

Glasgow climate talks kick off

Glasgow, 1 Nov (Perna Bomzan): The climate talks in Glasgow kicked off on 31 October in Glasgow, Scotland, following the adoption of agendas for the various meetings under the UNFCCC, Kyoto Protocol (KP) and the Paris Agreement (PA). Work under the various bodies was launched, as world leaders began to arrive for the summit which will take place Monday, 1 Nov.

The morning of the first day of the talks saw **Alok Sharma** of the **United Kingdom (UK)** presiding over the adoption of the revised provisional agendas of COP 26, the 16th session of the KP Parties (CMP 16) and the 3rd session of the Conference of Parties to the PA (CMA 3). Prior to the adoption of the agendas, there was an opening ceremony (see further details below).

The work of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) also commenced following the convening of meetings by the Subsidiary Bodies (SBs) in the afternoon. This was followed by a joint-plenary session held, presided over by Sharma to hear statements from Parties on their expectations for the talks (separate article will follow).

Prior to the adoption of the revised COP 26 provisional agenda, **Bolivia** in an intervention, lambasted developed countries for their lack of ambition to reduce emissions, urging them further to cease emissions to zero with complete decarbonisation given their historical responsibility

for global warming and their resulting climate debt owed to developing countries.

Bolivia intervened in response to the removal from the revised provisional agenda its proposal for an agenda item on *'Equitable, fair, ambitious and urgent real emission reductions now consistent with a trajectory to reduce the temperature below 1.5°C'*.

The Bolivian proposal appeared in the first draft of the provisional agenda but was taken-off due to absence of consensus, which it stressed reflected badly on developed countries displaying "empty" words of ambition and "no determination" on taking practical action. (TWN has learnt that the United States was among those who were opposed to the Bolivian proposal).

While presenting the revised provisional agenda, COP 26 President **Sharma** said that the UK had committed to facilitate a "decision" to keep 1.5°C within reach on the overarching cover decision and had informed that the issue would also be addressed through events such as the World Leaders Summit and the special event by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Bolivia in its intervention had said that "A COP cannot ignore the main cause of climate change and global warming" and referred to the industrial revolution when developed countries used up resources and their share of the carbon budget. It said that the "net zero" slogan is be-

ing used by these polluting countries to evade their responsibility and above all, the developed countries are putting pressure on other Parties to change the objective and goal of the PA since this “new goal” of net zero for “all” countries by 2050 is not in the PA and actually counters the “letter and spirit” of the PA.

Bolivia underscored that the net zero emission strategies for all countries by 2050 did not take into account “climate justice and equity” and was therefore, a “major injustice” and blow to the concept of “common but differentiated responsibilities” (CBDR) based on equity. This also will exacerbate the inequality and gap between developed and developing countries, it said and instead called for drastic emission cuts by developed countries well before 2050 since they share the “largest burden” and they need to take “leadership”.

“Developed countries have not lived up to their commitments”, it reiterated in reference to the legally binding commitments of the KP adopted in 1997 and with the Annex 1 countries only achieving “insignificant cuts” in emission rates, and the US abandoning the KP altogether. Additionally, it regretted the ratification delays of the second commitment period (2013-2020) of the KP which finally came into force only on the last day of 2020 which once again pointed to “lack of ambition” by developed countries.

Bolivia suggested to form a “taskforce or working group” that would identify those parts of the carbon budget used by Annex 1 countries based on equity and CBDR and further urged developed countries to “increase their ambition” instead of a net zero solution as a global or blanket approach. It also stressed that Annex 1 countries need to compensate developing countries in order to ensure that the process is “just and equitable” in relation to the carbon budget as well as provide capacity building.

In conclusion, Bolivia hoped to find a “space in this COP” on the issue calling for “urgent and equitable action for real and meaningful reduction to keep temperature below 1.5°C”, reiterating the need for “extraordinary actions” by Annex 1 countries to show “actual ambition” and “actual action”.

COP 26 President **Sharma (UK)** in response “committed” to facilitate on the issue as part of “Presidency-led consultations” and said that there are a number of events where this item would be covered as previously mentioned.

Prior to the adoption of the revised provisional agendas of the COP and the CMA respectively, Sharma provided the following clarification and explanation on the revisions made, based on “intensive” consultations conducted and feedback received by the Presidency on other proposals by Parties as follows:

i. Turkey had shown “flexibility” by withdrawing its proposal to “*delete the name of Turkey from the list of Annex 1 to the Convention*”.

ii. Proposal by Bolivia to include “*All matters of adaptation*” and the proposal by Gabon on behalf of the African Group to include item in the CMA on “*Matters related to adaptation*” now reads under CMA as agenda item *4(a) Reports of the Adaptation Committee (for 2019 and 2020)* and *4(b) Report of the Adaptation Committee (2021) and the work on the global goal on adaptation*.

iii. Proposal by Gabon on behalf of the African Group that each item under the Standing Committee on Finance be reflected as separate sub items, now reads under COP as *8(b) Matters relating to the Standing Committee on Finance* and under CMA as *8(a) Matters relating to the Standing Committee on Finance* with a “footnote” that would read *recognising the proposal received from Gabon on behalf of the African Group on 17 August 2021* with a link to the letter from Gabon containing the proposal. Presidency consultations would be held on these sub items.

