

APA Co-chairs propose single contact group to address substantive work

Bonn, 23 May (Indrajit Bose) — The Co-chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement (APA) under the UNFCCC, proposed to conduct work in a single contact group that will begin on Monday, 23 May, with an initial exchange of views among Parties on the substantive issues on its agenda.

This proposal by the Co-chairs, **Sarah Baashan (Saudi Arabia)** and **Jo Tyndall (New Zealand)**, was made during an informal session of the APA on 21 May, at the ongoing Bonn talks, which was open to observers. Parties generally agreed to the Co-chairs' proposal and gave their feedback during the session.

The Co-chairs' proposal emerged following discussions held on 20 May where Parties provided their [preliminary views](#) on the organization of work, after the adoption of the APA [agenda](#).

Tyndall said that the Co-chairs' proposal is for Parties to meet in plenary (in the formal session) on Monday (23 May) to agree on the organization of work. "The plenary would establish a single contact group, which can begin right away to have an initial exchange of views on agenda items 3 to 7. For the remaining Monday morning, we will discuss design issues within the agenda items. At the end of the day we will set the scene by giving you questions. On Tuesday (24 May), we will begin with focused technical discussion, with one and half hours set aside for each item," she said further.

[Item 3 of the agenda covers further guidance in relation to the mitigation section of decision 1/CP.21 on (a) features of nationally determined contributions (NDCs), (b) information to facilitate clarity, transparency and understanding of NDCs, and (c) accounting for Parties' NDCs.

Item 4 agenda is on further guidance in relation to the adaptation communication including, inter alia, as a component of NDCs, while item 5 is on

modalities, procedures and guidelines for the transparency framework for action and support.

Item 6 is on matters relating to the global stocktake and item 7 is on modalities and procedures for the committee to facilitate implementation and promote compliance.

Item 8 is on further matters related to implementation of the Paris Agreement (PA), which includes (a) preparing for entry into force of the PA, (b) preparing for the convening of the first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA1), and (c) taking stock of progress made by the subsidiary and constituted bodies in relation to their mandated work under the PA and section III of decision 1/CP.21.) (Section III of the decision refers to 'decisions to give effect to the Agreement.]

Tyndall added that for agenda item 8, the framing could be made with a briefing from the Secretariat on the early entry into force of the PA.

"At the end of the day, we are not necessarily talking about drafting of conclusions for each item, but Parties could focus on calls for submissions and options that emerge for inter-sessional work if any. APA would then meet in plenary on Thursday (26 May)," she said.

"Those who made suggestions for technical workshops have to keep in mind that these would have budgetary implications," said Tyndall.

(The next meeting of the APA and the subsidiary bodies will be in November, during the 22nd meeting of the Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC in Marrakech, Morocco. On 20 May, the European Union had proposed that an intersession workshop be thought of between the current Bonn session and COP22).

All Parties expressed support for the Co-chairs' proposal but developing countries raised concerns

over proposals for having inter-session work of the APA. The concerns stemmed mainly over the need to ensure balance in the progress of work in APA and the progress of the work in the subsidiary bodies and other constituted bodies tasked to carry out the mandates in relation to the implementation of the PA.

Thailand for the **Group of 77 and China** said that Parties needed to look carefully at the outcome of the Bonn meeting. Since discussions on all items are unlikely to end with substantive conclusions, it said that apart from a reflections note of the Co-chairs, there could also be a summary by the Co-chairs.

It also said that the proposal of going through all the items was consistent with the G77 position and stressed that all these items should be discussed in plenary. On the proposal for focused technical discussions, Thailand said that these need to have prior guidance from the plenary.

On intersession work, “if such is required”, it said that Parties would need to take stock before deciding on the need for such intersession work and this would have to be thought through carefully because there could be limitations on whether all the countries could participate.

Speaking for the **Like Minded Developing Countries (LMDC)**, **Venezuela** said the work of the APA and the subsidiary bodies coming from the mandates from COP21 form a single package. Their work must therefore advance coherently and in an integrated, comprehensive and balanced manner.

“The discussion of the various agenda items must be undertaken by the APA sitting in plenary session under the leadership of the Co-chairs. Should the state of the discussions merit it, the APA could decide to set up not more than two contact groups chaired by each of the Co-chairs to focus Parties' discussions on particular topics or issues that may be assigned to these contact groups by the APA. This will ensure maximum participation from all Parties,” said Venezuela. It underlined that such contact groups should be open to observers.

Transparency and inclusiveness are paramount, therefore, the APA should avoid at this session setting up informal small group discussions on specific topics in order to avoid creating an ever-growing multiplicity of meetings that Parties with small delegations will not be able to participate itself, it said.

“We see the work of the APA at this session and to COP22 to be focused on encouraging and

providing Parties with the opportunity to express and share their views and perspectives both on the floor and through submissions regarding the substantive issues reflected in the agenda. This will allow Parties to obtain greater clarity regarding each other's views, and hopefully generate greater levels of understanding that can eventually serve as the basis for future consensus,” said Venezuela.

Seeking to achieve conclusions prematurely at the expense of transparency, clarity, and inclusiveness, may damage and prolong our process more than taking a deliberate and inclusively transparent process that may seem to be slow at first but in the end will be more effective in bringing about a legitimate outcome, Venezuela added.

