

## Carbon neutral target for all by 2050 disregards equity and climate justice

Madrid, 9 Dec (Evelyn Teh) – At a side-event held on Dec 2 at the climate talks in Madrid, several developing country delegates gave their reflections on the theme of ‘Equity in the implementation of the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement’, pointing out that recent calls for all countries to go carbon neutral by 2050 disregard equity and climate justice, as this treats developed and developing countries in the same manner.

Giving their perspectives on how equity should be made operational at COP 25, senior representatives of key developing countries stressed the recognition of the principle of common-but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC) between developed and developing countries in the implementation of the Paris Agreement (PA).

They also underlined the importance of developed countries meeting their obligations in the pre-2020 time-frame, and to not shift their unfulfilled obligations onto developing countries in the era of the PA, especially in relation to the emissions gap, caused by their failure to honour the agreements under the Kyoto Protocol (KP) and the Convention, and called for these gaps to be closed.

Speaking at the event organised by Third World Network, **Indian** lead negotiator, **Ravi Shankar Prasad** emphasised that “when people talk about carbon neutrality, people are not talking about equity” as this treats all countries in the same manner with “the same broad brush”, adding that “developing countries need a space to meet their sustainable development.”

(At the opening ceremony of the climate change talks, UN Secretary-General **Antonio Guterres** had called for governments to enhance their national determined contributions [NDCs] in 2020

under the PA, and to present “a carbon neutrality strategy for 2050,” adding that “without the full engagement of the big emitters all our efforts will be completely undermined”).

(Third World Network has also learnt that the COP 25 Presidency has contacted some delegations inviting them to join a ‘Climate Ambition Alliance’ and that only those who commit to enhancing their NDCs by 2020 and/or to net-zero emissions by 2050 are qualified to join. It seems that an event will be held Wed, Dec 11 for Parties who are part of the Alliance).

At the side-event, senior government representatives from **India, China, Egypt, South-Africa** and **Saudi Arabia** gave their views, and was moderated by Perna Bomzan of Third World Network.

**Ravi Shankar Prasad** of **India** said that within the PA and the Convention, the principles of “equity and CBDR-RC are the two important buzzwords which permeate nearly all aspects but unfortunately, there has been a lot of lip service paid to these concepts”, adding further that “in operationalisation, little has been done.” Prasad underscored that the success of both the Convention, the PA and the Kyoto Protocol (KP) are “critically linked to equity and CBDR and it is important for us to make sure that the spirit of these key words and phrases permeate the implementation of the PA”.

Explaining the operationalisation of the principles, Prasad said that the PA requires the developed countries to take the lead (in emissions reductions) as they are the “largest cumulative greenhouse gas (GHG) emitters” and that “it is only fair and equitable for developing countries to develop and grow to meet their sustainable development goals

(SDGs) to make sure that the outcomes of their actions are equitable.”

He added that under Article 4.1 of the PA in relation to the peaking of GHGs globally, it is recognised that for developing countries, the peaking of emissions will take longer. Prasad then said that “when people talk about carbon neutrality, they are not talking about equity” as they treat all countries with “the same broad brush” and added that “developing countries need space to meet their sustainable development”.

In relation to “equity among all human beings, if we compare the level of consumption emissions in the developed countries and the developing countries, it is highly inequitable and this has also been brought out by the UN Environment (UNEP) Emissions Gap report,” said Prasad further.

He also said that consumption emissions will grow in developing countries as citizens, especially the young, aspire for same standards of living as those in developed countries, and there was therefore “need for some balance in terms of outcomes in standards of living of citizens in different countries in different scenarios”.

Prasad explained further that in relation to the means of implementation of climate actions in developing countries, “there is a huge requirement of finance for transformational action”, adding that “a rapid transition in developing countries requires the provision of finance and technology support and capacity-building.” Referring to the pre-2020 finance goal of USD 100 billion per year by 2020, he said that in reality, not much has gone to developing countries and that the needs are actually “multiplied manifold from billions to trillions of dollars”. He also said that the new finance goal under the PA should be agreed to sooner, before the first global stocktake that will take place in 2023.

