

Stormy start over developed country mitigation

Bonn, 11 June (Alejandro Raza) – The first informal consultations on the “Work programme on clarification of quantified economy-wide emission reduction targets of developed country Parties” experienced a stormy start, with developing countries concerned that the proposed areas of work did not adequately reflect the mandate in the Doha decision.

The G77 and China emphasized that “a failure to ensure the comparability of efforts among developed countries would send significant negative signals to future work on mitigation.”

The meeting took place on 8 June as part of the agenda of the ongoing 38th session of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice. The work programme that is mandated by Decision 1/CP.18, adopted in Doha, is a crucial component of the outcome of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long Term Cooperative Action under the Convention.

At the 8 June informal meeting the **co-chairs, Ms. Karine Hetzberg** (Norway) and **Mr. Biran Matlana** (South Africa), presented a proposed overview of areas of work clustered as to how much further work was remaining. They included elements such as gases, sectors, and global warming potential values (GWPs) in one-cluster, LULUCF (land use, land-use change and forestry) and market units in another cluster and base-years and emission reductions in a third.

Developing countries were very concerned that the co-chairs’ proposal did not reflect the full mandate of the Doha decision; particularly that it excluded the issue of ‘comparability’ of efforts among developed countries contained in paragraph 8(b) of the Doha decision.

This resulted in G77 and China consulting before the conclusion of the session and proposing that equal time must be given to both

paragraphs 8 (a) and 8 (b) at all sessions of SBSTA.

Developed countries were generally supportive of focusing on technical elements in the co-chair’s first cluster and to consider how to ‘interface’ with work on LULUCF and market-units. Switzerland did express interest in discussion of paragraph 8 (b).

(The Doha decision in paragraph 7 “*Urges* developed country Parties to increase the ambition of their QERTS [quantified economy-wide emission reduction targets], with a view to reducing their aggregate anthropogenic emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases not controlled by the Montreal Protocol to a level consistent with the ranges documented in the Fourth Assessment Report of the IPCC and subsequent Assessment Reports.”

Paragraph 8 establishes “a work programme under the SBSTA to continue the process of clarifying the QERTS of developed country Parties, particularly in relation to the elements contained in decision 2/CP.17, paragraph 5, with a view to:

- (a) Identifying common elements for measuring the progress made towards the achievement of the quantified economy-wide emission reduction targets;
- (b) Ensuring the comparability of efforts among developed country Parties, taking into account differences in their national circumstances; ...”)

China on behalf of the G77 and China said the Group believed that to ensure the comparability of efforts, sufficient and appropriate common elements for accounting were needed for the developed countries, while the level of ambition on mitigation was another key element for comparability. Thus, it said, this two-year work program should result in setting

common accounting rules for developed country Parties, and should raise the level of ambition of single-year targets for 2020 such that they are comparable to those under the Kyoto Protocol [including via participation in a 2014 review].

It saw four main aspects of this work: developed country Parties clarifying and submitting information related to their QERTs; developed country Parties clarifying the approach that is used to measure the progress; identifying what common elements were needed for measuring progress, while ensuring comparability of efforts among developed country Parties; and identifying elements for assessing comparability.

It said that commonalities could be identified on base year, GWP values, coverage of gases and sectors. It also saw the importance of discussion of accounting rules related to the LULUCF sector in developed countries, as well as their accounting framework for international carbon credits. However, it noted that relevant work was being conducted under other bodies and items, and thus, said it was important to harmonize with this work. It called for the common elements to be reflected in the next update of the technical paper, as well as a comparative analysis of the conditions and assumptions related to developed country pledges.

The Group concluded that a failure to identify common elements for measuring progress towards the developed country Parties' mitigation targets, or a failure to ensure the comparability of efforts among them, would send significant negative signals to future work on mitigation wherever it took place, and would cause damage to the transparency and confidence among Parties.

South Africa associated with G77 and posed three questions: how the matter of “associated assumptions and conditions” (as included in paragraph 5 of 2/CP.17) would be treated; how the issue of ensuring comparability of efforts [as included in paragraph 8 (b) of 1/CP.18] would be addressed; and on how the co-chairs had grouped the issues as it did not understand why base year and expected emission reductions was in another cluster.

