

Glasgow Climate Change Conference: Sunday, 31 October 2021

The Glasgow Climate Change Conference opened with a moment of silence for the lives lost during the COVID-19 pandemic. Speeches during the opening ceremony recalled the destruction of the pandemic and underscored the significance of this meeting. All bodies launched their substantive work.

Opening Ceremony

COP 25 President Carolina Schmidt reminded delegates that science is non-negotiable and climate change requires multi-sectoral, transformative change. She stressed the importance of non-party stakeholders in climate action.

COP 26 President Alok Sharma described the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Working Group I (WG I) contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report as a wake-up call, and said COP 26 “is our last best hope to keep 1.5°C in reach.”

Susan Aitken, Leader of Glasgow City Council, expressed hope that Glasgow, as a post-industrial city with a 2030 carbon neutrality target, can inspire delegates.

UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Executive Secretary Patricia Espinosa highlighted three priorities: increasing ambition, especially by members of the Group of 20 (G20); achieving finance targets and mobilizing trillions; and strengthening adaptation action. She urged inclusion of all stakeholders and observers.

Hoesung Lee, IPCC Chair, called the WG I report sobering and said the true measure of effectiveness of collective efforts is the state of the climate system, which science attests is deteriorating.

Abdulla Shahid, President of the UN General Assembly, called for enhanced efforts to meet the USD 100 billion finance goal with equal shares for mitigation and adaptation, monitoring private sector net zero targets, and investing in green jobs.

India Logan-Riley, Ngāti Kahungunu, Aotearoa New Zealand, pointed to Indigenous leadership and resistance to fossil fuel extraction, and emphasized the need for a decolonial response to climate change, with the Global North committing to halting emissions and redistributing finance.

Opening Statements

Guinea, for the G-77/CHINA, called on developed countries to enhance their absolute economy-wide emissions reduction targets and scale up provision of support, stressed climate finance as key to success at COP 26, and underscored the need to fulfill long-standing climate finance commitments, such as the USD 100 billion goal.

The EU stated the group would “fight” for an ambitious outcome that advances action well before 2030. She outlined elements of a successful outcome, including: robust rules for the Paris Agreement’s Article 6 (cooperative approaches); enhanced transparency framework arrangements; and a common timeframe for all parties’ nationally determined contributions (NDCs).

Switzerland, for the ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY GROUP (EIG), emphasized three priorities: rules, finance, and ambition. He called for rules to be operationalized, not reopened, and for COP 26 to launch efforts to define a post-2025 finance target and ensure alignment of all financial flows with the goals of the Paris Agreement.

Australia, for the UMBRELLA GROUP, highlighted as critical, *inter alia*: finalizing the Paris rulebook, including on common timeframes and the enhanced transparency framework; advancing work on adaptation; and enhancing action for practical, locally-led adaptation and resilience efforts.

Gabon, for the AFRICAN GROUP, underscored its expectation that resolution on the consideration of Africa’s special needs and circumstances would be reached, noting scientific evidence of the continent’s vulnerability. He called for: reaching agreement on the operationalization of the global goal on adaptation by COP 27, concluding work on the new finance goal at COP 27, and for the “transparency package” to ensure adequate support for developing country reporting.

Bolivia, for the LIKE-MINDED GROUP OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (LMDCs), lamented developed countries’ “history of broken promises,” pointing to a lack of ambition in the Kyoto Protocol’s second commitment period and the failure to fulfill the USD 100 annual finance commitment. He underscored that calling on all countries to reach net zero by 2050 is “anti-equity” and said unilateral carbon border adjustments are discriminatory.

Antigua and Barbuda, for the ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES (AOSIS), called for a formal platform to take stock of the gap to the 1.5°C goal, a COP 26 decision for major economies to phase out fossil fuel subsidies by 2023, and a concrete outcome at COP 26 on financial support for loss and damage, noting this should be additional to the USD 100 billion goal. She emphasized the need for grant-based finance to ensure vulnerable countries’ fiscal space.

