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Mitigation by developed countries: common accounting rules and 'comparability of efforts' debated

Bangkok 2 September (Fauwaz Abdul Aziz) – Developed countries have turned around the discussion of common accounting rules for developed countries' mitigation action by calling for developing countries to be subjected to the same rules as those for developed countries.

This took place in a meeting of an informal group on mitigation by developed country Parties of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-Term Cooperative Action under the UNFCCC (AWG-LCA) held on 31 August, facilitated by Mr. Andrej Kranjc (Slovenia).

Precipitated primarily by the proposal by Norway in its intervention during the informal group, the call led to other developed country groups and nations such as the European Union, Switzerland and Australia to lend their voices in support of the suggestion, while an equally united show of opposition by developing countries such as India, China, Brazil and others emerged to emphatically reject the suggestion.

"No, for sure, is our answer", Brazil insisted in reaction to Norway, and emphasised that the call did not reflect a step in the right direction if it meant that such an exercise brings into the discussion the topic of common accounting rules for both developed and developing countries.

The insufficiency of developed countries' mitigation effort was again emphasised by developing countries.

Mali on behalf of G77 and China said that it would be interesting and helpful for the information note to have a categorisation to see what was done in terms of, for instance, comparability of effort (among developed countries' mitigation actions). Referring to the 6 pages on work done relating to developing countries under para. 1(b)(ii) of the Bali Action Plan, and the 3 pages for mitigation commitments or actions of developed countries, Mali said that is a sense of the comparability between what was done and what needs to be done.

[Para. 1(b)(i) of the Bali Action Plan addresses mitigation commitments or actions by all developed country Parties of the UNFCCC, obliging non-Kyoto Protocol Parties to ensure comparability of efforts with the Parties to the Protocol. Para. 1(b)(ii) addresses the nationally appropriate mitigation actions by developing countries supported with finance, technology and capacity building by developed countries.]

Mali further said that the updated technical paper on the targets gave a very compelling picture of what's happening in Annex 1 (developed country Parties) mitigation targets. The Group also welcome the structure of the workshops (on quantified economy-wide emission reduction targets by developed countries, and on nationally appropriate mitigation actions by developing countries) on Sunday (2 September), but felt very strongly that decisions are needed in Doha on a number of issues. At Durban, the LCA was extended for a year to enable completion of its work in pursuance of decision 1/CP.13, and the Group called for decisions in at least in four areas for a successful completion of the things under negotiation:

- Increase pre-2020 ambition for UNFCCC Annex-1 Kyoto Protocol (KP) and Annex 1 non-KP Parties in line with science and the UNEP report;
- Conversion of emission reduction targets for Annex-1 non-KP Parties into tons of CO2 equivalent or turning targets into

assigned amounts over a period of time based on common accounting rules;

- Adopting Common Accounting Rules (CARs) for all Annex-1 Parties, at least as strong as those under the KP;
- Further clarification of targets for non-KP Parties, including the implication of CARs on the effectiveness of the targets.

The Marshall Islands on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) said that building on what we had in our Durban decision we would see an outcome at the end of the year, particularly in the framing elements and the contextualisation of whatever we say on developing country Parties, as necessarily needing to refer back to the science and a gap assessment and a very clear statement of the insufficiency of developed country effort. That needs to be made very very clear and has obvious links with the work going forward next year, including in the context of the workplan on enhancing mitigation and under the ADP (Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action), it stressed.

The Marshall Islands said that having looked at the useful technical paper that was updated since the last session, it's very clear that the number and scope of the conditionalities that have been applied to developed country targets have expanded, not reduced. That's a huge concern to us both in terms not only of the understanding to us, but also of the environmental integrity of what we've got in front of us. So it's been our position that we'd like to see that those targets are single-number, devoid of conditionalities and reflected in a carbon budget over a period such as what we've got under the Kyoto Protocol. Since there's going to be information presented at the workshop on Sunday, and to the extent that improves our understanding as reflected in the current version of the technical paper, we'd want to see those reflected in order that they could inform our further work.