On the issue of the pre-2020 commitments of developed countries, Prasad said that this was closely linked to equity. He lamented that while the world celebrated the entry into force of the PA, it failed to take note of the pre-2020 emissions gap, which has implications today, “as the requirement to control emissions has multiplied and at a faster pace”. He added further that “all these gaps we see today is the lack of action and ambition by the developed countries in the pre-2020 period”.

“Now, developing countries are forced to look at enhancing action and the discourse is shifting to

actions by all countries,” said Prasad further, adding that while it is true that all countries have to take action, he emphasised that “this must be based on equity and CBDR-RC when we are talking about ambition”.

Prasad underscored that “in any independent analysis in different countries, it was the developing countries who are taking more action than the developed countries” as the latter are not meeting their commitments, including that under the KP, and called for “the operationalising of equity and CBDR-RC at COP 25”.

**Ambassador Wael Aboulmagd of Egypt** said that the first task of COP 25 is to finish the work of what could not be achieved at the last COP in Poland, viz. Article 6 of the PA (on cooperative approaches, including market and non-market approaches), adding that Article 6 is to assist Parties in implementing their NDCs and is not “a commercial enterprise” and called for “equal and balanced treatment throughout the Article 6 which can be distinctive” and to ensure that there is “enough funding for the Adaptation Fund.”

As regards the pre-2020 issue, Aboulmagd said that this matter has been talked about for years and that “it is unfortunate that our developed country partners have not met the necessary commitments.” He was also concerned that everyone now was talking about the important stage of the PA but there is no talk of the gap that exists due to the unfulfilled commitments of developed countries, stressing that “we do not accept the shifting of responsibilities” onto to developing countries.

The Ambassador also underlined the importance of financial support to developing countries and said that while the contributions to the first replenishment of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) is appreciated, the USD 9.7 billion falls far short in terms of the actual contributions required in developing countries, adding that the GCF was not a development fund nor a donor-driven entity, and recalled that many have said that the grand bargain for the PA was the provision of predictable funds to developing countries. He expressed concerns over how there was a tendency among developed countries to change the character of the GCF.

Aboulmagd also said that the central issue of technology transfer continues to have little or no progress made, stressing that “there has to be some support and access for developing countries

to transformative technologies so that they are able to leapfrog and be more sustainable in their development models". He also emphasised that in developing countries, adaptation is going to be the number one urgent priority.

Referring to the UNEP Emissions Gap Report, Aboulmagd said that since 1990 until now, many of the developed countries have not peaked in their emissions growth or stopped them from growing at an alarming pace.

**Chen Zhihua of China** said that there are views that the notion of historical responsibility is an outdated concept, but if we respect science, then we must acknowledge it, he added, as GHGs remain in the atmosphere for a long time and developed countries have emitted a huge amount, while the fossil fuel price was very cheap.

Zhihua also said that there are huge differences between developed and developing countries and that is the first dimension of equity.

He explained that many developing countries lacked confidence in mitigation, adding that "we realised that no developed country achieved their development through low emissions." The Chinese delegate said further that "we can only depend on ourselves to realize decarbonisation without examples before us."

Zhihua also pointed out that many developing countries remain in the middle or low-end of the production chain of the world, adding that "China is called the world's factory" and that "many products are consumed by other developed countries in their countries, but are counted as developing country emissions." He said that "if we base GHG emissions on consumption rather than production, you will see a different landscape in terms of emissions."

"The best way to reflect the principle of equity is through the implementation of the Convention and the KP," said Zhihua further, adding that these are international treaties which carry the common understanding of all on equity. "We all decided to stay within the framework of the Convention, which was a good starting point to understand the concept of equity. If we are committed to implementing these treaties in its full, effective and sustainable manner, we will be closer to the heart of the principle of equity,"

He explained further that the Convention established the principles of equity and CBDR-RC, with developed countries taking the lead and in

supporting developing countries in their climate actions. In the PA, "we all agreed to enhance the implementation of the Convention and recognised that developed and developing countries have different starting points, with the peaking of emissions being longer in developing countries than in developed countries."