Peru, for the INDEPENDENT ASSOCIATION OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (AILAC), urged parties to address the climate crisis on the basis of science. She called for: the G20 to take action following the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC); a new collective finance goal; and operationalization of the Santiago Network on Loss and Damage.

India, on behalf of BRAZIL, SOUTH AFRICA, INDIA and CHINA (BASIC), underscored the principle of CBDR-RC and special circumstances of developing countries especially in the context of COVID-19. He urged developed countries to dramatically reduce their emissions and increase support to developing countries on finance, technology transfer, and capacity building. He called for a new quantified finance goal and a clear roadmap to achieve it.

Saudi Arabia, for the ARAB GROUP, urged preserving balance across agenda items, especially under Article 6, and called for extending the action plan of the Katowice Committee of Experts on the Impacts of the Implementation of Response Measures (KCI) due to COVID-19-related delays.

Bhutan, for the LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES (LDCs), highlighted finance, adaptation and support to address loss and damage as priority issues, stressing that “finance is now about rebuilding trust.” He called for operationalizing the Santiago Network on Loss and Damage, and stressed that both the COP and CMA continue to have authority to govern the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts (WIM).

Noting it had recently ratified the Paris Agreement, TURKEY said its withdrawal of an agenda item proposal on an amendment to Annex I of the Convention was an indication of the country’s will to work constructively.

Argentina, for ARGENTINA, BRAZIL and URUGUAY, stressed climate finance as crucial for the full implementation of the Paris Agreement and for greater ambition and, cautioning against “new categories,” underscored that all developing countries need assistance for sustainable recoveries. He proposed a body focused on advancing the post-2025 climate finance target, with equal representation from developed and developing countries, and clear and specific activities.

Papua New Guinea, for the COALITION FOR RAINFOREST NATIONS, highlighted the global importance of reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD+) and the need for constructive outcomes on transparency. On Article 6, she urged against “taxing mitigation to fund adaptation,” noting all future credits must be covered by NDCs.

Guatemala, for the CENTRAL AMERICAN INTEGRATION SYSTEM, appealed for recognition as a region highly vulnerable to climate change, which should be given priority access to financing mechanisms. He demanded urgent resource mobilization, increased official development assistance, and strengthened adaptation efforts.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES underscored the need for multi-level climate action and called for channeling resources to the local level.

RESEARCH AND INDEPENDENT NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS called for reaching agreement on the outstanding elements of the Paris rulebook to ensure full implementation of the Paris Agreement and noted science stands ready to support parties’ work.

TRADE UNION NGOs emphasized every sector needs to decarbonize, but that this requires engaging workers in social dialogue, ensuring quality jobs and social protection, and delivering climate education.

WOMEN AND GENDER lamented the murders of environmental defenders, calling for safeguarding human rights and investing in regenerative justice. The impacts of failing to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C will be devastating, she said, underscoring “there is no time for hollow speeches.”

CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK (CAN) expressed concern about the significantly reduced participation of observers. She said global health and climate crises have increased inequality, so CAN will do everything it can for this COP to deliver what is needed for vulnerable people around the world.

CLIMATE JUSTICE NOW! lamented the exclusion of observers and demanded an end to the fossil fuel era coupled with “real zero” targets in line with equity and fair shares.

FARMERS stressed the potential of farmers and agriculture to contribute to climate action, noting that only 15% of climate finance has been allocated to agriculture and calling for this imbalance to be redressed.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES expressed concern about nature-based solutions developed without Indigenous Peoples’ input and their free, prior, and informed consent. She called for the adoption and implementation of the draft second workplan of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples’ Platform (LCIPP).

YOUTH NGOs called for “action today at COP 26,” urging parties to finalize the Paris rulebook. Citing the UN Secretary-General’s call to “give youth a seat at the decision-making table,” they asked for meaningful constituency engagement at the meeting.