According to AOSIS, one gap that needs to be filled is that in relation to CARs. We would like to see our work between now and Durban pull together the building blocks for CARs consistent with those already in operation pursuant to the Kyoto Protocol; as we know that will help to improve comparability between efforts under the KP and those of the Convention, and also give us guidance in terms of the use of LULUCF, market-based mechanisms and how those would apply towards achieving those targets. In that context, the group is concerned that in response to the common template that was prepared earlier this year in response to the decision in Durban, we still have a lack of information coming forward from developed country Parties that would help to enhance our understanding of the targets and how the Parties intend to achieve them.

It noted that Parties have only received information on expected emissions reduction in the period through 2020 from the EU, Norway and Switzerland and called on other Parties that have yet to provide that information to do so to help fill gaps that we still have as reflected in the technical paper.

Norway said that the AWG-LCA chair's documents for discussion reflected the achievement of the working group and showed how hard they had worked over the last couple of years. It then called for the establishment of common accounting rules throughout the process of submitting information on mitigation action and pledges, saying this would be the best outcome for 2020 pledges. Norway said it realises that so far it has been difficult to achieve consensus on starting such a process, but if it were a possibility for the Conference of Parties scheduled to meet at the end of this year in Doha, then this would be very positive.

Norway also said it would be very useful to summarise and synthesis the events and developments that had transpired over the past two years, looked forward to a workshop that will take place on Sunday (2 September), the build-up of more technical papers, and to take the AWG-LCA process to its conclusion by year end.

Switzerland said several matters had to be fulfilled so as to ensure the Doha meeting concluded successfully, including further clarifying assumptions and conditions related to pledges, conducting more workshops, the continuation of more updates in the form of technical papers, and more parties are encouraged to submit further information on their mitigation pledges.

It also said it supports the development of common accounting rules and comparability for all Parties and said efforts in such areas should be taken further. Speaking about the conditions surrounding its pledges or the higher end of its pledges and ambition, which many countries had called to end, Switzerland said they (the conditions) are placed there because of the need to know what the other Parties are doing. This is also why this process of clarification is so important to Switzerland, and these relate not only to (developed country) Parties but in much broader terms, as Switzerland needs to know what the other Parties are doing. As to ambition, there is a context to the ambition that is there, it added.

Australia also expressed support for the proposal by Switzerland, and said it also would very much support the development of common accounting rules for all Parties, both developed and developing countries.

The facilitator called for more views and voices regarding the debate over common accounting rules for developing countries.

Brazil, which associated itself with the statement of the G77/China, said it was wrong for the developed countries to take the discussion in the direction proposed by Norway.

If that's the question that we'll be taking on (this agenda item), I think that's completely the wrong direction in our opinion, said the Brazilian representative, adding that the exercise mandated from the Durban negotiations was very clear, which was to clarify using the workshops and technical paper, the pledges are undertaken by the developed country Parties.

In terms of marginal increments of actions, Brazil said it has no doubt that developing countries have increased much more burden than developed countries so far. In response to the proposal and question that (the facilitator) had raised, Brazil said "No for sure, that is the answer", adding that we don't think that's the right direction if this exercise comes into the discussion of common accounting rules for all Parties.

Seeking to clarify its statements made on the matter, Norway took the floor again to explain that calling for the development of common accounting rules for all Parties does not mean that the nature of the pledges submitted would change for developed countries with economy-wide absolute emission reductions. The common accounting rules would be common for all of developed countries, but the accounting rules that would be relevant and applicable to developing country Parties would be according to what kind of mitigation actions they have put forward, the scope, and extent of those actions. It doest not mean that developing countries are expected or will have imposed upon them the same type of mitigation actions as applicable for developed countries.

It also said that by the closing of the AWG-LCA in Durban, it does not mean it seeks to close off the discussions on ambition by Doha, because that its work will be taken up in the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP).

Voicing support for Norway, the European Union said it was the group's understanding that around accounting there is a phased approach and that has to be applied according to the type of commitments that a country has taken and will take in the future.

It reiterated the position that the purpose of the exercise of the clarification of pledges is towards getting more facts on the current pledges, and that helps to build trust and to move matters forward on a number of issues.

