

Call for a permanent forum on potential consequences from response measures to climate change

Tianjin, 8 October (Hilary Chiew) – Developing countries have proposed a single permanent forum to deal with the issue of potential consequences from response measures to climate change that is currently being negotiated in both the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperation under the Convention (AWG-LCA) and the Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP).

Parties are currently negotiating in four contact groups that are set up under the AWG-KP to deal with the five chapters of the draft proposal by the Chair, Mr. John Ashe of Antigua and Barbuda.

At the contact group on potential consequences on 7 October morning, supporters of Option 1 under Chapter V (*Consideration of information on potential environmental, economic and social consequences, including spillover effects, of tools, policies, measures and methodologies available to Annex I Parties*) clarified their proposal and assured Parties especially those in Annex I (developed countries) that the discussion in the two negotiating tracks are heading in the same direction.

Option 1 reads as follow: *Decides to establish a permanent forum as a means for Parties to report and evaluate impacts and consequences of policies and measures; this would offer a common space where Parties may provide information on their specific needs and concerns relating to such consequences, and identify ways to minimise negative consequences of the policies and measures adopted by Annex I Parties on non-Annex I Parties.*

Argentina said what proponents have in mind is one forum that will report separately to the Conference of Parties (COP) and the COP serving as the Meeting of Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP). For the CMP, the forum will look at the consequences of Annex I Parties' actions on Non-Annex I Parties and for the COP, it will assess the consequences of developed countries' action on developing countries.

It further said the forum will offer a common space to allow for sharing of information and interactive dialogue to discuss the matter since it has been agreed by all that it is challenging to anticipate, attribute and quantify potential consequences.

Saudi Arabia said at the present time it is unclear if the AWG-LCA will agree to establish the forum but once the issue has been decided by any of the bodies, it will end up as one forum with unified language. It said it is prepared to work together on the terms of reference, what to accomplish and who should be involved once there is an agreement on the forum which should help all Parties, both that are affected by and those contemplating the actions.

Annex I Parties like New Zealand, the European Union and Switzerland say that the need for information and data could be provided through the National Communication and clarification can be sought at the meetings of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI) and Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice, the bodies of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Hence, their preference for Option 2 which reads: *Decides that Parties should use existing channels, including national communications, and report on observed impacts and specific needs and concerns relating to social, environmental and economic consequences of mitigation actions taken by Parties.*

At an earlier meeting of the contact group on Wednesday (6 October) **China** said it supported the establishment of a permanent forum as the existing channel was inadequate in addressing all the potential consequences and focus has largely been on potential consequences in Annex I countries but not abroad.

New Zealand said the existing channel process has not failed but it should be given a chance to be strengthened. It said many Annex I countries have reported in their National Communication on the potential consequences

and its own report in accordance with obligations under Article 2.3 (of the UNFCCC) came to 122 pages about the activities that it had been doing in striving to minimise the impacts of its actions in reducing greenhouse gases emissions.

It also said Annex I Parties are not required to report on the potential consequences until the fifth National Communication. Acknowledging the shortcomings in the first four National Communications, it said what is important is the fact that they are now reporting with great details and the point is to be forward looking.

In response to China, New Zealand said its National Communication covered what happened in other countries and not only domestically.

Switzerland acknowledged that Annex I Parties have to strive to reduce impacts of their mitigation policies on third parties and it is important to work together to collect information on these efforts and deepening understanding and listening to experiences a country may have but said that the existing channel is the approach which involved trial and error.

Belgium, representing the European Union, said there remained differences and inconsistencies in the negotiation text on the same matter under the AWG-LCA and AWG-KP where the former has three options and the latter has two. It suggested that the text should mirror each other to ensure convergence into a single forum later (if such a forum is agreed on), noting that at least one Party of Annex I that is not Party to the Kyoto Protocol (referring to the United States) should be included in this forum and not left out.

It agreed with the flow of information and the need for a place to discuss them but it would like to seek clarification on additional information on top of those provided through the National Communication and inventories that already contained substantial amount of information.

At the Thursday (7 October) contact group meeting, New Zealand pointed out that a substantial amount of information on climate change (including potential consequences of response measures) is already made available in other international avenues and diplomatic dialogues like the G20, besides at the UNFCCC.

Saudi Arabia said the idea of the permanent forum can be viewed as the UNFCCC contribution and cooperation with those avenues and it will not render the other avenues redundant and neither would the forum be redundant.

It said the forum will be cost-effective and not burden any Parties as it is proposed to take place in conjunction with the UNFCCC subsidiary bodies' meetings in the same location.

On the forum's function, it said it will involve Parties, intergovernmental organisations and the participation of scientific, financial and research communities to review and evaluate the various options and develop a work programme and the SBI can then report once a year to the COP on the findings of the forum, and make recommendations to the Parties.

Argentina stressed that the central body for climate change is the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol. Recognising that there are huge amounts of information out there but the information should be organised in the UNFCCC and issues should be resolved within the UNFCCC, let's not undermine the central role of the UNFCCC, it said.

China said the existing channel approach could not assure others that Annex I will fulfill their commitments as shown by their failure, except the EU, that they will meet their targets.

New Zealand said it was surprised with China's conclusion as it is completely unknown if Annex I will meet their commitment until 2014 when all data are compiled but added that New Zealand is fully on track to meet its first commitment period targets.

The EU, Russian Federation and Australia also said they are on track to meeting the targets.

China replied that it stands to be corrected and will be patient to wait till 2014 to see the final results.