

Orderly and timely outcome with no surprises, say COP 21 Presidency

Bonn, 10 June (Hilary Chiew) – The in-coming French presidency of the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) stressed that it does not want surprises in Paris but an ‘orderly and timely’ delivery of an agreement that lasts.

At the open-ended informal consultation to solicit views on the expectation of the Paris COP from Parties and observers held on 9 June, the Special Representative of the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Laurence Tubiana, apologised (to Parties) if the in-coming presidency was ‘pressing too much’ and sought Parties’ understanding to put themselves in the shoes of the French.

Emphasising on inclusiveness, she explained that timely processing and preparing of what is needed for the core agreement and COP decisions are very important to ensure that all small and big countries’ voices are listened to and no one is left behind.

Explaining the sentiment of the incoming COP President Laurent Fabius, the Foreign Minister of France, about an ‘agreement text’ by October, she said it would be very important to have by then the main elements of the global deal that everybody wanted.

At the opening of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP) on 1 June, Tubiana assured that the French Presidency is not working on a text and does not want to produce a text.

On inclusiveness, she said the duty of the COP Presidency is to listen to every voice and the responsibility for an agreement lies on all Parties.

“We cannot put the responsibility on the Co-chairs. We have to deliver it ourselves. We have to mobilise at all levels ... negotiators, ministers and heads of government. It is not easy to explain to the outside world what we are doing here but we must work on

the message that we are working hard to deliver and we have to make it work together,” she added.

She said she is hopeful as she saw immense mobilisation and willingness to act. She said for the first time since her involvement in this process in 1997, she saw that each country wanted to bring home the result of the international discussion and make the change at home.

Tubiana said the agreement will deal with mitigation and adaptation, the latter a priority for many countries that are suffering from the impacts of climate change. She also said a balanced agreement must taken into account each country’s responsibility and having the six elements (mitigation, adaptation, finance, technology development and transfer, capacity building and transparency of action and support) of the Durban mandate.

She said to mobilise the US\$100 billion a year by 2020 from both public and private sources, the role of non-state actors is needed. It is not to replace the governments’ efforts but it is about cooperation that is really needed for the climate regime.

She further said that the in-coming Presidency will continue to convene consultations to explore ideas for common ground to ensure success in Paris with two more informal meetings for ministers scheduled for 20 and 21 July. The French are also working closely with the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon as well as the option of inviting heads of states to the first day of the COP.

Argentina said it hoped to sign a good deal in Paris that includes mitigation, adaptation and means of implementation as well as differentiation.

Concurring with Tubiana that the secret of the success of the Paris COP will be an agreement with means of implementation that Parties are waiting for, Argentina stressed that the agreement will be under the Convention. It said the Convention is ‘wise’ and

Parties had tried to implement it through the Kyoto Protocol (KP) which is a top down approach and which is good but Parties were not ambitious enough.

Although Argentina approved of the second commitment period (of the KP), it is disappointed that the obligation of developed countries are not very high. And as a result of this lack of ambition, we now try to go for bottom up approach and it hoped this will work.

Argentina will do its part but emphasised that it will be under the Convention and with differentiation.

The European Union expressed full confidence in the in-coming Presidency team and it shared the French vision of a Paris COP that is transparent and inclusive. It said the group is concerned over the gap between the negotiation and a political decision at the ADP discussion, noting that it is important to get a 'text' out soon so decision makers can engage going forward. An early text will also contribute to the media narrative that the international community is taking climate action seriously and everyone is on board to make the goal a reality.

Australia speaking for the Umbrella Group wanted the Paris COP to represent significant collective effort and put us on the path of global warming below 2C. It said an important part of Paris will be the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) that Parties will bring forward this year, particularly from the advanced economies, noting that many Umbrella Group members had submitted theirs.

It also would like to see broad participation by including non-state actors and welcomed the in-coming Presidency support on this issue. It said our job is to deliver to our ministers a draft agreement as close to the final deal in Paris and there is less than six months to set up a concise, durable agreement and accompanying decisions to operationalise the agreement.

Maldives speaking for the Alliance of Small Island States said one part of the "Paris Package" should consist of an ambitious, legally binding Protocol, under the Convention, capable of limiting warming to below 1.5 degrees.

It said in addition to addressing mitigation, adaptation, finance, technology development and transfer, transparency of action and support, and capacity building in a balanced manner, the 2015 agreement must also anchor and give permanence to Loss and Damage.

Maldives said AOSIS also sees a series of supporting decisions as a part of the "Paris Package". We have had some very good discussions here in Bonn on the workstream 2 (pre-2020) decision and are optimistic that we will continue to work constructively to achieve a strong decision on workstream 2, which we also see as a critical component of the Paris Package. We believe that the workstream 2 decision should be separate from the covering decision for the 2015 agreement and consistent with the mandate of the ADP for workstream 2.

It welcomed the vision of achieving an outcome in an orderly and timely manner, noting that many AOSIS members' delegations are small and the practice of previous COPs of late nights and sessions running dozens of hours beyond the scheduled closing time often resulted in those delegations being left out of the final decision making process. It therefore welcomes efforts to limit long days and last minute scrambling to reach a transparent and inclusive outcome.

Singapore adding its voice to AOSIS said it would like to commend France for the inclusiveness and assurance to work together in a transparent manner to make COP21 a success.

The Trade Union constituency said the agreement must commit to ensure just transition of the workforce. Recalling the walk-out protest by civil society groups at the Warsaw COP (in December 2013) as they witnessed clear backtracking by Parties and the call by the in-coming Presidency for inclusiveness, it highlighted the discussion in the programme budget of the UNFCCC where support for civil society involvement could be limited and urged for assurance of the participation of civil society.