Countering the developed countries, however, India presented the context as well as the gaps between what has been done so far and what needs to be done under the particular issue of mitigation by developed countries under the negotiations. Associating itself with the comments made by Mali (for G77 and China), and the individual comments by China and Brazil, **India** said while many believe a lot of work has been done under this agenda item and a long way has progressed, and that there is not much that is seen as work that needs to be done at Doha, and that work that is left in this particular issue can be taken over by the subsidiary bodies and that should be enough, the context tell a different story.

Greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere and the increase which has taken place from the pre-industrial levels to the industrial levels indicate that average GHG pre-industrial concentration in the atmosphere being 280 ppm in 1995 has risen to 360 ppm. This means that around 80 ppms were added by the industrialised countries into the atmosphere, and from 1995-2005, around 19 ppms have been added, which show that the context in which developed country parties was supposed to take mitigation commitments was due to historical responsibility that they had increased the GHG concentrations in the atmosphere and were therefore required to take deep and ambitious mitigation commitments to address the increase in GHG concentration after 1992 when the UNFCCC was adopted.

But the question is whether the commitments of developed country Parties are deep and ambitious enough, said India. There was the Kyoto Protocol under which Parties agreed to reduce by 5.5% below the pre-industrial 1990 level by 2012. Since Bali, there were some Parties outside the Protocol who said that there should be comparability of efforts so that Parties of the Kyoto Protocol and other Parties are comparable.

But the question is whether these decisions are complete and have led to the fulfillment of the Bali Action Plan. In terms of the comparability of efforts, there are still huge gaps as all Parties have acknowledged, while a common accounting framework (for developed countries in and out of the Kyoto Protocol) has yet to be developed.

So there is no way to compare the mitigation efforts of Kyoto Protocol Parties and non-Kyoto Protocol Parties, said India, and the gap is a very significant one and needs to be addressed through the decisions that will be taken in Doha. In Durban, it was agreed that a comprehensive and balanced outcome would be achieved pursuant to the Decision of 1/CP.13, whereas all other framing elements are related to the common accounting and comparability aspects of it.

Kenya, meanwhile, in association with Mali and other developing countries, said developed countries should be encouraged to show leadership so as to enable developing countries to undertake ambitious targets. Developing countries are discussing that a lot of work has been done, but developing countries are still struggling to cope with new developments and the requirements imposed on them to comply with their obligations to deal with climate change generally.

But it suggests a lack of good faith when with the rules already set under the Kyoto Protocol, developed countries say those rules are not supposed to be developed further for developed countries that are not Party to the Kyoto Protocol.

While developing countries look forward to the work that is remaining in terms of the Bali Action Plan and on the common accounting rules and comparability, the least that should be done by developed countries is to remove their conditionalities, given there have not been any pledges from any developing country that has a condition on it.

On the issue of ambitious targets, developed countries have to provide leadership, and before it is figured out how the future agreement will look like after 2020, at least these rules should be set out by developed countries in the Kyoto Protocol and non-Kyoto Protocol (developed) countries before 2020.

On the question of where we take these issues forward, issues of clarification need to take that work forward, and on the specific mandates that are remaining from Bali on common accounting rules on comparability, after the successful closure of AWG-LCA, the best way to deal with them would be in the subsidiary bodies under the Convention.

The **Dominican Republic**, similarly, said there has been much that has advanced, but much needs to be done. It would be very difficult to advance solely because of the realities of the discussion on the 1(b)(i) track without having some close consultations and advances under 1(b)(ii). While these are separate, they are related and have inter-linkages. It's important to explore how both can advance, as a lot of work in one of them [1(b)(ii)], but not in the other [1(b)(i)]. The former states that there should be accounting for LULUCF and for carbon credits, and that accounting is important, failing which a number of other things will not happen. The Dominican Republic also requested that the facilitator assist in giving guidance as to how these issues could be resolved.

China in support of the statement made by India and Brazil, stressed that the call for the development of common accounting rules to all (Parties) derives from a misunderstanding of the mandate given to the AWG-LCA.

While common accounting rules should be supported in relation to all developed country Parties (Annex 1 Parties) because such rules are a useful tool to ensure the comparability that has yet to be resolved, the Parties have never been mandated to merge 1(b)(i) (developed country mitigation) and 1(b)(ii) (developing country mitigation), nor have they been mandated to merge efforts to develop common accounting rules for all Parties. It is therefore not appropriate to discuss such matters in this particular forum, said China.