

Differences continue to brew behind closed doors

Bonn, 22 October (Indrajit Bose) — Parties expressed concern at the mode of work in the spin-off groups, and the G77 and China presented concrete proposals on it but the pace remained slow in the spin-off groups.

Some developed country Parties still want to have conceptual discussions; Parties are adding new proposals, leading to limited progress in the spin-offs.

Negotiations continued in spin-off groups through 20-21 October at the ongoing climate talks in Bonn, taking place on 19- 23 October.

Below is a snapshot of what happened in the spin-offs as reported by the co-facilitators at the stocktaking session on 21 October and also from those close to the negotiations.

Mitigation

Franz Perrez (Switzerland), lead co-facilitator for the mitigation spin-off, reported to the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action under the Convention (ADP) that Parties were first given the opportunity to identify whether there were any omissions of Parties' proposals in the text. He said that some Parties asked for changes to be included. He also said that the group discussed the paragraph on long-term goal, but Parties could not agree on it. He said he had invited Parties to develop clear options and hand in bridging proposals. He further said that he sensed disappointment in the room owing to either negotiations not progressing fast enough or due to lack of time to look in-depth into all proposals.

Sources told Third World Network that developed countries introduced new concepts such as 'climate forcers' to the paragraph and other elements which led to further disagreements. There were two broad options emerging, one with a quantifiable target and another option that alluded to an

aspirational goal with no timing of how the long-term goal could be achieved. It was obvious Parties could not reach consensus, said a developing country negotiator. Sources also said that the EU suggested that since Parties would not be able to solve the problem here (in Bonn), it was best to tease out options for the ministers or the heads of delegations to resolve. The speakers' list could not be concluded on 20 October and the mitigation spin-off group will resume at 10 am on 22 October.

Adaptation and Loss and Damage

Andrea Guerrero (Colombia), lead co-facilitator for adaptation and loss and damage in her report back to the ADP said that Parties had done a first reading and had discussed paragraph by paragraph at the spin-off. There were proposals to bring back text from the Co-Chairs' initial non-paper and the spin-off also discussed language on the link between adaptation and mitigation and on including language on human rights and gender. She said consultations on some of the issues discussed would continue.

On loss and damage, Guerrero said that Parties had finished the first reading and agreed to delete the option present in the Co-Chairs' text and had introduced language on loss and damage. She expressed concern on the pace of negotiations and said that there was little consolidation. "Text has grown and we have many paragraphs," she said adding that this method was not taking Parties towards a short text. She urged Parties to work together on bridging proposals.

According to sources, Switzerland had initially suggested that the text on loss and damage be bracketed and Canada had inserted a "no-option" for loss and damage in the agreement. However, G77 and China stood united on the issue of loss and damage in that they see it as an integral part of the agreement.

Finance

Georg Borsting (Norway), co-facilitating the finance spin-off group, said in his report back at the stocktake that Parties had first identified missing elements and that some Parties had called for text inputs to be reflected in the text. He said Parties would hopefully be able to continue discussions outside of the spin-offs and added that there would not be enough time for negotiations on the text if Parties don't engage bilaterally and come up with bridging proposals.

He also said conceptual discussions had taken place on sources, scale, balance of thematic funding and action taken by Parties. He added that the co-facilitators would prepare a new iteration for the finance section of the text, which would reflect discussion of the two days and which would include proposals on streamlining.

A developing country negotiator though expressed concern over the US's approach in the finance spin-off group. "They say they are not running away from their responsibility but that the new agreement must reflect new realities and the world has changed considerably since 1992 when the Convention was signed," the negotiator said. "The EU is of the view that contentious issues in finance should be left to the ministers to handle. The central question in finance is who provides what for whom," according to the negotiator.

The finance spin-off also tackled sources and scale and Switzerland objected to a 50:50 allocation for mitigation and adaptation, and said it did not want to use a number since it is a durable agreement, the negotiator said.

Technology development and transfer, and capacity building

Artur Runge-Metzger (the EU) reported to the ADP that the co-facilitators had requested Parties to submit their proposals that have been omitted from the text.

According to sources, the general sentiment was that the negotiations should be based on the 'surgical insertions' provided by Parties on 19 October, however the co-facilitator did allow for new insertions. One developing country delegate said that a group of developed countries had asked for the removal of references to certain Articles and paragraphs in the Convention but this was objected to by developing countries.

Norway reportedly submitted a new paragraph to

say that all Parties should work on enabling environment to attract private sector for business. "The present text has a formulation, but they elaborated it in the form of a new paragraph," said a developing country negotiator.

"The other partners did not engage constructively to address barriers and wanted to talk further (on concepts). We had sufficient discussions on concepts at ADP 2.10 (the previous ADP session held from 31 August to 4 September). Developed countries were expanding text with new language, which did not prove helpful," the negotiator said, adding that a key grouping of developing countries suggested that Parties go for screen-based live editing and collapse options but it was eventually decided that Parties would meet informally and come up with bridging proposals.

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On capacity building, developing countries provided options to reflect differentiation in one of the paragraphs. However, since the speakers' list was not closed, discussions would resume at the next spin-off group on technology and capacity building.

Transparency

Fook Seng Kwok (Singapore), the lead co-facilitator for transparency said that the spin-off group dealt with capturing inputs from Parties first and then moved to substance. They also had a quick thematic overview of what each paragraph dealt with and one proposal was made to collapse options. He said differences remained on whether the transparency system should remain differentiated. He also said that Parties had assigned work to the co-facilitators to also work on presenting some options for streamlining text to Parties at the next spin-off.

"There is a different understanding of transparency among our partners," said a developing country negotiator and added that to bridge proposals, they went into an informal-informal setting. "We discussed differentiated transparency system and came up with four clear options. We have also asked the co-facilitators to bridge some proposals," the negotiator said, adding, "The mood in the room was constructive and certainly way better than that in mitigation."

Workstream 2 on pre-2020 action

Aya Yoshida (Japan), the lead co-facilitator for Workstream 2 said Parties had decided to go line-by-line of the Workstream 2 draft decision. She added that Parties would come up with bridging proposals and that they would consider the Technical Examination Process (TEP) on Adaptation. In the spin-off group on 21 October, adaptation experts were present along with the Co-Chair of the Adaptation Committee, Juan Hoffmaister (Bolivia), who briefed Parties on the work of the Committee, said Yoshida in her report back to the ADP. She also said that the co-facilitators had taken note of Parties' proposals to consolidate parts of the text where they saw convergence or divergence. She added there was a strong desire among Parties to engage offline to crystallise options and streamline text.

Speaking to TWN, a developing country negotiator said, "Developed countries wanted to discuss thematic areas whereas we said we should begin from the preamble. We spent a lot of time just explaining why we need a technical examination process on adaptation. We also said that for workstream 2 it is not up for negotiations since the

negotiations had already been done. Workstream 2 is for implementation to address the implementation gap that exists as a result of developed countries not fulfilling their commitments." Another negotiator told TWN that it was a "waste of time" as no real negotiations happened. Yet another delegate said that "we were consumed in conceptual discussion".

As some of the information from within the spin-off groups trickled out, many observers said that it was clear why Japan, part of the Umbrella Group of countries, wanted the spin-offs to remain closed to observers and why the European Union had remained silent to the call of G77 and China and Mexico to open up spin off groups to observers.

There was an action on 21 October morning organised by civil society organisations to protest the Co-Chairs' decision to lock out observers from spin-off negotiations followed by a press conference that included Mali on behalf of the African Group, Maldives on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States and the Democratic Republic of Congo (who is also a co-facilitator of a spin-off group), CSO and trade union representatives.