Sharma informed that on the following matters he would engage in “alternative forms of consultations rather than include them in the agendas”:

i. On proposal by Gabon on behalf of the African Group to include a new item under CMA entitled “*Special needs and special circumstances of Africa*”, he proposed to hold Presidency consultations and

these consultations would report back to him including on “possible way forward”.

ii. On proposal by Bolivia to include an item under COP entitled “*Equitable, fair, ambitious and urgent real emission reductions now consistent with a trajectory to reduce the temperature below 1.5°C*”, he committed to “facilitating discussions on the urgent actions required to keep 1.5 degrees within reach as part of the Presidency led consultations on the overarching cover decisions”. He further informed that this issue would also be addressed through special events, namely, the World Leaders Summit (1-2 Nov), the IPCC headline event (9 Nov) and the information event on the NDCs synthesis report (3 Nov).

iii. On proposal by Switzerland for item under CMA entitled “*Reporting and review pursuant to Article 13 of the Paris Agreement: provision of financial and capacity-building support to developing countries*”, he would “create space” through Presidency consultations and address the concerns raised by the Environmental Integrity Group.

Sharma further proposed that the following requests be addressed under existing agenda items:

i. On proposal by Georgia to include an item under COP entitled “*Achieving equitable geographic representation in the composition of constituted bodies under the Convention*”, the matter be addressed under agenda item 2(d) *Election of officers other than the President*.

ii. On proposal by Bolivia to include an item under CMA entitled “*Stocktake on financial support and means of implementation for alternative policy approaches such as joint mitigation and adaptation approaches for the integral and sustainable management of forests*”, he proposed that Parties consider this matter in the context of deliberations related to the Standing Committee on Finance and guidance to the Green Climate Fund and further committed to “following up” after COP 26 with both entities on their “mandated work” on financial support and means of implementation for alternative policy approaches.

Sharma informed that following consultations, he proposed “not to include” the proposal by Gabon on behalf of the African Group entitled “*The third commitment period of Annex B Parties to the Kyoto Protocol in accordance with its Article 3, paragraph 9, and the entry into force and completion of the Kyoto Protocol second commitment period*” in the CMP agenda.

Under COP agenda item 7 and CMA agenda item 7 with regard to *Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts*, he proposed to hold Presidency consultations.

In response, **Timor Leste** intervened with regard to agenda under COP and CMA on the *Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage* calling on to ensure that both COP and CMA will receive reports from both Subsidiary Bodies to which Sharma recalled his proposal to hold Presidency consultations as mentioned earlier.

Venezuela raised its specific concern on “external elements” that are having an adverse effect on its implementation of the PA, referring to the unilateral and coercive measures (UCMs) and requested for a “space” on UCMs on both the COP and CMA agendas to which Sharma assured that there are a number of places in the existing agendas to raise the concern.

The COP 26 agenda was then adopted, followed by the CMP16 and CMA3 agendas.

AT THE OPENING CEREMONY

The opening ceremony saw statements by COP 25 President Carolina Schmidt, who is the Chilean Minister of Environment; Susan Aitken, Leader of Glasgow City Council; UNFCCC Executive Secretary Patricia Espinosa; Abdulla Shahid, President of the UN General Assembly; Hoesung Lee, Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and India Logan-Riley, Maori climate activist from New Zealand.

Carolina Schmidt highlighted three areas relating to ambition, finance and rules. She said there is a great gap in ambition in terms of emission reductions and on finance, the need for not only a new level of financial resources by 2025 but also to close the gap of the USD 100 billion per year pledge by 2020. On rules, she said that the most important issue will be the Enhanced Transparency Framework under the PA, without which there would be no Article 6. She said that the COP process is based on “trust” and also on the “CBDR” principle.

Patricia Espinosa called upon Parties to “recapture the spirit of multilateralism” that adopted the PA and fulfil commitments under it. She stressed the need for finance and to mobilise in trillions as without necessary support it was not possible to embark on the transformation needed to achieve the 1.5°C temperature limit, further emphasizing significant increase of financial support towards adaptation.

Hoesung Lee said that the first part of the IPCC’s ongoing Sixth Assessment Report on “Physical Sci-

ence” which was released in August clearly laid out the most up-to-date physical science and it reflects the magnitude of collective challenge for all nations on this planet. He said that it is now “unequivocal” that human influence is causing climate change and stressed on climate action as “we share one atmosphere and one climate system”.

Abdullah Shahid, highlighted the current existential crisis and critiqued that “we have the capacity and resources but simply are not doing enough” which is the hard truth. He focused on adaptation and the need to ensure a 50:50 split in terms of finance between adaptation and mitigation.

India Logan-Riley delivered a hard hitting impassioned speech exposing colonialism and extractivism of the Global North, calling for responses based on a rights-based framework rooted in justice and care for communities. She said that finance must be redistributed and that richer countries have to commit to deep emission cuts rather than relying on markets and false solutions.