The co-chair said the omission of “ambition” issues was “done deliberately” as the intention was to focus the work on “commonalities and low-hanging fruit” in order to find progress. Similarly the omission of issues relating to

comparability [8(b)] was to suggest they would be undertaken later on. He said base year and expected reductions were placed separately due to “sequencing.”

South Africa clarified it was not raising “ambition” but “associated conditions and assumptions” and called for them to be laid out in a technical paper.

Marshall Islands said it wished to make the fastest possible progress, which might be achieved from moving from the easiest to the hardest issues according to the mandate. It said that the element of ‘expected emission reductions’ was also a part of (b) (comparability).

China asked what the expected outcome was of each of the clusters. It asked if, for example, Parties were going to set a rule that all Annex 1 Parties use the same GWP and gases, or were they going to identify “who has what”?

The co-chair said they were not “setting rules” but looking at “commonalities of approach” to understand the reasons behind differences.

The **EU** said the special event (“Event on quantified economy-wide emission reduction targets by developed country Parties” held on 6 June) was useful in laying down the key elements of the substance to work on and that it hoped there would be a similar workshop on appropriate actions from developing countries. It said it was happy to go by the clusters proposed by the chairs. It agreed with South Africa that the assumptions were also important. It also flagged the format of discussion on LULUCF and markets as they are dealt with elsewhere.

The co-chair said that the other work on LULUCF and market-based mechanisms would be completed at COP 19 (later this year in Warsaw) so Parties should consider how to bring that into this agenda item.

Switzerland said their preferred ‘theme’ would be the assumptions related to emission reductions of the targets, as that makes a huge difference, particularly if the pledge is for a ‘single-year’ or a budget. It proposed that this could be a theme for a focused technical discussion in Warsaw. It said the first cluster already had a great deal of convergence. It said it was looking forward to discussions on comparability.

China said that the outcomes for the first cluster should have a conclusion, at least where all

Parties took a similar approach. It said “conditions” should be added to a cluster.

Marshall Islands said it understood why LULUCF and markets were together but consider that they needed to be discussed separately.

The co-chair clarified that they would not be discussed together but were just placed there logically.

New Zealand said that the purpose was not accounting but comparability so elements could be common but treated differently. It agreed with the structure and also noted LULUCF and market-units were being discussed elsewhere.

Australia said it was looking forward to progress on its ‘sister programme’ on NAMAs (nationally appropriate mitigation actions by developing countries). It said it saw a clear link between paragraph (a) (elements) and (b) (comparability) and proposed three steps: what – define what a pledge is and what it looks like; how – how each Party was approaching each element of the pledge; and address the implications from the different approaches. This approach would encourage Parties that have not provided information to do so.

South Africa asked how to capture things as “we go along.” It recognized that the technical paper would be updated but it didn’t want to arrive at COP 20 and say, “what happened in the last 2 years?” It said it was necessary to capture progress along the way, and so, if there was common practice on GWPS, “we should write that down.”

The co-chair said the outcome on the work programme would be considered at COP 20 and there was a lot of work to get into technical understanding before outcomes could be considered. She asked how do we move further in this meeting and called for specific suggestions on further work in terms of submissions/technical briefings. She proposed moving shortly to the ‘first cluster’ of issues.

The United States said Parties should start by doing their “homework” and read the technical paper and then think about what is still needed. It said that if Parties provided information on all the elements listed in paragraph 5 then there would be comparability, so (a) “elements”, and (b) “comparability” were linked. It liked Australia’s question of what the implications of

this were and suggested some sort of interface with other agenda items dealing with LULUCF and market units.

Japan called for more focused, technical and expert meetings.

China asked for more clarification on the timing and arrangements over the two years, noting it had been said that comparability could be discussed ‘later’ but what does “later” mean.