Conference of the Parties (COP)

Organizational Matters: Rules of Procedure: Parties agreed to apply the draft rules of procedure (FCCC/CP/1996/2), with the exception of draft rule 42 on voting. The COP Presidency will hold consultations.

Adoption of the agenda: Sharma noted consultations on the agenda and outlined the Presidency’s proposals regarding the new agenda items proposed by parties. On proposals by Gabon, for the African Group, and Bolivia related to adaptation on the COP and CMA agendas, Sharma proposed that the CMA agenda include an item on “matters relating to adaptation” that will include the reports of the Adaptation Committee for 2019 and 2020, the report of the Adaptation Committee for 2021, and the work on the global goal on adaptation. On the African Group’s proposal for additional sub-items under a COP item on the Standing Committee on Finance (SCF), he proposed including a footnote that recognizes the African Group’s proposal. He suggested holding presidency consultations on these matters.

Sharma further proposed to address two proposals under “existing” items:

- A stocktake on financial support and means of implementation for alternative policy approaches, proposed by Bolivia, to be addressed as part of SCF and guidance to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) discussions; and
- Equitable geographic representation in constituted bodies, proposed by Georgia, to be addressed during consultations on nominations to constituted bodies.

Sharma proposed presidency consultations in lieu of adding the following items to the agendas:

- Special needs and special circumstances of Africa, proposed by Gabon, for the African Group; and
- Reporting and review pursuant to Article 13 of the Paris Agreement (enhanced transparency framework): provision of financial and capacity-building support to developing countries, proposed by Switzerland, for the EIG.

On Bolivia’s proposal for a COP agenda item on equitable, fair, ambitious and urgent real emission reductions now consistent with a trajectory to reduce the temperature below 1.5°C, Sharma suggested the issue would be addressed in presidency-led consultations on the overarching cover decisions of the meeting and events such as the World Leaders Summit, Science and Innovation Day, and sessions on the IPCC WG I report. BOLIVIA lamented the exclusion of the item. She stressed the need for developed countries to acknowledge historical responsibility by undertaking immediate emissions reductions and compensating developing countries.

TIMOR-LESTE requested to consider the item on WIM under both the COP and CMA. Sharma confirmed that there will be presidency consultations on loss and damage.

VENEZUELA called for including the impacts of unilateral coercive measures on climate change and climate action on the COP and CMA agendas. Suggesting the existing agendas are conducive to such discussions and noting extensive agenda consultations, Sharma appealed to parties to proceed with the adoption of the agenda.

Accepting these proposals, the COP adopted the agenda (UNFCCC/CP/2021/1/Add.2), holding in abeyance items on proposals for amendments to the Convention and the second review of the adequacy of Article 4.2(a-b) of the Convention (on Annex I parties’ mitigation commitments).

Organization of work: UKRAINE proposed, and parties agreed, to defer the consideration of the item on reporting and review of Annex I parties.

The following items were referred to contact groups:

- Matters relating to finance, except matters relating to the SCF; and
- Development and transfer of technologies: Review of the constitution of the Advisory Board of the Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN).

The following item was referred to informal consultations:

- Development and transfer of technologies: Second review of the CTCN.

Dates and venues of future sessions: Sharma noted that the African regional group had nominated Egypt as the host of COP 27. He encouraged the relevant regional groups to accelerate consultations on the hosts of COP 28 and COP 29. The Presidency will consult groups on this item.

Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA)

CMA President Sharma opened the session.

Organizational Matters: Adoption of the agenda:

VENEZUELA reiterated the call for discussions on unilateral coercive measures. TIMOR-LESTE reiterated that the outcomes of the SBI discussions on loss and damage should be considered by both the COP and CMA. The CMA adopted the agenda (FCCC/PA/CMA/2021/1/Add.2).

Sharma confirmed the presidency consultations as explained during the COP opening plenary.

