

High drama at adoption of Glasgow Climate Pact

15 Nov, Glasgow (Meena Raman and Purna Bomzan) – It was a night of high drama at the conclusion of the Glasgow climate talks, late night on Saturday, Nov 13, ending a day later than the scheduled finale, before the adoption of the ‘Glasgow Climate Pact’.

The Pact was heralded as a ‘historic deal’ by the UK’s COP 26 President **Alok Sharma** and UNFCCC’s Executive Secretary **Patricia Espinosa**, mainly for the first time mention in a COP of a call to all countries in “accelerating efforts towards the phasedown of unabated coal power and phase-out of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies, while providing targeted support to the poorest and most vulnerable in line with national circumstances and recognizing the need for support towards a just transition”.

The text, prior to the final decision being gavelled, referred to a ‘phase-out’ of ‘unabated coal’ and did not have any reference to a ‘provision of targeted support for the poorest and most vulnerable’, which were insertions proposed by India, and supported by **China**, during the formal plenary of the COP, after Sharma informed Parties that there were consultations that went on among some delegations in this regard to accommodate the changes proposed.

This erupted to an outcry from the **Environmental Integrity Group (EIG)** led by **Switzerland**, the **European Union (EU)** and the **Alliance of Small Island States**, who called the

process un-transparent and disappointing, but nevertheless, accepted the adoption of the Pact. In response, **Sharma** apologized to Parties and almost broke-down, and pleaded for consensus on the deal saying “it is vital that we protect this package”, leading to the gavelling of the decisions.

(Right from the onset of the talks that began on Oct 31, developing countries had been pleading for the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC) between developed and developing countries enshrined in the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement (PA) to be respected and operationalized in the Glasgow decisions, given the former’s historical responsibility for past and cumulative emissions. This proved to be a monumental task, reflecting the conundrum over the ‘coal’ decision. Developed countries in their interventions spoke of ‘shared responsibilities’ and not ‘differentiated responsibilities’ and focused on future emissions and not past emissions).

The package of decisions adopted in Glasgow saw the expression of much disappointment from developing countries, who had very small gains through hard-fought battles as they faced the might of the **United States (US)**, mainly over issues of finance in general and in relation to addressing loss and damage and adaptation. (See further details below).

Many developing countries such as the **Like-minded Developing Countries (LMDC)**, and the **Africa Group** expressed concerns that the Glasgow Climate Pact was mitigation-centric with little to show on the means of implementation for developing countries.

In response to texts in the Pact on ‘keeping the 1.5C goal alive’, the **LMDC** in particular pointed out (during the informal stocktake plenary) that calls for net zero targets by 2050 by all was a “great fallacy” and a “great escape by the developed countries” from “doing real rapid emissions reduction now” and that this amounted to “carbon colonialism”.

Prior to convening the formal plenary evening on Saturday (Nov 13) to adopt the decisions, Sharma first convened an informal stocktake plenary, during which time Parties provided their reflections on the texts which the COP President had presented to them morning of the same day.

AT THE INFORMAL STOCKTAKING PLENARY

After presenting his latest texts of draft decisions, **Sharma** invited Parties to “join together” to bring their collective effort towards “successful conclusions”. He had pointed out that these decisions chart out “tangible next steps and very clear milestones” across the “three pillars of mitigation, adaptation and finance”, guided by “equity and CBDR”.

More importantly, he said that these texts are a way forward on the three outstanding elements of the PA’s work programme viz. on Article 6 (cooperative approaches involving market and non-market approaches), the common time frames (CTF) for national determined contributions (NDCs), and the enhanced transparency framework (ETF).

Guinea for the **G77 and China** appreciated “the recognition that accelerated action in this critical decade is on the basis of the best available scientific knowledge and equity, reflecting CBDR-RC, in the light of different national circumstances and in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty”.

On Article 6.2 of the PA on the share of proceeds for the Adaptation Fund (AF), it remarked that this issue had been very important for developing countries, and that it was important for the Group’s concerns to be appropriately reflected.

(The G77 and China had been calling for a mandatory provision of a share of proceeds to the AF from the Article 6.2 cooperation between Parties. The final decision adopted did not reflect this call, but instead only “strongly” encourages Parties “to commit to contribute resources for adaptation, in particular through contributions to the AF”. There was firm opposition from the US for a mandatory provision in this regard.)

“On loss and damage, we are pleased with the progress towards the further operationalization of the Santiago Network in terms of agreement on its functions. This is a solid outcome of COP26 in terms of further institutionalizing loss and damage issues under the Convention and its PA. The spirit of solidarity, flexibility, and compromise shown by all Parties in the negotiating rooms to move this issue forward in solidarity with the peoples and communities suffering loss and damage from the adverse effects of climate change is the spirit that we must maintain,” it said.