Zhihua said that "the reality is not optimistic", clarifying that developed countries want to abandon the KP and some Parties want the PA to replace the Convention, instead of enhancing it. He stressed that at COP 25, it was vital to protect the multilateral process and to combat climate change and that "this COP should be an implementation COP."

On the pre-2020 issue, he also lamented that the PA adopted in 2015 was ratified in 2016, but the Doha amendment of the KP adopted in 2012 has not yet been implemented, saying that this has been "a lost decade." Zhihua said that "with less than one month in the pre- 2020 period, we need to identify the gaps and have a workplan on how to adjust these gaps in the post-2020 period. This, he said "is a critical task for this COP" and "we cannot move into the post-2020 and forget what we have not finished in the pre-2020 period", adding that "if we forget history, we will have difficulties starting a new period with the PA."

**Zaheer Fakir of South Africa** who is also the **G77 and China coordinator on finance** gave a presentation on the evolution of climate finance from Rio (1992 Earth Summit) to Paris (2015) via COP 14 in Copenhagen (where the mobilisation of USD 100 billion per year by 2020 for developing countries was first formulated. He explained that there is a distinction between funds provided and mobilised, saying that under the Convention, the reference is to the provision of finance from developed countries which means public sources, while in Copenhagen, it evolved to mobilising from various sources, including the private sector.

He said that the Global Environment Facility (GEF), which is an operating entity of the financial mechanism of the Convention, the overall allocation of resources has been going down, from USD 1.36 billion (for the period 2010-2014) to USD 801 million (for the period 2018 – 2022).

As for GCF, Fakir explained that although the initial resource mobilisation target was USD 10.3 billion, and the signed contributions were USD 10.2 billion, not all Parties have fulfilled their pledges and not much money has been disbursed

yet to developing countries, with total projects with effective funding agreements at only USD 2.8 billion.

As regards the Adaptation Fund, Fakir said that total resources available are USD 887 million with about 23% of the amount coming from the 2% levy of the certified emission reduction credits (CERs) with the rest coming from donor contributions. The Fund does not have a replenishment process, and without predictable and adequate resources, it will continue to rely on handouts, he added.

Said the G77 finance coordinator further, developed countries are placing greater and greater emphasis on co-financing, adding that in order to get USD1 from the GEF, developing countries have to provide USD 7.

He also said that the provision of public finance from developed countries has declined in favor of a focus joint mobilization, blending and leveraging from all sources; and access to finance, instruments and concessionality which should be available to all developing countries is now based on income levels. Grant funding has declined and continuing to decline while loans (concessional and non-concessional) and other non-grant instruments have increased and will continue to play a bigger role, he added further.

Fakir explained further that climate finance which was always to be new and additional to overseas development assistance (ODA) is now part of ODA, adding that the climate finance “burden-sharing” which was between and amongst developed countries has shifted to developing countries and other stakeholders, such as the private sector. He lamented that developed countries’ commitment to provide finance as per Article 4.3 of the Convention has become diluted,

and there is no more reference to the UNFCCC, with developed countries viewing the PA as a replacement of the Convention.

**Mona Al Attas** of **Saudi Arabia**, the **Coordinator** of the **Like-minded developing countries (LMDC)** on **Article 6** of the PA emphasized that developing countries in needing to address climate change, also have concerns and many national circumstances to take into account, including about meeting the SDGs and poverty eradication.

Explaining the LMDC position on Art 6, she said that when Parties engage in activities to achieve their NDCs, they should be able to use cooperative approaches. As regards the guidance to be provided on Article 6, it must accommodate all types of NDCs given their different nationally determined character.

She stressed that negotiations on all the sub-articles of Article 6 must progress in a balanced manner and no items should be left behind. For the LMDC, Article 6.8 is most important as it addresses non-market approaches covering mitigation, adaptation and means of implementation, such as finance, technology and capacity building.

Al Attas said that Article 6.1 recognises that Parties may choose to pursue voluntary cooperation in the implementation of their NDCs to allow for higher ambition in their mitigation and adaptation actions and to promote sustainable development and environmental integrity. Her message was that no Party should be left behind in relation to the cooperative approaches and the rules therefore should accommodate everyone.