Organization of work: The CMA adopted the organization of work. The following items were referred to the subsidiary bodies:

- Matters relating to adaptation: reports of the Adaptation Committee (for 2019 and 2020); and for 2021 and the work on the global goal on adaptation;
- Methodological issues relating to the enhanced transparency framework for action and support;
- WIM;
- Joint annual report of the Technology Executive Committee (TEC) and CTCN; and alignment between the CTCN review and the periodic assessment;
- Capacity building under the Paris Agreement;
- Report on the forum on the impact of the implementation of response measures;
- Matters related to Article 6 of the Paris Agreement; and
- Administrative, financial and institutional matters.

Contact groups will be convened under the CMA to take up the following items:

- Public registries under the Paris Agreement;
- Matters relating to finance: Guidance to the GCF and Guidance to the Global Environmental Facility (GEF);
- Matters relating to the Adaptation Fund, with the CMP contact group for this issue;
- New collective quantified goal on climate finance; and
- Compilation and synthesis of, and summary report on the in-session workshop on, biennial communications of information related to Article 9.5 of the Paris Agreement (*ex-ante* finance transparency).

Informal consultations will convene on the first periodic assessment of effectiveness and adequacy of the support provided to the Technology Mechanism.

Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP)

CMP President Sharma opened the session.

Organizational Matters: Adoption of the agenda: At the request of UKRAINE, the sub-item on the annual compilation and accounting report for the second commitment period for Annex B parties was deferred to CMP 17. SOLOMON ISLANDS noted concerns with the documentation, but also that there is important information in the reports and suggested informal consultations. Sharma suggested the SBI take up the matter. Parties adopted the agenda and agreed to the organization of work.

Election of additional officers: Sharma noted that nominations were still pending.

Status of ratification: Sharma reported that the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol entered into force on 31 December 2020 and, as of 30 October 2021, 147 parties had accepted the Doha Amendment.

Matters relating to the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM): Sharma noted linkages between the CDM and discussions under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. The CMP agreed to establish a contact group on this item.

Matters relating to Joint Implementation: The CMP took note of the annual reports of the Joint Implementation Supervisory Committee (FCCC/KP/CMP/2020/4 and 2021/6).

Report of the Adaptation Fund Board (2020 and 2021): A contact group was established.

Report of the Compliance Committee: The CMP took note of the reports (FCCC/KP/CMP/2020/3 and 2021/5) and invited parties to make contributions to the Trust Fund for Supplementary Activities to support the Committee's work. The election of Compliance Committee members will be taken up during the CMP closing plenary.

Report on the High-level Ministerial Round Table on Increased Ambition of Kyoto Protocol Commitments: The Presidency will conduct consultations.

SBSTA

SBSTA Chair Tosi Mpanu Mpanu (Democratic Republic of the Congo) opened the meeting, reminding parties of the rapidly closing window of opportunity to combat climate change. The SBSTA adopted its agenda (FCCC/SBSTA/2021/2) and organization of work.

Election of officers other than the Chair: Mpanu Mpanu noted consultations are ongoing.

Organization of work: The following items were deferred to SBSTA 56 (June 2022):

- Methodological issues under the Convention;
- Methodological issues under the Kyoto Protocol; and
- Market and non-market mechanisms under the Convention.

Contact groups will convene on:

- Matters related to Science and Review: Second periodic review of the long-term global goal under the Convention and of overall progress towards achieving it;
- Methodological issues under the Paris Agreement, with informal consultations on the sub-items; and
- Matters relating to Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, with informal consultation on the sub-items.

Informal consultations will convene on:

- Nairobi Work Programme;
- Sources of input for the Global Stocktake; and
- Matters related to science and review: Research and systematic observation.

Report of the Adaptation Committee (for 2019, 2020, and 2021): The Co-Chair of the Adaptation Committee reported on the Committee's steady progress despite the pandemic, completion of all activities in the three-year work plan for 2019-2021, and progress on mandates from the CMA, including on the global goal on adaptation. Informal consultations will convene.

