

Historical responsibility for climate change must not be forgotten- say developing countries

Bonn, 3 May 2018, (Perna Bomzan) – Several developing countries who spoke at the opening of the ‘Talanoa Dialogue’ (TD) held on 2 May, under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), reminded Parties that a missing question at the dialogue that deals with the historical responsibility of developed countries for climate change was “how did we get here?”

They were responding to the three questions posed at the dialogue viz. “where are we; where do we want to go and how do we get there.” Developing country groupings including the **Like-minded Developing Countries (LMDC)**, the **Arab Group** as well as **India** stressed that the ‘how did we get here’ question was an important one.

The **LMDC** said that as in history, all stories start with “once upon a time” and that the history of climate change starts with the middle of the nineteenth century with the industrial revolution in developed countries that generated much of the historical emissions responsible for global warming.

The TD was chaired by the **Ambassador Luke Daunivalu** from Fiji, representing the Presidency of the 23rd session of the Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC (COP 23) and

Special Envoy for Climate Change of Poland, **Tomasz Chruszczow** representing the upcoming COP 24 Polish Presidency. The TD kicked off in Bonn, Germany at the UNFCCC’s intersession talks.

(In Paris in 2015, Parties had agreed to “convene a facilitative dialogue ...in 2018 to take stock of the collective efforts of Parties in relation to

progress towards the long-term goal referred to ...in the Agreement and to inform the preparation of nationally determined contributions (NDCs)...”. The COP 23 Fijian Presidency introduced the Pacific island concept of ‘Talanoa’ to the facilitative dialogue to reflect the ‘Pacific spirit’ of “story-telling, problem solving and decision-making for the collective good.”)

In opening the dialogue, **Daunivalu** stressed that the process is a “constructive one” that is “facilitative” and “solutions-oriented,” adding that “it is not confrontational but more of a space where we can come together to look for common solutions to the common challenges we all face and that groups of Parties are not to be singled out”. He encouraged Parties to “share the stories from your own standpoints and to talk about what is happening within your own countries or constituencies and become an inspiration for others to increase ambition.”

(According to sources who spoke to TWNN, the COP 23 Presidency asked the LMDC to remove some text from their submissions, on the grounds that they were singling out some Parties, but the group could not agree and did not want its submission “censored.”)

Ambassador Wael Aboulmagd of **Egypt**, speaking on behalf of the **G77 and China** hoped that the dialogue “will be fruitful, effective and inclusive.” He said G77 wanted clarity particularly on the nature of the outcomes of the process as well as other organisational matters which he hoped “would ensure a balanced narrative coming out of the process and reflective of all perspectives”.

The G77 Chair stressed further that there needs to be a common understanding of where Parties collectively are with regards to the PA's long-term goals as well as what opportunities exist to actually achieve those long-term goals. "We hope we can approach the process in a comprehensive and holistic manner. The mitigation target is extremely important but equal consideration should be given to the full gamut of issues namely mitigation, adaptation and the means of implementation," he added further.

On the question of where we are, the G77 believed that international cooperation among all Parties to address climate change has achieved positive outcomes yet significant gaps still remain in relation to mitigation, adaptation, finance, technology transfer and capacity building especially for developing countries.

On the question of where we want to go, that G77 Chair said that "we need to work hard to achieve the medium and long-term goals set by the Convention and its related Agreements, while fully upholding its principles of equity, common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities in light of different national circumstances and promoting the coordination of combating climate change with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030."

On the question of how we get there, the G77 believed that "the key to achieving these goals is to find a feasible path for green and low carbon development and to effectively integrate economic development with environmental protection and strengthen international cooperation."

The Egyptian ambassador underscored that "the process should nurture openness, inclusiveness and trust building among Party and non-Party stakeholders to be able to confront the harsh reality of climate change and its impacts and the format of the dialogue should not be prescriptive and all Parties should be allowed to share their stories in a manner they deem most constructive" and that "all voices should be captured".

Iran on behalf of the **LMDC** stated that it looked forward to a "dialogue rather than a monologue" and that "the spirit is not to blame anyone but also not to shy away from realities either." The LMDC stressed that the three questions of the dialogue bring us to the collective destination but the missing question of "how did we get here is equally important". Iran further said that as in history, all stories start with "once upon a time" and that the

history of climate change starts with the middle of the nineteenth century, referring to the industrial revolution (when much of the historical emissions were generated). It hoped that the dialogue's facilitative nature can be "demonstrated in realities" and "not just in formalities".