“We have heard suggestions to have an additional inter-session meeting of the APA after this session and before COP22. Doing so could imbalance the single package coming from COP21 by providing the APA more time to do its work than the subsidiary bodies that also have mandates coming from COP21. This could damage the trust and good faith that we have built up, and could then complicate the sharing of perspectives and achieving any eventual consensus,” it said.

Speaking for the **African Group, Kenya** said any inter-session work would need the effective participation of all Parties and this needed to be taken into account. It also said that the APA sessions needed to be open to observers.

Speaking for the **Least Developed Countries (LDCs)**, the **Democratic Republic of Congo** said allocating time to agenda item 8(c) (on the taking stock of progress made in the subsidiary and constituted bodies in relation to the mandated work under the PA) was important. It also stressed that no more than two informal sessions should be held in parallel. It said that these consultations should be open to observers, and that the work of the group in Bonn can be captured through a reflections note.

Speaking for the **Arab Group, Saudi Arabia** said the Co-chairs' engagement would determine the success of APA. It also said that if there were any spin-off groups, Parties needed to have clear mandates and objectives for a clear outcome. Saudi Arabia stressed that whenever Parties concluded a session, it would be important to have clarity on what Parties have arrived at and how the output could be used to move forward.

Speaking for the **Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)**, **Maldives** sought clarification on the inter-session meeting and asked what work would

be carried out.

Tyndall responded that the Co-chairs did not have a fixed view on the inter-session work. “We are responding to a point raised yesterday by Parties that a technical workshop should be done in the inter-session. Parties have to think through this in terms of participation or cost implications,” said Tyndall.

Speaking for the **Independent Alliance of Latin America and the Caribbean (AILAC)**, Colombia proposed division of work into two parallel groups and asked the Co-chairs to chair the groups so that double the amount of work could be achieved.

Tyndall responded that the Co-chairs would talk to the Secretariat to see what might be done and indicated time constraints of holding sessions in parallel because the subsidiary bodies were also meeting along-side the APA.

India said it would be useful to start work in the setting proposed by the Co-chairs before diving into the details and that Parties could come to a contact group later. India sought clarity on the inter-session work and workshops. “Will it be part of our negotiations process? Will all Parties participate? Will the UNFCCC or the COP Presidency organize this work? What will be the mandate? How will the mandates of the subsidiary bodies be taken up?” asked India. It also sought some vision of the future roadmap and what Parties were thinking for Marrakesh and beyond to get an understanding of timelines.

Tyndall responded that the questions raised by India needed to be answered by Parties. As Co-chairs, they would provide Parties with options with their implications.

Cuba said the whole outcome of Paris was a balanced outcome and it was an interlinked package. “By advancing APA’s work in an inter-sessional, we may be leaving behind important and prominent work under the subsidiary bodies. That would be problematic,” it said. “We would want everything to progress at the same level,” it added.

On the outcome of work, **Argentina** stressed that it would agree to any note from the Co-chairs so long as it took into account convergences as well as divergences among Parties for further work.

The Russian Federation said any inter-sessional work must be thoroughly examined and said there were constraints to use workshops as a method, along with other financial constraints.

The **European Union** said as APA’s work evolved,

the mode of work would change. It added that carrying forth work inter-sessionally would keep the work going and that it would reflect on the idea of workshop or series of workshops to see what are the pressing issues. It welcomed progress of work in the other subsidiary bodies, and said that once APA broke into smaller groups for discussions on issues, there would be progress in the work.

Speaking for the **Environmental Integrity Group, Switzerland** said the APA should ideally be able to establish more focused groups, depending on the progress and logistics. It added that agenda item 8(c) (on the taking stock of progress made in the other bodies) was not a substantive issue. It also said that on the preparation for entry into force, Parties had been consulted by the incoming COP22 Presidency on how to handle a possible rapid entry into force, and this would ease the burden of the APA.

Tyndall responded that while the work on entry into force by the incoming Presidency was at a higher political level, the work of the APA was more in the technical and legal level. She added that they expect complementarity between the work by the incoming Presidency and APA.

Norway added that there might be rich discussions during substantive work. If it led to a situation where Parties were pressed with time, the Co-chairs should consider entering into two parallel processes on an *ad hoc* basis.

Australia said the number of contact groups would depend on the way discussions would go on “items 3 to 7 of the APA agenda”.

The **United States (US)** was in favour of two parallel processes and was open to having facilitated sessions even at the current stage of discussions so that technical experts could begin engaging. It would be useful to have a contact group and overall discussions on the first day of discussions and for Parties to come back together for procedural conclusions, it said. It added that it was open to settings to continue work between Bonn and Marrakesh.

“Issues are at different levels. Some of these will require more unpacking than the others. We hear what countries have to say about balance, but there is a balance about the nature of work under each agenda item. We need to see what the inter-sessional setting would be if we have them,” said the US.

Before closing the meeting, Tyndall added that the

Co-chairs had taken note of the number of calls for parallel sessions to be held and that they would talk to the Secretariat to see if there was any option for doing that. “We support and agree that that would help get into substance, but we can do this if we are not constrained by the number of bodies and the

potential for clashes there. We will reconvene in plenary on Monday morning and we will propose the organization of work and get ahead with it,” said Tyndall.

(Edited by Meena Raman)