Report of the Executive Committee of the WIM (for 2020 and 2021): The Executive Committee of WIM (ExCom) presented updates on its work in 2020 and 2021, highlighting, *inter alia*, the operationalization of five expert groups covering all strategic workstreams; and the annotated outline of the synthesis report to contribute to the Global Stocktake. Informal consultations will convene.

SOLOMON ISLANDS underscored the need for consideration of issues related to the WIM by both the COP and CMA, and requested assurances that any draft decision will be referred to both bodies. Noting that the Presidency will be convening consultations, Mpanu Mpanu encouraged parties to focus on content.

LCIPP: The LCIPP Co-Chairs provided an update of the platform's work, including a new draft workplan. Informal consultations will convene.

Development and Transfer of Technologies: Joint annual report of the TEC and CTCN: The TEC and CTCN provided progress updates, including on the implementation of TEC's workplan and on requests received by the CTCN. Informal consultations will convene.

Response Measures: The KCI reported on progress towards the completion of its workplan, pointing to the publication of two technical papers. A joint contact group with the SBI will convene.

Annual Reports on Technical Reviews: Technical review of information reported by Annex I parties: SBSTA took note of the reports (FCCC/SBSTA/2020/INF.5 and 2021/INF.3).

Technical review of GHG inventories of Annex I parties: After an intervention by UKRAINE, SBSTA agreed to defer the consideration of this item.

Technical review of GHG inventories and other information reported by Annex I parties: SBSTA took note of the reports (FCCC/SBSTA/2020/INF.4 and FCCC/SBSTA/2021/INF.5).

Statements by Intergovernmental Organizations: Mpanu Mpanu said he would hold consultations on cooperation with international organizations. The IPCC pointed to publication of the WG I contribution to the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report and noted progress towards the completion and approval of the WG II and III contributions in early 2022.

The GLOBAL CLIMATE OBSERVING SYSTEM-WORLD CLIMATE RESEARCH PROGRAMME highlighted "lighthouse activities" relating to climate risk and climate science training.

The WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION lauded its new policy committing to free exchange of data, and lamented the 40% chance that the annual average global temperature will temporarily reach 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels in at least one of the next five years.

The COMMITTEE ON EARTH OBSERVATION SATELLITES and the COORDINATION GROUP FOR METEOROLOGICAL SATELLITES highlighted a roadmap that supports the Global Stocktake and NDC activities. The GLOBAL CLIMATE OBSERVING SYSTEM highlighted its work to support adaptation action. The INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION lamented only 7% of the ocean's surface is covered by observation, and urged greater consideration of oceans.

The INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION applauded the global air transport industry's net zero by 2050 target. CHINA expressed disappointment, saying there was no consensus on a global goal, and emphasized respect for CBDR-RC.

The INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION (IMO) shared updates, including on: the IMO's initial strategy to reduce GHGs; and mandatory short-term measures to reduce the carbon intensity of international shipping by at least 40% by 2030. JAPAN called for universal regulation and said introducing the CBDR principle would distort the playing field. VENEZUELA called for: differentiating in actions and measures in international aviation and shipping; preserving the balance of global energy markets and their price stability; and for aligning ICAO and IMO mechanisms with Article 6 of the Paris Agreement.

Informal Technical Workshop on Development of Common Reporting Tables and Formats Related to the Enhanced Transparency Framework: In this workshop, co-chaired by Helen Plume (New Zealand) and Xiang Gao (China), delegates discussed outstanding technical issues related to the enhanced transparency framework, and reflected on draft tables presented by the Secretariat. The workshop produced no formal or informal outputs.

On common reporting tables for reporting GHG inventories, the EU, the US, Switzerland, for the EIG, and Malawi, for the LDCs, supported working from the draft tables as a starting point for negotiations.

