

Developing country delegates provide insights on climate negotiations

Bonn, 7 May (TWN)- Delegates from developing countries provided their insights into the on-going negotiations under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement (PA) at a side-event organized on 30 April, at the opening of the Bonn climate talks.

The side-event was organized jointly by Third World Network (TWN) and South Centre (SC) where developing country representatives outlined their expectations for the UNFCCC's 24th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP24), which will be held in December in Poland, and provided their insights on the negotiations, including the contentious issues at hand.

The speakers at the side event included **Walter Schuldt** from **Ecuador**, the former Chair of the G77 and China in 2017, **Kamal Djemouai** representing the **African Group**, **Ayman Shasly** of **Saudi Arabia** who represented the **Arab Group**, and **Pei Liang** from **China**, who is coordinating the issue of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for the **Like Minded Developing Countries (LMDC)**.

Explaining the perspective of the **LMDC** on NDCs, **Pei Liang** said that the main contention in the NDCs negotiations centred around the scope of the NDCs. The question in the negotiating halls is whether guidance on NDCs should cover only mitigation, or be comprehensive, covering mitigation, adaptation and means of implementation. Referring to Article 3 of the PA, which gives it its comprehensiveness, Pei Liang said that there is an attempt to restrict the scope of NDCs discussion under Article 4 of the PA to mitigation. "Article 4 is NDCs and mitigation,"

he stressed.

He also referred to the views of developed countries that discussions on adaptation and means of implementation were happening elsewhere and there was no reason therefore to discuss these in the NDC discussion. He said that the argument needs to be tested for accuracy because guidance for the other topics was not being discussed elsewhere. He gave the example of adaptation communications.

"Adaptation communication has three potential vehicles: (through) national communications, national adaptation plans and/or adaptation as a component of NDCs, but developed countries are reluctant to discuss adaptation as a component of NDCs and do not want to discuss finance, technology development and transfer and capacity building as their contribution. The issues discussed under technology and capacity building streams are general institutional issues but these issues do not touch upon the individual undertaking of developed countries," said Pei Liang.

He also explained why guidance on all aspects of the NDCs is required, adding that when developing countries design their NDCs, they need to know information on projection of finance and technology, so that they can decide on their policies accordingly. "Developed countries should provide us with the means of implementation to enable us to put in place ambitious mitigation goals. There remains an adaptation gap, as well as a support gap. We need this comprehensive picture on global ambition. The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) is the driver for us to take more ambitious action on

an equitable basis. We are undertaking action already. But if we want to be more ambitious, we need to also be more ambitious on support. This is the crux of what is needed for an equitable outcome in COP24,” said Pei Liang.

Djemouai, reflecting the priorities of the **African Group**, said that the African countries were engaged in the process to enhance the implementation of the Convention and for that, they had submitted ambitious NDCs under the PA. He stressed that the fact that the NDCs are conditional upon “real and effective means of implementation” support from the developed countries, should be remembered.

He lamented over the dip in the pledges at the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as well as the limited resources in the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

(During the opening of the Bonn climate talks, the **G77 and China** said that GEF’s 7th replenishment meeting had concluded recently with a total of USD 4.1 billion pledged, of which only USD 3.3 billion was actually new funding. The Group also noted that “climate change will see a 47% decrease in developing country allocations and an aggregate 37% decrease compared to GEF 6”. See TWN Update 2 for more details.)

“What will be the impact of such inadequate resources on our countries?” asked Djemouai, while stressing on Africa’s vulnerability and how crucial efforts on adaptation and loss and damage are for their countries. “There is a problem of balance. We see more detailed work done on mitigation issues as well as on transparency. If you go to finance, or adaptation negotiations, the pace there is very slow and this is of real concern to our group. We need balanced progress across all the issues,” he added. “Besides, it is extremely difficult for African countries to access funding and technology, even small technologies,” he stressed further.

Emphasizing the importance of outcomes from formal processes, Djemouai said that events such as the ‘Talanoa Dialogue’ would not be of much help and Parties must get action done through the formal processes under the UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol and the PA.

(The ‘Talanoa Dialogue’ refers the ‘2018 facilitative dialogue’ agreed to by Parties in

Paris to take stock of the collective efforts of Parties in relation to progress towards the long-term goal referred to in the PA and to inform the preparation of the NDCs). At COP 23, the Fijian Presidency introduced the Pacific island concept of ‘Talanoa’ to the facilitative dialogue to reflect the ‘Pacific spirit’ of ‘story-telling, problem solving and decision-making for the collective good’.)

Djemouai also highlighted the responsibility of non-stakeholders in the process and said that under the UNFCCC process, it is a country and not non-state actors who takes commitments. The role of the non-state actors is to help governments honour their commitments and not to make it a business opportunity to earn money.