Saudi Arabia on behalf of the **Arab Group** also raised the missing question of "how did we get here" referring to the historical responsibility of climate change. It said that the TD is taking place outside of the negotiations in the spirit of constructive story-telling and it must take into account the different problems and impacts depending on "where we are in the planet". It underscored that it is simple to understand and "learn from historical mistakes" and avoid them for the future in order that history does not repeat itself. It reiterated that the outcome of the dialogue "must capture all stories and not one story is left behind," adding that there should not be dominance of one story from the others or other groups' perspectives. It said that Parties have ratified the Paris Agreement in good faith and that the dialogue would help Parties to focus on what they have promised to do and how to operationalise the Agreement.

Gabon on behalf of the **Africa Group** said that although Africa has almost insignificant contributions to the current levels of greenhouse gas emissions and being the most affected continent by the adverse effects of climate change, nonetheless, African countries have been doing a lot not only on the adaptation front but also on the mitigation front with a lot resources coming from their national budgets. It said "predictable finance, technology transfer are main catalysts and cornerstones to fulfill our vision that is reflected in the Paris Agreement, the vision that aims at enhancing ambition for all, acknowledging the specificities of the African countries and their national circumstances and capacities". It further said that it expects "an outcome that reflects the views of all", an outcome that would be endorsed by all, an outcome that reflects the balance between mitigation, adaptation and means of implementation, an outcome that would enhance international cooperation".

Ethiopia speaking for the **Least Developed Countries (LDCs)** referred to the special report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on 1.5°C being published in October this year, as a critical source of information for the dialogue and that a "formal

space” is needed for its findings to feed into the final stages of the dialogue during COP 24. It further said “the outcomes of the dialogue must ultimately lead to a significant increase in emissions reductions by all countries to put us on track to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5°C. For this, COP 24 should result in a clear political commitment by Parties to take into consideration the results of the TD when communicating their NDCs by 2020”.

Maldives on behalf of the **Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)** said that “our work should not only encourage increased mitigation actions but support for them in developing countries through the provision of adequate and predictable means of implementation”.

India said that the dialogue was a very important platform to ensure enhancement of pre-2020 actions. It said that the stories of many developing countries begins with the cost they pay for climate change due to the “historical accumulation” of greenhouse gas emissions. It also underscored that the question of “how did we get here” is central and pertains to planning for the future with various aspirations like the achievement of SDGs, poverty eradication and ensuring energy for all in its country. “Therefore, goals and ambition have to be based on CBDR and equity” and that all promises and commitments are “honoured and fulfilled”. It further remarked that in line with the Talanoa spirit, there must be tolerance of each other’s views and stories and that the dialogue should not try to be “prescriptive” in what and how stories should be told. The “sovereign” rights of Parties to share stories in a manner they see fit must be respected and the faintest of voices must be captured with all stories receiving equal weightage.

South Africa said that the dialogue provides new possibilities to raise ambition and “identify gaps in

the pre-2020 period”. It said that there is a “direct link between support and ambition” and that the dialogue should look at ambition in the broader spectrum, in all its forms. It further remarked about the process, raising the question of transition from the technical to the political phase. It sought clarity on whether there will be a synthesis report or a collation of stories distilling policy options or whether it there would be a Presidency document. It asked what sort of outcome was sought from the political phase and whether there would be a negotiation phase.

Australia on behalf of the **Umbrella Group** said that it is participating in the dialogue “in full support of the objective of taking stock of our collective progress towards the long-term temperature goal of the Paris Agreement”. It further said that “we hope to build a common understanding on ways of making progress, addressing challenges and realising the benefits of collective action”.

The **European Union** said the dialogue “can and should foster an honest reflection of the adequacy of present NDCs compared to the long-term goal” and that it should “inform our reflection on our common commitment and identify tangible actions”. It said the “European Commission will present a proposal for a strategy for a long-term EU greenhouse gas emissions reductions very soon” and in addition, the “EU member states have already or will communicate national long-term low greenhouse gas emissions development strategies to the UNFCCC”.

Mexico on behalf of the **Environmental Integrity Group** said that the dialogue is a much needed exercise to “review our current efforts” and find a way to “enhance ambition” to reach the global goals.