The co-chair suggested that to avoid the duplication of work Parties could wait until after COP 19 to see the results of work on LULUCF and market units. She said that the overview was only a suggestion. She said further that there seemed to be different perceptions on comparability with some Parties saying by looking at the elements you would get something comparable while others were placing more emphasis on “one element over another.” She suggested that Parties focus on the first steps of this year and then there would be a better picture of the total work to determine useful next steps. She said it would be difficult for us to outline the entire work programme out to COP 20.

Norway supported moving forward with clearly technical issues, and to discuss more complicated issues later.

The Republic of Korea suggested that the “base year” could be included in the first cluster and emission reductions in the second. It suggested ‘begin easy’ and work toward more “politically charged” issues such as conditions.

Brazil said the linkage of credits was a “chicken and egg” problem but the central element was expected mission reductions and how LULUCF and market mechanisms fit with strong reductions.

The co-chair said getting more complete or in-depth information from what Parties have put into their pledges was quite a complicated issue.

The EU suggested the facilitators of LULUCF and “various approaches” come and give a “state of play” update. It emphasized that this agenda item was not to discuss rules but to understand contributions. It supported focusing on “elements” first but wanted to understand the format of discussions.

South Africa said it needed comfort regarding the structure of the whole work programme. It accepted there were different views on

comparability but rejected the US suggestion that addressing the elements will “ensure comparability” as it is a separate sub-paragraph. Thus, it said, the work programme had to ensure it was dealt with by the 40th session of the SBSTA (in June 2014). It suggested a technical workshop on LULUCF issues in Warsaw. It said it was important to clarify the modalities of updating the technical paper, which is to be updated annually, so that it includes what parties want to see. It suggested that assumptions should be analyzed.

The co-chair concluded that Parties wished to go through “easy elements” first, and to look at these in a structured way. She noted that new reporting guidelines for inventories would be in place from 2015. She said a lot of Parties had expressed value in reviewing the technical paper and contributing to future iterations, as well as to allowing for presentations from other agenda items. She said there had been a call for focused work on LULUCF, and on assumptions and conditions. She asked for clarification if Parties thought submissions were a useful way forward and expected feedback on the timeline to be proposed.

The Philippines said it was not clear when the group would address paragraph 8 (b) (comparability) and called for more clarity on when and how it would be achieved up to COP 20.

The co-chair said they would put together an overview bullet point of all the items to be discussed but noted there were different perceptions on what comparability meant.

Kenya said it felt strongly that Annex 1 Parties needed to provide more information and that it wanted a discussion on assumptions and conditions.

New Zealand said inputs should include submissions, the technical paper, and ongoing discussions. Outputs should include a better understanding of what each is doing. In terms of timing it proposed a cautious approach.

China supported the co-chairs to come up with a draft-time line that included time to discuss comparability, which Parties could engage with.

Switzerland reiterated it was looking forward to discussing comparability.

Kenya called for submissions on methodologies and on the difference of single-year vs. multiple-year targets.

The Philippines sought further clarification on when paragraph 8(b) would be addressed as it felt it was “equally important in terms of urgency as the low hanging fruit.”

The co-chair said they had not fixed a clear timeline but would try and put together something that facilitates a more focused discussion.

The Philippines again called for more clarification on “when” 8 (b) would be discussed.

At that point the session paused to allow G77 and China to consult. Upon returning **China, on behalf of G77 and China**, said it proposed that paragraphs 8(a) and 8 (b) should be dealt with equally in each session. They clarified that this meant in every SBSTA session.

Marshall Islands noted that not “all the issues in the mandate” were present in the co-chairs proposal and so called for a schematic that gave an overview of all of the issues mandated to the work programme.

The co-chair concluded that they were keen to be loyal to the mandate and had not “forgotten” the issues but had left them out “to get momentum.” She said they would note the importance of issues that were a part of the mandate but weren’t reflected and would provide bullet points outlining other elements before the next session.

A one-page note by the co-chairs is now available in which they “capture the discussion” the informal consultations in bullet points: http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/bonn_jun_2013/in-session/application/pdf/sbsta38_i14_10jun2013_t1000_cn.pdf