



Co-Chairs' Summary of the Presidencies' Consultations on Transparency and Common Time Frames

28-29 April 2021

Introduction

We were pleased to convene the fourth monthly multilateral consultation, from 28-29 April 2021, focusing on issues related to transparency and common time frames for nationally determined contributions (NDCs). The objective of the consultation was to provide a platform for Parties to discuss key issues, signal expectations in advance of the June intersessional and for the rest of the year, and converge towards solutions ahead of COP26, noting that transparency and common time frames are two of the three key unresolved issues related to the Paris "Rulebook". Participating Heads of Delegation (HoDs) provided clear and constructive input on these topics, reflecting both on the progress made to date as well as the urgent need to further advance discussions on both issues prior to COP26.

Following opening remarks from Mr. Julio Cordano and Mr. Archie Young, representing the COP25 and COP26 presidencies, welcoming remarks were provided by the Chair of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) Mr. Tosi Mpanu Mpanu and the Chair of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) Ms. Marianne Karlsen.

Participants were then invited to share their views on three guiding questions which were provided in advance:

- What are the key issues under the Enhanced Transparency Framework (ETF) that require the attention of the HoDs, and what solutions can we consider to enable adoption of the ETF at COP26?
- What guidance can HoDs give to technical experts as they progress detailed work this year on the ETF? How could this work serve negotiations at COP26?
- What are the important considerations to be addressed in a substantive outcome on common time frames at COP26, and what concrete steps do we need to take between now and COP26 in order to resolve common time frames by then?

Transparency

Identifying the key issues for remaining work

From the outset, Parties clearly recognized the importance of transparency (of both action and support) for effective implementation of the Paris Agreement. Parties also shared the view that we urgently need to make progress on this issue to complete the mandated work in Glasgow, which is vital for Parties to prepare and submit the first biennial transparency reports by 2024 and implement the ETF under the Paris Agreement. Many Parties recalled the underlying principles outlined in paragraph 3 of the modalities, procedures and guidelines for the ETF (MPGs)¹, and that those principles should serve as a guide for the work.

¹ See the annex to decision 18/CMA.1.

HoDs generally shared the view that Parties have different starting points in terms of their experience in reporting, and that **capacity-building is an important aspect** that should be taken into account. In this context, several Parties drew attention to the need for support to enable developing countries to transition to the ETF. Development of software and provision of related training were discussed as practical solutions that could facilitate reporting under the ETF and help Parties reduce reporting burden.

Several HoDs reflected on the importance of common reporting tables and formats as a tool to help Parties achieve the principles of transparency, accuracy, completeness, consistency and comparability, in accordance with the MPGs. Some Parties also reiterated that the mandate is to develop common reporting tables and formats that can accommodate reporting by all Parties, taking into account the diversity of NDCs.

Parties acknowledged that, given the volume and complexity of the outstanding work, **further technical work is needed** on developing common reporting tables for GHG inventory, the common tabular format of the structured summary, and the common tabular format of financial, technology development and transfer, and capacity-building support. Many Parties called for focused technical discussion on concrete options to identify practical solutions.

Most Parties consistently **identified flexibility** as a key issue for the remaining work on transparency, although we heard differing views on how to apply the principle in developing the common reporting tables and tabular formats. Many Parties noted that flexibility provisions are clearly established in the MPGs and the focus should be on how to operationalize them. On the other hand, some Parties emphasized that application of flexibility should be self-determined by the Parties and reporting formats should enable broader flexibility in the scope, frequency and level of detail of reporting, including an option to delete specific rows and columns of tables.

Meanwhile, the **linkage between Article 6 and 13** was identified as another key issue by many groups and Parties, in relation to the common tabular format of the structured summary for tracking progress of NDCs. A number of Parties suggested that guidance provided in paragraph 77 (d) of the MPGs provided the basis for the work on the structured summary, whereas some other Parties were of the view that this work should be guided by the decision under Article 6 to be agreed at COP26. Some HoDs emphasized the need for strengthened coordination among the experts working on Article 6 and Article 13 negotiations.

We also heard a number of Parties stressing the need for a holistic and balanced approach in discussing related issues. There was a call to seek a balance between transparency of action and support. Furthermore, several Parties drew attention to the importance of reporting and review outlines and training of technical experts as part of the mandated work of SBSTA on transparency, in addition to the common reporting tables and tabular formats. Some Parties also made reference to the related agenda items under the SBI, including the terms of reference of the Consultative Group of Experts and provision of financial and technical support in relation to reporting of developing countries.

How to make progress ahead of COP26

In reflecting on the way forward, HoDs signaled strong support for continuing virtual technical discussions in an informal setting ahead of COP26 and welcomed the SBSTA Chair's plan to hold an informal technical workshop on transparency from 5 to 7 May. Nonetheless, we also heard concerns on the challenges of virtual meetings, including the issue of time zones, limited connectivity in developing countries, and the need for group coordination.

