration of all issues and avoid reinterpreting or singling out mandates and added that the informal notes summarizing discussions should be inclusive of all views expressed.

**Antigua and Barbuda** for the **Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)** said that virtual engagement has challenges. It said that there were procedural debates in the transparency framework discussions, and little movement on Article 6 of the PA, and called for a better picture of progress,

captured in writing, as there was no luxury of time to complete work, given the planetary emergency.

**Bhutan** for the **Least Developed Countries (LDCs)** noted with concerns that the virtual format is slowing progress, with technical glitches taking up valuable time. It believed that the informal notes were critical to capture progress, consolidating all options, while ensuring all views are captured. It reminded the Chairs that it had called attention to addressing loss and damage and gender, which were not being considered in the SBs. It also said that connectivity was a significant barrier for LDCs, with lead negotiators having to send suggestions by chat and emails. It also stressed the need for translation in mandated events.

**India** for the **BASIC** said that there were significant differences in the approach of co-facilitators across various agenda items, adding that the current session should be used for informal exchanges among Parties and should not pre-empt decision-making. It stressed that virtual platforms are not conducive for decision-making and that principles of transparency, inclusive and party-driven nature must be upheld. India said that the Chairs must ensure that all views of Parties are captured in balanced manner. It also called for more discussions on scaling up adaptation finance and other climate finance matters and reiterated the need for balanced treatment of all agenda items.

**Paraguay** speaking for the **Independent Alliance of Latin America and the Caribbean (AILAC)** said that connectivity issues were a clear challenge. On the transparency framework, it said that the different options must be narrowed down, and that the new reporting requirements will need financial support. It said that it was willing to have agreement on having draft decisions for consideration.

**Argentina** for **Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay (ABU)** expected discussions to be captured in informal notes but not in terms of drafting decisions. Issues should be dealt without prejudging outcomes, it said further, and expressed concerns at the lack of treatment given for adaptation finance. It also said that there is need to avoid having informal-informal meetings. It also said that the search for highest possible ambition must come from NDCs rather than from market mechanisms. It also expressed high expectations that the AF will have more resources from the Article 6 mechanisms. On the review of AF, the focus should be on the terms of reference, it said, and expressed serious

concerns about discussing issues about governance which was outside the scope of the review. It also wanted a common definition and accounting modality on climate finance.

**Portugal** for the **European Union (EU)** said that virtual work has limitations, but substantive work must progress to develop and strengthen guidance for the implementation of the PA implementation. To arrive at Glasgow for COP 26, the EU remained supportive of the work and called for ensuring the rules of procedure and practices to be applied consistently in all processes. It said that there was need for efficiency in the work including on the use of informal-informal sessions and to capture work through informal notes.

**Australia** for the **Umbrella Group** said that on adaptation-related items, it welcomed focus on enhancing practical and effective adaptation actions for SIDS and LDCs, as well as focus on social inclusion like gender and indigenous peoples. On climate finance, it welcomed technical work on transparency of support, review of the AF, and technical support for reporting obligations. On the transparency framework, it called for progress and acceleration technical work.

**Switzerland** for the **Environmental Integrity Group (EIG)** noted technical difficulties in the virtual platform. It said Parties could learn from processes under the Convention on Biological Diversity. It supported informal-informal meetings and for any material to be discussed to be uploaded before any meeting. It said that the consultations should be used for substantive discussions rather than on useless procedural debates. It stressed the need to progress towards decisions at this session with concrete work on texts.

Week two of the SB sessions begins today, 7 June.

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