

Meeting minutes • 18 November 2024

## **COP29 webinar briefing**

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Date: Monday 18th November 2024

Time: 2-3pm

### **Attendees:**

- Parliamentarians: : Luke Murphy MP, Ellie Chowns MP, Barry Gardiner MP, Baroness Boycott, George Pickthorn (Perran Moon MP staff), Laura Kyrke-Smith MP
- External: Eve Deakin (UK negotiating strategy team), Mike Williams, Courtney Federico (Centre for American Progress), Ruth Davis (UK special representative for Nature), Matt Toombs (DESNZ), Alex Scott (ECCO), Zoe Avison (Climate APPG), Alasdair Johnstone (ECIU), Alex Chitty (LCEF), Tom Nguyen (Peers for the Planet)

### **Stage of talks**

- Generally, good progress so far; focus shifts from technical discussions towards political process in week two.
- Important carbon market motions adopted so this may be the COP where we get carbon markets and Article 6 of the Paris Agreement over the line. And important discussions on transparency and gender, and other outer layers of the Paris package.
- New collective quantified goal (NCQG) on climate finance is the biggest focus. Other big items: mitigation, where less progress was made in week one; and adaptation. Azerbaijan presidency has sought support from the UK and Brazil on COP29 package.

### **US Context**

- COP29 began just after US elections, with election of Trump raising likelihood of US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement and even the UNFCCC. If he succeeds in the latter, that would be harder to re-enter than the Paris Agreement alone, as last time.
- It is possible he will encourage others to leave too (Argentina's Milei, for instance).

- The likelihood of US withdrawal leaves little room for the US to exercise leverage in negotiations over climate finance at COP29; they were already experiencing significant political challenges at home, given Republican control of the House.
- Republican control of Congress, Presidency and the Supreme Court make it likely the US will be absent for at least the next four COPs, leaving others to step into the gap to continue to accelerate global momentum.
- That said, some (e.g. ExxonMobil) have been lobbying to keep the US in the process, and some NGOs are asking Biden to submit a US nationally determined contribution (NDC) of at least 65% emissions cuts, as a marker of progress US should be making.
- As last time, action at sub-state level could mitigate Trump's impact; most emissions are the consequence of state decisions. Also unlikely Republicans would repeal Inflation Reduction Act entirely so US emissions should continue downwards.

### **Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) COP16 in Cali, Colombia**

- CBD COPs often seen as little sister to climate COPs but growing recognition nature recovery is crucial to reducing emissions as well as improving resilience to impacts, and bolstering food security.
- Amazon rainforest a good example: globally important carbon sink, crucial to region's hydrological cycle; degradation affects rainfall and agricultural output, which will be felt by UK consumers. Nature recovery underpins economic prosperity and growth.
- Cali CBD COP saw some positive outcomes; UK helped broker a groundbreaking deal that will see pharmaceutical companies help promote and protect biodiversity. And a breakthrough on deal on rights of Indigenous Peoples, central to nature recovery.
- However, COP16 hit difficulties relating to climate finance and a number of deals did not make it over the line.
- UK Government and Parliamentarians have important role to play on momentum. Increasingly the three Rio conventions (climate, biodiversity, desertification) could not operate separately but need governments to approach them synergistically.
- Negotiations on the NCQG here at COP29 should deliver an important investment vehicle for promoting nature recovery. But nature-based

solutions are also central to discussions on climate change impacts and adaptation.

- When we talk about nature and the natural environment, we need to think of them as the fundamental life support systems that support economic and national security.

