

COP 25 President stresses importance of pre-2020 commitments

Madrid, 11 Dec (Evelyn Teh) – The high-level segment of the Madrid climate talks opened with an opening ceremony, morning of 10th Dec 2019.

The opening was presided over by Carolina Schmidt, President of COP 25, and also saw speeches by Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, the President of the UN General Assembly, Petteri Taalas, Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Teresa Ribera, Minister of Environment of Spain and Patricia Espinosa, the UNFCCC's Executive Secretary.

The COP 25 President, **Carolina Schmidt**, said that climate action has to be fair and this COP must mark a real change of course, a change of direction and ambition, bringing on board new players to the table to commit to carbon neutrality by 2050.

She added that the outcomes from the ministerial level consultations must deliver real progress on the path to implementation of the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol as well as the Paris Agreement. These outcomes must also be mindful of the pre-2020 commitments, referring to those which have already been complied with and the implementation that we need in order to advance with ambition as of 2020. She also stated that although developing countries are already implementing tangible actions, but there needs to be clarity in terms of means of implementation on finance, technology development and transfer and capacity-building. “This is precisely why we stress on climate finance and adaptation and conducted a high-level dialogue with finance ministers and also an unprecedented high-level dialogue on adaptation”, added the COP 25 President.

(The COP 25 President's call on pre-2020 commitments was also stressed by **Palestine**, speaking on behalf of the **G77 and China**, when Parties were invited to present their statements, following the opening ceremony. See further details below).

Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, said that “we must address the mitigation gap and review our individual and collective nationally determined contributions (NDCs) to ensure that they are integrated into policies and budgets across all sectors; including an economic model that provides for prosperity for all, while disassociating economic growth from environmental degradation”. He highlighted the focus on cities, which contributed more than 70% of global emissions and urged governments to practice climate-conscious decision-making in terms of planning, transport, and energy efficiency, in cities and urban infrastructure.

He also emphasised that developed countries had agreed to support climate action in developing countries by mobilizing USD100 billion per annum by the year 2020, which deadline is fast approaching. While he commended countries which have made pledges in favour of climate finance, the funds still remain low. He said that there is a need to expedite the catalysation of all financing flows to meet the growing demands for both adaptation and mitigation.

He also stated that in 2020, the UN General Assembly will convene an important Biodiversity Summit, to address trends in biodiversity and ecosystem that will undermine the long-term resilience of the world's most vulnerable people as we have not achieved progress towards 80% of assessed Sustainable Development Goal targets

relating to poverty, hunger, health, water, climate and land. He also said that the General Assembly is convening the second Oceans Conference in Lisbon, in June 2020.

Patricia Espinosa said that the scientific evidence is showing that we are going in the wrong direction; and that we are poisoning the very element that are keeping us alive. She added further that governments are still subsidizing the fossil fuel industries, and our overall consumption habits had little change., adding that the UN Environment's Emissions Gap Report showed that emissions continue to rise, and we are not acting fast enough. The Executive Secretary reminded members that "this year marks the 25th anniversary of the UNFCCC". Espinosa also noted that ambition and action to address the climate emergency is needed in every part of the economy and therefore, the operationalising of Article 6 of the Paris Agreement is needed to "help get carbon markets up and running in support of the Paris Agreement and ensure that the rules are the same for everyone".

Petteri Taalas said that the world has so far seen 1.15°C warming in the atmosphere and the oceans warmed by 0.5°C and last year, 220 million people suffered from heatwaves, in addition to 800 million people who suffered from the lack of food, adding that the warming of the ocean had also given more energy to tropical storms. Talaas explained that "the record-breaking storm like Idai which hit Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi earlier this year, was the strongest in 100 years. This includes the cyclone in Japan and Hurricane Dorian which hit the Caribbean islands and Bahamas, which lost 25% of its annual GDP within a day". He also mentioned the wildfire in Sydney, lack of water in Victoria Falls, flooding in East Africa and flooding in southern Europe. He added that the Arctic continued to melt, including the Greenland glacier, contributing to the sea level rise especially in the southern hemisphere, among other evident climate change impacts we are seeing today. "All levels of greenhouse gases (i.e. carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide) have broken records and we are more or less moving to 3 - 5°C warming by the end of the century – and if we are to use all our fossil fuels, we would be entering into an 8°C warmer planet," warned the WMO S-G.

Taalas also said that 85% of the energy produced in the world is still reliant on coal, oil and gas, adding that "we have means to convert our energy

source to be more based on renewables, including means in transportation sector." He said that "there is a growing pressure to talk about carbon taxes which may put pressure on emitters and consumers" but added that "political realities are present that is if one is too extreme in the action, then it may have negative political implications."

Teresa Ribera stated that "there has been a social outcry as people want more action" calling for "serious soul searching". She added that there is capacity in the international community to rise to the challenge even during difficult periods with solidarity, adding that there is a commitment to the climate agenda, commitment to multilateralism and providing a response to the profound consequences of this, while also recognising that there is inequity, in terms of well-being, welfare and economics. The Spanish minister said that we have lost 10 years and have a challenge within the next 10 years to avoid climate change and believed that by 2050 in Europe, it is possible to build a new model of prosperity, vision and equity; focused on people as the social dimension of climate change is real and called for the facilitation of equity and justice.

Following the end of the ceremonial opening, was the delivery of national statements from ministers from 76 countries. Highlights of some of them are captured below.

Riad Malki, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Palestine speaking on behalf of the **Group of 77 and China** said that for developing countries, the pursuit of the right to development and eradication of poverty must be respected and safeguarded. "The increasing impacts of climate change and the associated losses and damages on our socioeconomic circumstances and development prospects are posed with increasing challenges; over and above the economic challenges that many of our countries face", said the Palestinian Minister further.

He added that "under the Convention, the developing countries' right to sustainable development is safeguarded in the application of the guiding principle set out by the UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capacities (CBDR-RC), in light of different national circumstances. This principle is founded on the concept of equity and of fairness under international law."

Malki said further that "even we as developing countries respond based on our different national

circumstances to calls for enhanced ambition on adaptation and mitigation, we also call upon our Partners to show enhanced ambition in taking the lead to reduce their emissions and in being more ambitious in the provision of support to developing countries.” He also stated that the provision of finance to developing countries must be depoliticised to allow them to move forward. “Adaptation must be treated in a balanced manner, including its mechanisms, funding institutions and institutional arrangements that had been set up under the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol which cannot be left behind from the implementation arrangements for the Paris Agreement”, he added further. “Support for adaptation action in developing countries, as well as support for enhanced action on addressing loss and damage will be increasingly crucial for developing countries as the adverse effects of climate change scale-up in the future, while mitigation actions must also be safeguarded, maintained and upheld, said the minister further.

He also stressed stated that this is the year where pre-2020 actions under the Convention are supposed to conclude and lay the foundation for future climate changes for Parties to the Paris Agreement. “However, these commitments to reduce emissions and providing support to developing countries are both not met. He also stated that the country responsible for 1/3 of historical emissions and 1/5 of current emissions have seemingly turned their back on their commitments,” in an apparent reference to the United States.

Dr. Omar Antonio Figueroa, the Minister of Environment of Belize speaking on behalf of the **Alliance of Small Island Developing States**, stated that although Small-Island Developing States have been and will remain the vanguard of climate action and the benchmark of ambition, they cannot do this on their own. He lamented that “our capacities to sustain ourselves are rapidly and uncontrollably eviscerating. We are already experiencing irreversible loss and damage, and if, in the next decade the world fails to take aggressive action to curb emissions, the future of our people and our nations hangs in the balance.”

Terhi Lehtonen, State Secretary of Environment for Finland and Frans Timmermans, the First Vice-President of the European Commission speaking jointly on behalf of the **European Union (EU)**, stated that the EU is here to work “to find robust and long

lasting solutions to the shared challenges”. Among the agenda items they saw important to complete at COP 25 includes Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, where it wanted to see an operational outcome for market resources, and to create a market mechanism that provides strong incentives which avoids double counting and does not undermine environmental integrity. It also wished to see the completion of the second review of the Warsaw International Mechanism for loss and damage.

Mary Gorretti Kitutu, the Minister of Environment of Uganda said that “it is critical that climate finance remains high on the agenda in this COP. As a country, we have a tireless effort to progressively implement our nationally determined contribution (NDC), with a costed NDC Implementation Plan already in place. The immediate NDC actions have been elaborated and incrementally being implemented albeit with challenges of access to means of implementation.” She stated that this applies as well to the need to access financing for projects on building resilience and enhance adaptation. She also highlighted the need to finalise the WIM review and issues related to Article 6. The Ugandan minister said that finalising the rules for markets and non-market mechanisms need to “maintain environmental integrity, ensure adaptation mechanisms are an integral part and move beyond pure offsetting of emissions and deliver overall mitigation in global emissions, avoid double counting, not allow the carryover of pre-2020 Kyoto units to the Paris Agreement or other accounting loopholes, and deliver a share of proceeds from the market mechanisms for the Adaptation Fund.”

Prakash Javadekar, Minister of Environment, Forests and Climate Change of India began with a quote from Mahatma Gandhi which read, “the future depends upon what we do today.” He appealed that there “should not be new issues, deviation nor changing of goal posts” but “to concentrate on NDC implementation, and the progress we can make and review when we conduct the global stocktake in 2023. On the issue of technology transfer, he said that it has to be available at an affordable cost, “as we cannot make profits from disasters”. On Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, he said that the Clean Development Mechanism should be allowed to continue until 2023 so that the credits earned will not go to waste.