SINGAPORE and CHINA pointed to discrepancies between the categories of GHG sources included in the draft tables, and those used in the 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories. BRAZIL, JAPAN and the EU said the discrepancies arose because the draft tables are based on the tables currently used for inventory reporting by Annex I parties.

Views diverged on whether there would be distinct input and output tables. BRAZIL, CHINA, and Saudi Arabia, for the ARAB GROUP, supported, and AUSTRALIA, CANADA and JAPAN opposed.

On common tabular formats for reporting information to track progress on NDCs, parties discussed intersections with Article 6 negotiations. The US and CANADA supported adding placeholder text to reflect outstanding options in the Article 6 text, while stressing, with Costa Rica, for AILAC, the mandate to move forward. The EIG stressed that some parties are already engaging in cooperative approaches under Article 6.2. SAUDI ARABIA called to delay discussions on this point until Article 6 negotiations are finalized.

The workshop reconvened in the afternoon, focusing on common tabular formats for reporting information on support.

Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI)

SBI Chair Marianne Karlsen (Norway) opened the session, stressing the need for parties to move forward with negotiating texts. Parties adopted the provisional agenda (FCCC/SBI/2021/9), holding sub-item 4(a) (information contained in national communications from Annex I parties) in abeyance.

Organization of work: The following items were deferred to SBI 56 (June 2022):

- Revision of modalities and guidelines for international consultation and analysis;
- Mechanisms related to the Kyoto Protocol; and
- Poznan strategic programme on technology transfer.

Contact groups will convene on:

- Arrangements for intergovernmental meetings; and
- Administrative, financial and institutional matters.

Informal consultations will convene on:

- Common time frames;
- Koronivia joint work on agriculture;
- Report of the Adaptation Committee;
- WIM;
- Matters related to LDCs;
- National adaptation plans;
- Technology transfer and development;
- Matters relating to the Adaptation Fund;
- Matters relating to capacity building;
- Gender and climate change; and
- Matters related to Action for Climate Empowerment.

Reporting From and Review of Annex I parties: UKRAINE reiterated its concerns on this item and proposed postponing consideration of this and related sub-items until the Secretariat amends the documentation. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION said the UNFCCC is not a platform to discuss disagreements over Crimea. Karlsen proposed, and parties agreed, to defer this agenda item to the SBI 56 in June 2022.

Reporting from non-Annex I Parties: Report and terms of reference of the Consultative Group of Experts (CGE) (2020 and 2021): The CGE reported on activities in 2020 and 2021, including regional hands-on training workshops, regional webinars, and support for the technical analysis of biennial update reports (BURs). Informal consultations will convene.

Provision of financial and technical support: The GEF reported on the activities relating to the preparation of national communications and BURs. Informal consultations on this item will be convened.

Summary reports on the technical analysis of biennial update reports: SBI took note of the summary reports.

In the Corridors

It was a "soft launch" for the Glasgow Climate Change Conference. Rather than begin with a bang – the arrival of leaders from around the world and all the media and security scrutiny that brings – the meeting started with opening all the substantive items for work. The soft opening gave delegates a chance to trial the daily testing regimen, pick up their hygiene kits, and say hello with an elbow bump. It was as normal as a COP held during a pandemic could be.

But that doesn't mean it was easy. There were concerns over the announced limit of 10,000 people a day in the Blue Zone, with some recalling the havoc such quotas caused in Copenhagen. Ticketing in plenaries led to confusion among parties, anger among some civil society, and a repeal of the policy by the end of the day. One civil society delegate was frustrated to be battling logistics, worrying that many NGOs will be excluded from the meeting and plenary rooms on Monday.

Several noted that the revised agendas were uploaded in the wee hours of the morning. From the carefully-chosen words of President Sharma, it was clear, as a delegate put it, "that these agendas are the COP's first compromise." There will be more compromises to come. Given the many calls for urgency and rapid action, it was perhaps fitting to start with substance. Many looked toward agenda items that they hoped would be positively concluded in Glasgow, with a seasoned delegate quietly confident on Article 6.