It, however, expressed “extreme disappointment with paragraphs 73 and 74 on a dialogue related to loss and damage” This, it said, was very far from the concrete call the Group had pushed for in terms of a ‘Loss and Damage (LD) facility’ that it sought in Glasgow. “In the spirit of compromise, we will be able to live with these paragraphs on the understanding that it does not reflect nor prejudge the unequivocal outcome that we seek on finance for loss and damage to reach the most vulnerable, which due to history and human rights and basic common decency the G77 and China will continue to pursue. To this end, we understand that the dialogue referred to in paragraphs 73 and 74 has as its end goal the establishment of the LD facility,” Guinea pointed out.

(The US was again firmly opposed to any decision on finance associated with loss and damage).

On finance, Guinea reiterated that “a COP without a concrete outcome on finance cannot be deemed a success. We appreciate the balance that has been achieved in these texts with respect to the processes for our continued work on the issues of long-term finance and the new collective quantified goal. We also reiterate that filling the gap in the fulfilment of the existing USD100 billion remains the responsibility of developed countries”.

On the work in relation to the global goal on adaptation (GGA), it appreciated “launching the two-year work programme on the GGA that we have called for. Work on this issue has been too long delayed and this needs to be fast tracked through such a work programme”.

In relation to the ETF, Guinea commented “the hard work that has been done to arrive at a balance that reflects the views of various Parties”.

Bolivia for the **LMDC** expressed deep concerns on the texts and proposals, but “in the spirit of compromise in order to increase ambition, we are able to support the documents and move forward”.

It said it worked very hard to hold back “the unfair push to transfer responsibilities to the developing world” by the developed countries and “preserve CBDR and equity” hence, achieving a “delicate balance” in the cover decisions.

It pointed out concerning concepts in the texts such as “net zero by 2050” which it said is a “great fallacy” to achieve the 1.5C goal and a “great escape by the developed countries” from their responsibilities to climate change. “Developed countries continue to use the carbon budget that belongs to the developing world and this is not fair”, it lambasted, calling for the need to “push developed countries to achieve real emissions reduction now” since that is the direction to provide “real solutions” for climate change.

“We need to enforce commitment to enhance ambition by the developed world in order to keep the development rights of the developing countries alive,” Bolivia said and further proclaimed that “as LMDC, we refuse to get trapped in carbon colonialism”, berating that the developed countries were trying to create “new rules of the game”. It said that only the developed countries have conditions to transition to low carbon economy due to their financial conditions and technological capabilities.

Bolivia expressed concerns that the powerful and rich countries are still refusing to provide financial support to developing countries and that it fought hard to keep the connection of the 1.5C goal commensurate with the means of implementation (finance, technology transfer, capacity building). “There is no appetite by developed countries to address their historical responsibility and pay their climate debt to the developing world,” it said and added, that at the “next COP, we need more commitment by developed countries to finance”.

It also highlighted the need to preserve the “language, principles and provisions of the UNFCCC” and refrain from deviating by using “new language” such as ‘processes’ under the Convention instead of the term ‘provisions’.

Gabon for the **Africa Group** said that it came to Glasgow to create an ambitious and balanced agreement focusing on mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage and finance. However, in the run up, “much focus” is on the 1.5C goal and mitigation. It welcomed the work programme on the GGA. It also called for a “review” of the USD 100 billion goal under the COP and sought more assurance from developed country partners on the delivery of finance as a critical issue. Gabon also said that it faces huge financial and technological challenges to the climate problem that it did not create and highlighted the debt burden of developing countries.

Antigua and Barbuda for the **Alliance of Small-Island States (AOSIS)** said that its priorities which

included elements in mitigation and loss and damage were not there in the package which it said was extremely disappointing, but it could move forward “in the spirit of compromise”. **Bhutan** for the **Least Developed Countries** urged all to “adopt the text” although it is “not balanced”, considering the high expectations for ambition in line with the 1.5 C goal; its assurance for finance as well as the LD facility for finance.

China said it had “no intention to open the texts again” although they were “by no means, perfect” but made a suggestion on the paragraph regarding the issue of coal and fossil fuel subsidies, and suggested that the language could follow the recent US-China Joint Declaration as well as of the G20 Declaration so that “all Parties” can accept the text.

India said that “consensus remains elusive” and that it sought for “just and equitable solutions” and pointed out that the climate crisis is caused by “unsustainable lifestyles and wasteful consumption patterns”. It said that “fossil fuels and their use have enabled parts of the world to attain high levels of wealth and well-being” and that “developing countries have a right to the fair share of the global carbon budget and are entitled to the responsible use of fossil fuels within this scope”. “Developing countries have to still deal with their development agendas and poverty eradication,” it stressed, adding that “towards this end, subsidies provide much needed social security and support” and gave the example of the provision of subsidies to low income households for liquefied petroleum gas to eliminate biomass burning and reduce indoor pollution. India said it had some additions to the text in this regard.

South Africa supported the language proposal by both China and India, calling for a “workable solution” on the issue.