### **UK role at COP29**

- UK has a strong presence in Baku and the impact of setting an ambitious NDC has been widely felt. The NDC owes much to the UK's carbon budget framework, with the sixth carbon budget guiding the 81%, excluding international aviation and shipping.
- UK is the only country with a domestic legislative commitment on emissions cuts to 2035; its NDC will have a huge impact creating momentum and setting ambition level, although UK is not going it alone Brazil has also set an ambitious NDC at COP.
- It was anticipated businesses would be less engaged with COP29 than previously. Whilst possibly true at CEO level, this had been unfounded – including a very strong presence from British businesses involved in discussions on clean energy transition.
- COP29 is the finance COP; the big challenge is the NCQG, climate finance goal. Clearly difficult, as a new finance goal was last set at Copenhagen in 2009. But also essential, to give countries confidence in the COP process.
- Negotiations entering a crunch point, as they move to political level. UK is committed to achieving an ambitious but deliverable goal, and to working with the developing countries most impacted by climate breakdown, and with major emitters.
- The COP presidency's request for the UK to work with Brazil to help secure a deal underscored the extent to which UK is now recognised as a climate leader on the world stage. It was also important that the G20 summit in Rio signalled support for ambition in Baku against a challenging geopolitical landscape.

### **Prospects for success - the view from civil society**

- Success at COP29 essentially boils down to its ability to deliver on what was agreed at COP28 – a response to the first Global Stocktake that ensures 1.5°C-aligned NDCs.

- It is vital to success at COP29 for a new NCQG to be agreed that gives countries confidence the COP process can deliver change.
- There had been a sense COP29 would be a less consequential COP, focused on technical detail. But even before Trump's election, and more now, COP29 is a critical summit that must show global commitment to delivering the Paris Agreement.
- Despite difficulties in the first week of negotiations, COP29 has demonstrated global resolve on Paris; speeches from world leaders gave a strong sense of defiance. The arrival of Ministers is a real opportunity to invest energy and ambition into the talks.
- People are looking to the UK and Ed Miliband to show leadership in finding compromise over NCQG, but there also need to be clear decisions on mitigation agreements made in Dubai, at COP28.
- It is widely hoped the G20 leaders, and the G20 summit collectively, can help signal strong support for an ambitious outcome in Baku – particularly that the wealthiest nations are committed to delivering on climate finance. This could inject confidence and momentum into the negotiating rooms at COP29.

#### **Q&A:**

- Asked how confident panellists were that a climate finance goal would be achieved, it was commented that, whilst difficult and the kind of challenge the presidency had not encountered before, there was lots of appetite to prove the importance of the multilateral approach to climate action. There appeared to be enough appetite from countries to ensure a good deal was possible, but we must not forget that we also need more countries to step up with ambitious NDCs and realistic delivery plans.
- Asked about the need to reform the COP process to align the UNFCCC and CBD process more closely, the point was made that implementation of the conventions was constantly evolving and that this was a more serious and politically contentious framework than ten years ago. A number of governments had already agreed to a joint statement on nature, people, and climate and there was optimism governments would continue to bring them together. It was felt this was brought into focus by COP16 and COP29 taking place so close together, and there being a strong focus on finance in both; there was a need to continue to push hard to ensure the

nature agenda was not overlooked. It was observed that the world faced a massive challenge delivering action on climate and nature over the next five to ten years and we should not be distracted from that by the messy nature of reforming UN processes, which already faced a constant rhythm of reform and evolution. An example was the emergence of the formalised 'troika' of COP presidencies from the last, current and next COP. It was suggested it would be useful for national legislatures to have a stronger understanding of the role of COP presidency, for when a country assumed the presidency role.

- Asked about the UK's presence and leadership at COP29, and the impact that had already had, and may continue to have, panellists said the UK had been extremely well received at COP29, in response to the Prime Minister's speech and the new NDC. There was widespread acknowledgement of UK leadership in negotiations and people were hopeful this would encourage further commitment heading into COP30 in Brazil – a COP which would be particularly significant in light of the United States' likely non-participation by that stage.
- Asked about future US engagement with COP and what could be the consequences of US withdrawal, it was noted that, although the federal government was unlikely to be represented, there would be strong presence from US civil society and state governments. The US Climate Alliance (which represented state governments and municipalities representing 60% of US GDP), and America's All In were created in response to Trump's first withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. They would step into the leadership role vacated by the federal US government, and it was noted they were already involved in preparing 'shadow NDCs' to mark the progress the US should be making. It was also noted that, at a federal level, there would continue to be Congressional delegations to COPs and that, indeed, these could grow in number as a result of US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement.