

COP 24 President outlines mode of work for final week of climate talks

Katowice, 10 Dec (Perna Bomzan and Meena Raman) – At the end of the first week of the climate talks on 8 Dec, at the ongoing 24th session of the Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC (COP 24), **Michal Kurtyka**, the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Environment of Poland, leading the COP 24 Presidency said that “a significant amount of work remains to be done to secure a balanced outcome” on the Paris Agreement Work Programme (PAWP) and outlined the steps to reach the final outcome, expected to be adopted on Dec. 14.

Kurtyka made these remarks in a plenary meeting of the COP which was convened at 10 pm Saturday, 8 Dec, after the closing of the plenary sessions of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI), the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement (APA). (See further details below on the APA closing).

The three bodies under the UNFCCC were mandated to conclude their work on the PAWP negotiating texts on 8 Dec. However, given the divergences of views among Parties on many issues, especially that relating to finance, operationalising differentiation in the guidelines for the implementation of the Paris Agreement (PA) and the scope of nationally determined contributions (NDCs), Parties have not been able to produce clean texts and more work remains to be done, to find landing zones and for the sticky issues to be resolved by Ministers, who have arrived in Katowice for the high-level segment of the talks this week.

The texts produced from the bodies on the PAWP issues were transmitted to the COP 24 President by the Presiding Officers as their proposals, for further work to be done under the COP.

After hearing the report back from the Presiding Officers of the three bodies, Kurtyka said that the expectation from the three bodies was to have a “clear text” and at the most, with a “handful of outstanding issues” to be resolved by Ministers. The COP 24 President said that “we must change the mode of work and engage in more focused negotiations” and urged Parties “to bring to the table, written proposals and solutions and not to re-insert previous proposals that have not enjoyed consensus”.

He said that the “starting point ... will be the text” produced by the three bodies and that he will be taking a “pragmatic approach” to address the outstanding issues. He explained that the “the outstanding technical work will be facilitated” by the ex-Presiding Officers of the three bodies in their capacity as “experts” on the issues, adding that “they will be assisted by the respective co-facilitators (of the different PAWP agenda items) if available”.

Kurtyka underscored that it was “crucial” for the “technical work” to be completed by Tuesday (11 Dec) and made “clear” that it will “not be possible to conclude the PAWP on Friday (14 Dec) if the “new texts” are not produced by then “under the responsibility” of the facilitators (ex-presiding officers). “While they (and their co-facilitators) keep plugging away at the technical issues, I will engage pairs of Ministers to tackle the remaining crunch issues” he added, further, informing that “finance-related issues” will be

the “first” issues that Ministers will be address starting on Monday (10 Dec).

He said that “in choosing Ministers to undertake this important task. I will take into account your views expressed, regarding ensuring balanced representation”. He further explained that he would be using “different formats to achieve results including open-ended consultations meeting in a Vienna format and bilateral consultations”. He said he would also be convening regular stock-taking meetings, which will “also help to maintain a transparent and inclusive process and to set milestones for delivery”. The first stocktaking would be held on Tuesday evening (11 Dec) with the “new text, with all technical issues resolved (that) has to be ready by then”. Further, in convening meetings, he would take into account the “need to avoid clashes” in order for Parties to “adequately follow all discussions”.

(An [information note](#) by the Presidency on the mode of work was published on 9 Dec @ 22.30).

APA contact group and closing plenary

The APA contact group convened in the afternoon of 8 Dec for the final report back on the six PAWP agenda items as well as to consider the draft conclusions to be formally adopted at a later APA closing plenary. APA Co-Chair **Jo Tyndall (New Zealand)** said that the “third iteration” of the texts produced “under our own responsibility” were made available earlier in the day recognising that “these texts are not agreed documents and that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed”.

Gabon speaking on behalf of the **African Group** expressed deep concerns that it had engaged with the aim of reaching a “balanced outcome” but “unfortunately, in many cases, some of the texts did not even contain any of the proposals” made by the group. It added further that it could not agree to the texts on the Adaptation Fund (AF) as well as on the global stocktake (GST).

Saudi Arabia for the **Arab Group** also expressed its concerns on the different agenda items especially on the enhanced transparency framework (ETF) saying language introduced in the texts were “not consistent with the PA” and that this was crossing the group’s redline.

Maldives for the **Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)** expressed concerns that on the features of NDCs, the group’s options were removed without consensus and that there was a “deliberate attempt” to isolate the matter of “loss and damage” in the negotiations which is “part of our reality today”.

Ethiopia for the **Least Developed Countries (LDCs)** also informed that “in a number of instances, whole sale deletions of entire text” was being exercised and stressed that a package with the “lowest common denominators” was simply not acceptable.

