

Deep differences over establishing a forum on impact of response measures

Bonn, 15 June (Hilary Chiew) - Parties argued over the necessity to have a dedicated forum on the impact of the implementation of response measures at the first session of a discussion forum jointly convened by the Chairs of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI) and Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) at the ongoing climate talks.

Following a Special Event on 13 June, Parties are supposed to discuss the content and modalities of a work programme and a possible forum in two sessions held on 14 and 15 June. At the Event, several Parties and Groups of Parties made presentations and six technical papers were also presented (See TWN Bonn Climate News Update No. 21).

However, on 14 June, developed country Parties said there are existing channels for information sharing as requested by developing countries but the latter felt that those channels were insufficient and asked Annex I Parties to respect the mandate of the Cancun decisions on this matter adopted last December.

(They are referring to paragraph 93 of the Cancun decision (1/CP.16) that reads: “*Further decides to provide a forum on the impact of the implementation of response measures, and to that end requests the Chairs of the SBSTA and SBI to convene such a forum at the 34th and 35th sessions of these bodies, with the objective of developing a work programme under the subsidiary bodies to address these impacts, with a view to adopting, at the 17th session of the Conference of the Parties, modalities for the operationalisation of the work programme and a possible forum on response measures*”).

Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China (G77-China) sought clarification on the status of the ‘special event’ and asked for a report

to be released with the general conclusion and summary.

It further said that the vast majority of views reflected the need for a work programme to reflect the specific needs of developing countries and it is not helpful to say that there are convergence and divergence in views as a large number of presentations converge on the view that impacts from the implementation of response measures are real.

It reiterated G77-China’s position that a forum would serve as a direct platform for exchange of views, and serve to promote understanding of the consequences and specific nature of the design and implementation of response measures such as trade measures which some developed countries had already implemented and are planning. In this context, it said there is a need to discuss the consequences and actions of developed countries to facilitate technology collaboration because it will need help from experts to assist developing country Parties.

Saudi Arabia supported the move as it said clarity on the status and a detailed, formal report of the ‘special event’ is needed. **India** said its concerns should be reflected and that should be the basis form which to start work.

After consulting with the SBI Chair Robert Owen-Jones (Australia), SBSTA’s Chair Mama Konate (Mali) said the ‘special event’ was to deepen understanding of the issue and concerns of Parties would be reflected in the report expected to be issued on 15 June.

Saudi Arabia said the ‘special event’ should be characterized as more than deepening understanding but to provide input to the issue and thus all the presentations should be attached

so that Parties could benefit from it and use that as a starting point.

Australia said it would like to see the report reflecting balanced views and does not see the need to attach presentations to the report as it is sufficient that they are made available on the UNFCCC's website.

The **European Union** said the 'special event' was stimulating and extremely informative. It was of the view that it is useful to continue sharing ideas. While it expects to see a completed report of the event, it also hoped the report will accurately reflect the exchanges and preferred not to go into further details on what messages to draw from the event. It expressed concerns about where the discussions were heading.

The joint forum Co-Chair Konate then urged Parties to get into real work by looking at the lists of suggested questions for discussion in the information note handed out so that views on the elements proposed could be collected including those identified in the 'special event'.

The suggested questions listed as items 12 and 13 in the information note are:

"With respect to the content of and modalities for the work programme to address the impact of the implementation of response measures:

(a) What should the objective and scope of the work programme be?

(b) How should the work programme be structured? What activities and milestones should it generate?

(c) How should the work programme be managed (i.e. including how stakeholder engagement should be addressed)?

(d) When should the work programme be reviewed? When should possible further activities be discussed?

(e) What links to the existing processes (eg national communications, a possible forum) should be established and examined?

With respect to the content of and modalities for a possible forum on response measures:

(a) What could the role, form, scope and functions of a possible forum be? How should it relate to the work programme?

(b) How should a possible forum be organized, including its duration and participation?