Schuldt from **Ecuador** said that after Paris, Parties were still facing issues on interpretation of the PA and that discussions are going in the “opposite direction,” with the risk of a reinterpretation of the PA, especially as to how to treat ‘differentiation’ between developed and developing countries. This, he said posed a major challenge in moving forward towards a negotiating text, adding that there were artificial distinctions being made, between what are political issues and what are technical issues, referring to on-going work under the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement (APA) and the Subsidiary Bodies on the Paris Agreement Work Programme (PAWP).

He said that Parties should focus on the job at hand, which is to implement the different mechanisms established under the Convention. He further clarified that pre-2020 discussions were equally important and lamented the fact that the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol had still not entered into force. The former Chair of the G77 and China also said that within the negotiating rooms under PAWP, there was enormous pressure on Parties to restrict the NDC discussions to mitigation only, which was “problematic”.

Schuldt also provided a description of the key finance issues pending and said that the USD 100 billion goal (per year by 2020) and its roadmap, ex-ante information on finance support by developed countries, how to finance loss and damage, removing conditions for developing countries to access climate

finance were all important discussions on which progress was very limited. He referred to the ‘Suva Expert Dialogue on Loss and Damage’ and said the dialogue must explore how to calculate finance needs for loss and damage. “Finance is key to transition to a smooth and responsible implementation of the PA,” he stressed. He also said that while the role of non-state actors was fundamental, it was important to ensure that there is no influencing of the process by “certain private sector entities.” (He was referring to discussions under the Subsidiary Body on Implementation on the issue of having ‘conflict of interest’ norms under the agenda item on ‘arrangements for intergovernmental meetings.’)

Shasly, reflecting the priorities of the **Arab Group** said that a delicate balance had been struck in the PA and its expeditious ratification came through because developing countries drew comfort from the fact that the Agreement catered to their sustainable development needs. He also said that the Paris package must be operationalized in a manner that did not hinder their sustainable development.

On the expectations out of COP24, Shasly said the Arab Group expects one single decision with all the elements of the PA, failing which Parties will run the risk of jeopardizing the gains achieved in Paris. “Focusing on just certain areas will not help,” he stressed, and added that every climate action embeds within it both the elements of mitigation and adaptation and it was therefore important to give equal importance to both the issues.

He also said that how to operationalize equity and the principle of CBDR remained a big question still. Explaining further, he said the idea is to recognize that countries are different and that developing countries have several challenges and different priorities. “At the end of the day, in the absence of a global system that would ensure our right to development, I do not think we can ever accept a package that compromises our future and our children’s future,” elaborated Shasly. He added that mother earth is everyone’s home and they were those who have enjoyed (its resources) and those who have not and need to do so, including the future generations.

Meenakshi Raman of TWN, who moderated

the side event, also provide her perspective at the side-event. Referring to the three questions posed for the Talanoa Dialogue (viz. where are we, where do we want to go, how do we get there), she said that one question that nobody had asked was how did we get here.

“Asking this question will show history, and this will point to historical emissions, responsible for global warming. However, historical responsibility seems like a dirty word that is not being allowed to be mentioned in this space (referring to on-going talks), said Raman. “We cannot ignore the historical perspective,” she added, explaining how the architecture of climate negotiations under the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol had moved from being “a top-down to a bottom-up pledge and review process,” primarily because of the United States.

She also stressed the lack of ambition of developed countries in the pre-2020 period and asserted that the situation today is because of the emissions gap caused by lack of action by the developed countries. “Who needs to fill the gap,” she questioned, saying that everyone realizes that the NDCs on the table will not be able to limit the temperature rise to 2°C, let alone 1.5°C.

What Parties need to discuss is who has to reduce and by how much in an equitable and a fair way, but “this is a conversation that cannot be had because we cannot talk about the allocation of the carbon budget, taking into account the historical emissions”. She lamented that the pre-2020 emissions gap is being shifted to developing countries.

Raman also said that developed countries were using their ‘national circumstance’ to “establish self-differentiation”, without recognizing that “what national circumstances must mean should be on the basis of who is a developed country and who is a developing country”. She further emphasized, “The notion of self-differentiation cannot be used as vehicle to hide one’s inaction. The fact remains that there are developed countries and there are developing countries.”

Reflecting on the full scope of NDCs, Raman said that for developing countries, the reality is that they cannot afford not to address adaptation as a priority, given the limited resources they have. Besides, they are faced

with the challenges of poverty eradication and meeting the basic needs of people, she added. Therefore, the response to climate change in developing countries cannot just be about mitigation, but adaptation and addressing loss and damage, said Raman.

“Equity is the only gateway to ambition in

developing countries,” she said, adding that this is underlined by the principle of CBDR. She stressed that the “but” in the principle differentiates responsibilities and this cannot be forgotten.