Colombia for the **Independent Alliance of Latin America and the Caribbean (AILAC)** said that on finance, it encourages to “ensure finance elements are coherent to meet the long-term goals on mitigation and adaptation”.

Australia for the **Umbrella Group** said it does not have “full clarity on the current text” and that there are “areas which remain of concerns” and thus, “we have reservations”.

The **European Union (EU)** said that the texts do not reflect a “perfect balance” since “work is still incomplete”. It said the best way forward is to move with a “multi-layered approach” and that “political issues” can be “addressed by our Ministers”.

Tyndall said the Co-Chairs “do note and understand” the concerns expressed which are “inevitable and understandable”. She said the draft texts “represent our best efforts at this stage and our task now is to forward the product to the COP”, adding that it is “not our call on how to go forward”. “The COP President will convene a plenary and will be setting out his plans for the week ahead”, she informed. She also invited Parties to communicate their key concerns to the APA Co-Chairs by 4 pm.

Following amendments proposed by the African Group on the draft conclusions proposed by the Co-Chairs, the final conclusion adopted by the APA plenary was as follows: “...the APA agreed to forward the proposals by its Co-Chairs for the outcomes of its work on the PAWP, as presented in the annex. The proposals are being forwarded for consideration at COP 24 without prejudice to the content and form of the final outcome of the PAWP and recognizing that further work by the COP is necessary to finalize the PAWP outcome.”

The annex contained the proposals by the Chairs of the SBSTA and the SBI and the Co-Chairs of the APA for the outcomes of their work on the PAWP.

At the closing of the APA plenary, Parties expressed their sincere appreciation to the Co-Chairs, **Sarah Baashan (Saudi Arabia)** and Tyndall, in their interventions and with a long applause. The Co-Chairs also shared insights of their “adventure” and “journey” together, in steering the work of the APA, which was established under the decision adopted in Paris in 2015.

SBSTA plenary on IPCC Special Report

At the SBSTA closing plenary held on Saturday, Dec 8, one of the agenda items which saw controversy related to a non PAWP matter under the agenda item on “*Research and systematic observation*”.

The controversy erupted when the SBSTA Chair, **Paul Watkinson** presented to Parties the draft conclusions proposed for adoption, which contained a paragraph on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C.

The proposed conclusion in para 11 which was presented read as follows: “*The SBSTA noted the IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C.²¹ It welcomed the efforts of the IPCC experts on the report and the presentations given by IPCC experts and the rich dialogue that Parties and observers had with IPCC experts at the SBSTA– IPCC special event. It noted the importance of the underlying research and systematic observation enabling the production of the report. It took note of the knowledge gaps and information needs related to systematic observation in the report.*”

Maldives, for the **AOSIS** proposed a change to the conclusion for the SBSTA “to welcome” the report and expressed dissatisfaction that Parties could not welcome the information contained in the report that governments had accepted. The AOSIS intervention was supported by several others, including **AILAC**, the **LDCs**, the **African Group**, the **EU**, the **Environmental Integrity Group**, **Norway**, and **New Zealand**, with many stressing the importance of the report for the work of the PA and that it was a wake-up

call for more ambitious action to address the urgency of climate change.

The **United States** intervened to say that it could accept the conclusions proposed by the Chair (but not the amendment proposed by Maldives), adding that while it appreciated the hard work of the authors, it referred to the statement it made when the Summary for Policymakers (SPM) of the IPCC report was adopted in October this year, where it said that the acceptance of the report did not imply that the US “endorses” the findings or the contents of the report.

Kuwait also supported the Chair’s proposal to note the report, as well as **Russia**, which also said that it welcomed the work of the authors but not the report. **Saudi Arabia** also could not agree with the amendment proposed by Maldives and said that the conclusions were discussed at the informal consultations.

The SBSTA Chair suspended the meeting to allow for informal consultations on the plenary floor to seek a resolution. An amended proposal was then tabled for adoption which read the “*SBSTA welcomed the efforts of the IPCC experts on the report and the presentations given by IPCC experts and the rich dialogue that Parties and observers had with IPCC experts at the SBSTA– IPCC special event*” with the addition of the reference to the report which was initially contained in a footnote.

This proposal could not find consensus. The **EU** said that it wanted clear language to welcome the report and not just the efforts of the scientists. This sentiment was shared by several other Parties, including **AOSIS**, **AILAC**, **LDCs** and the **African Group**.

Given the lack of consensus, **Watkinson** invoked Rule 16 of the UNFCCC Rules of Procedure, which provides that if any agenda item, the “consideration of which has not been completed at the session, shall be included automatically in the agenda...” of the next session of the SBSTA.

The SBSTA Chair also expressed his disappointment and said that he will report the matter to the COP 24 President, which he did, during the feedback he provided to the COP plenary on the PAWP items.