(c) What relationship should exist with the COP and/or the subsidiary bodies, including reporting?

(d) How should a possible forum build on existing channels or institutions, and link to relevant existing expert groups?"

At this point, the **EU** said it needed clarification on how to move forward. It said between the work programme and a possible forum, which one are we addressing? It likened the exercise to between building a new house or considering an extension as it was of the opinion that there is already quite a lot of work on the issue of response measures. It stressed the importance of information in national communications and if Parties are to work out what to put in a work programme, they have to think how to build on that and what are the gaps and how to improve on the weaknesses such as including information that is lacking.

It further said there are a number of streams already moving forward under the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol and we have to relate to them, avoid duplication and strengthening them, adding that it was not convinced that a new platform in the 'proposed' forum will add value bearing in mind the limited time available.

It also said the issue of response measures should examine both positive and negative impacts as the wording in the Cancun decision is 'impact on Parties' and those Parties could also include developed countries.

Saudi Arabia said Cancun decision is very specific wherein it addresses requests for developed countries to minimize their negative impacts from the implementation of response measures on developing countries and to provide finance, technology and support capacity building.

It appreciated the Chair's approach of laying down a number of questions to take Parties forward as a good one, starting with the objective of the work programme and moving on to the structure and scope where the activities could be built up. Parties will then need to look at the modalities of the operation which indicate the duration, participation and number of meetings. It added that direction comes clearly from the Convention and the Cancun decision that provided the mandate, which is to find out how policies can be implemented to avoid economic and social consequences to developing countries and provide assistance to those Parties affected.

Joint forum co-Chair Konate said the intention was to go step by step and if there is some work (on the issue) underway elsewhere, it is up to Parties to inform the work programme that is

being built. He noted that the ‘special event’ allowed a large exchange of views and Parties should concentrate on building the elements of the work programme and the modalities.

The **EU** said a work programme should bring together existing work streams into a single work stream, citing paragraph 92 of 1/CP.16, which includes positive effects, and evidence of actual impacts.

Australia echoed the EU’s comment that Parties should look at what we have already, referring to existing channels, adding that it would be unfortunate if existing channels are not used to push the agenda forward.

Argentina for G77-China said existing channels are meant to share information but they are not enough. For example, national communications are a one-way information sharing but developing countries wanted a two-way exchange of views. It elaborated that national communications for many developing countries are presented every four to five years, resulting in negative effects being reported 10 years later. Hence, we need a direct platform to address this, which is through the forum and urged Parties to cooperate on this issue.

In supporting G77-China’s assertion, **Saudi Arabia** said the national communications do not facilitate exchange or dialogue. It said Parties may have to wait a further five years for Annex I Parties after reporting a 10-year-old negative effect on their response measures, adding that Parties will be negotiating for a long time while lots of people lose their jobs. In response to the EU’s house-building analogy, Saudi Arabia said the COP tells

us to go and build the house but did not tell Parties how to build it and that the mandate to build is very clear and is not contingent on any existing processes that exist.

Mexico agreed that the forum is needed as it would be a special space and it is a clear and specific mandate of the Cancun decision that the subsidiary bodies should develop the forum.

The **EU** said developed countries are already providing supplementary information every year and urged Parties to use them. On the need for a platform to exchange views, it said it would like to know the nature of the exchange; whether they are conducted in a meeting room like this session here or when Annex I Parties are developing their policies.

To this, **China** said the 5th national communication of the EU had 30 pages on response policies but only three pages refer to the consequences of the response measures and half of them are focusing on positive effects. Furthermore, it said, national communications were just focusing on the national level but not the international level, which is insufficient to reflect all the effects. Thus, a forum at the international level is important and should be separated from existing channels, adding that there is no channel focusing on response measures’ impacts.

Co-Chair Konate asked Parties to bring their information to the second session of discussion on 15 June and reiterated that since the mandate is to develop a forum, and if Parties take step by step then the goal can be achieved in an effective manner.