The **EU** urged not to ask for “different text”. The **EIG** said that while the texts are clearly far from being the best possible common denominator, it could “accept the text as presented”, urging to adopt the text in light of broader objectives. Australia also echoed that it “can accept present text”.

The **US** said it that it had been a “good” negotiation and acknowledged that there are things in the text that do not meet the “best desire” of every country. It said that it is “excited” by the fact that the outcome “raises ambition” on a “global basis” and that “this potential agreement is a very important step in the right direction”. Referring to the US-China Joint Declaration agreed in Glasgow, it said the agreement showed that in a world of “conflict, competition and differences” between nations, the issue of climate change rises above them to find a way forward, adding that it agreed with the text.

After a rather long list of interventions by many other countries, **Sharma** proposed to adjourn the meeting and reconvene the formal closing plenary to consider and adopt the texts as the outcome of the climate talks. He reassured that while the texts do test the boundaries on what Parties can accept, “these outcomes constitute an incredibly delicate balance”, and that the stocktake interventions had seen a “great deal of consensus and support for the texts, imperfect that they may be”.

AT THE FORMAL CLOSING PLENARY

Following the high drama during the start of the closing plenary highlighted above, during the adoption of decisions under the Conference of Parties to the PA (CMA), several Parties intervened.

Antigua and Barbuda speaking for **AOSIS**, highlighted specifically the LD facility for finance which did not enjoy consensus from developed countries and was settled for just a stand-alone “dialogue” in the final decision. It requested to include in the proceedings that its interpretation of the agreement is that “new facility will be adopted at the next COP 27”.

Venezuela reiterated its request for a space to discuss the important issue of unilateral and coercive measures (UCMs) in the context of human and environment rights, that has been affecting climate actions for some countries. It reiterated that it had been requesting to include UCMs in the cover decisions.

JOINT-CLOSING PLENARY OF COP, CMA AND CMP (CONFERENCE OF PARTIES TO THE KYOTO PROTOCOL)

UNFCCC Executive Secretary **Patricia Espinosa** hailed the outcome as a “bridge to historic transformation” built in Glasgow, thanking everyone for their professionalism and dedication regardless of multiple challenges. She said that “negotiations are never easy” to seek an outcome that is “acceptable to all” which is the “nature of consensus and inclusive multilateralism”.

Guinea for **G77 and China** said that the group worked towards conclusions and decisions to “reflect compromise while seeking to be ambitious and fair”, thus succeeding in some and failing in others and underlined that “multilateralism is fundamental, based on equity and CBDR”, stressing on fighting climate change in the context of “cooperation and genuine partnership rather than competition and from purely economic aspect”.

The **EU** spoke of a “balanced and ambitious outcome” and that this COP was a step in the right direction towards reducing global emissions in this critical decade. It stressed on keeping the goal of 1.5C alive and on “aligning all financial flows towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate resilience”.

Switzerland for the **EIG** also echoed that keeping the goal of 1.5C alive is a “north star of our common commitment”.

Australia for the **Umbrella Group** thanked and congratulated all for ensuring a “successful outcome” and agreeing on the final PA implementation arrangements. It said it was pleased to be leaving with “ambitious commitments” and that the COP 26 set us on the path to support “collective efforts to keep 1.5C within reach”.

Egypt proposed a draft resolution entitled “expression of gratitude” to the UK Presidency and the people of Glasgow which was adopted by consensus by all Parties. Egypt is the next COP 27 host that is now scheduled to be held in November 2022.

Bhutan for the **LDCs** said that “the final package we can accept but not enough”, with especially the issue of loss and damage falling short of what was expected, referring to the deletion of “facility” for finance in the final deal.

Antigua and Barbuda for the **AOSIS** spoke of “major compromises” the group made to overcome differences and that the PA work programme is complete after years of deliberations.

Peru for the **Independent Alliance of Latin America and the Caribbean (AILAC)** said that the decisions in the package are “not perfect”, nonetheless, it worked towards reaching a “common agreement”.

India for **Brazil, South Africa, India, China (BASIC)** said that it had shown “maximum flexibility” and is committed to “serious ambitious actions” notwithstanding the “challenges” at home. It stressed that the developed countries must deliver not only on mitigation but also on adaptation and finance, technology transfer and capacity building.

Argentina for **Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay (ABU)** thanked all for their “flexibility and spirit of compromise” and highlighted that Article 6 of the PA will provide both market and non-market approaches, especially a “new international financing” for developing countries in both their “mitigation and adaptation” efforts.

Saudi Arabia said that the decisions adopted are a “great start” as well as the need to make sure that they are implemented in a “balanced manner”.

Panama said that it is “not fully happy” specifically commenting on Article 6 decisions that they were not “as robust as science demands”.

Other countries that took the floor were **Pakistan** (in its role as the incoming Chair of the **G77 and China** in 2022), **Cuba, Indonesia, Turkey, Korea, Chile, Kenya, Dominican Republic** and **Japan**.

(See forthcoming articles on the details of decisions adopted).