Parties generally showed appreciation for the SBSTA Chair's recent call for submission of further views from Parties. Recognizing we only have a few months before COP26, many groups and Parties stressed that more time and space is needed to discuss concrete options and examples. Several Parties called for

tasking the secretariat or the SBSTA Chair to consolidate and synthesize options for reporting tables to facilitate further discussion and take the work forward. Many groups and Parties also highlighted the need to capture the progress made in the informal discussions in written format, for example through a non-paper or reflections note from the SBSTA Chair, to avoid repetition and move forward.

Common Time Frames

Identifying the key issues

On common time frames for NDCs, we heard very clearly that a decision on common time frames is **core to full and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement** as a decision on this outstanding issue is essential to facilitate the preparation of NDCs in time for the next cycle, as well as to ensuring that related processes under the Agreement function as intended. For example, a decision on the length of common time frames has implications for alignment with the global stocktake where Parties are expected to consider aggregate progress on tackling climate change when determining their future NDCs, as well as the ambition cycle where NDCs are expected to reflect continuously ratcheted-up efforts.

Some Parties referred to past decisions, such as Decision 6/CMA.1, in which Parties agreed that they shall apply common time frames to their NDCs to be implemented from 2031 onwards. However, many Parties mentioned the **urgent need to agree on the length of common time frames by COP26** for several reasons, including that it supports ambition and action, which are both core to efforts to address climate change, and because Parties will soon need to begin preparing and domestically approving NDCs in order to submit them in 2025. Some Parties also noted that any solution would need to carefully balance the nationally determined nature of NDCs and national circumstances with the benefits of a common time frame for all future NDCs, which could enhance the comparability of efforts. Some Parties highlighted the importance of aligning domestic processes so that the outcome matches the Paris Agreement cycle.

In considering the options for a common time frame, Parties noted that the two main proposals under consideration include **5-year or 10-year time frames**, with other proposals involving combinations that build on these two. Some interventions highlighted the benefits of using a 5-year common time frame, noting synergies with other processes in the Paris Agreement which also use 5-year cycles, such as the global stocktake, the “ambition cycle” and the cycle of communicating NDCs. Proponents of a 5-year option also noted that, in comparison with a 10-year time frame, a more frequent review - and ratcheting up - of ambition is necessary if Parties are to achieve net zero by 2050. Some Parties also indicated that 5-year cycles could facilitate a faster adaptation to rapid social, economic and technological changes. Reflecting on their own experiences, some Parties also recalled that 10-year domestic planning cycles can still effectively align with 5-year common time frames, where, for example, a 5-year time frame serves as the mid-point of a 10-year planning process with interim review processes. There was also a suggestion for agreement on common time frames to focus on the next cycle of NDCs only. Finally, in considering issues related to the options under discussion, we heard the need for more clarification on what an “indicative NDC” could entail as well as how much time should exist between the communication and the start of an NDC. In addition, some interventions also suggested the need for a political decision on top of any technical discussions.

How to make progress ahead of COP26

Regarding the way forward on common time frames, the majority of Parties highlighted the need to focus discussions from here forward on a limited number of options. Many Parties suggested that this could be achieved by streamlining or consolidating the elements included in past proposals. Parties raised different views as to who would lead these efforts (i.e. whether the SBI Chair or the COP25 and

COP26 Presidencies) and on when such a document may be considered (i.e. whether in advance, or during the June session). Interventions also indicated the need for more time to be allocated for discussion in June than in previous SBI sessions, and for options for intersessional work after June but before COP26.² Finally, several Parties called for strong leadership by the Presidencies, and in order to advance the issue in time for agreement at COP26, several Parties asked for any progress made in informal consultations to be captured in written form by either the SB Chairs or the COP25 and COP26 Presidencies.

Conclusion

We would very much like to thank the participants for joining this discussion on ways forward on these two key issues. We recognise the issue of working across multiple time zones in the virtual setting and note that some Parties highlighted the importance of capturing discussions in writing for the benefit of those who could not attend.

Reflecting on the interventions from the two sessions, we were very pleased to see that Parties were willing to share their views and engage with the input from others in a constructive way. We heard very clearly that resolving the outstanding issues on both transparency and common time frames is crucial to a successful COP26, as well as to ensuring longer-term implementation of the Paris Agreement. We also note that Parties will need clarity on these issues in order to prepare for upcoming reporting under the ETF, as well as to prepare their NDCs in advance of the next cycle. Finally, we heard that unlocking these issues will require a combination of both technical work at the expert level, as well as political leadership and guidance from HoDs, in order to set the scene for decision-making by Ministers.

We would like to highlight that the draft provisional agendas for the June sessional period have been made available, and the Subsidiary Body Chairs have published their respective scenario notes as well as a joint modalities note. We will continue to coordinate closely with both SB Chairs and the secretariat over the coming months.

We look forward to future opportunities to reflect further on these issues, advance understanding of technical and political considerations, and build momentum towards agreement. We welcome the discussion that took place at the recent Petersberg Climate Dialogue in that context.

This is the fourth time we have met in this manner to explore new ideas and ways forward on key issues. We look forward to identifying further opportunities for chairs and coordinators of negotiating groups as well as HoDs to work together to find solutions on the road to Glasgow and beyond.

² The Presidencies would like to note that Parties can make submissions at any time without the need for an explicit call for submissions. Voluntary submissions can be found at: <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/submissionsstaging/Pages/Home.aspx>