

Developed countries oppose work plan on Just Transition Work Programme

Bonn, 11 June (Hilary Kung) – At the ongoing climate talks under the UNFCCC's Subsidiary Bodies (SBs) in Bonn, Germany, the negotiation on the Just Transition Work Programme (JTWP) feels like déjà vu, with developed countries' continuous attempt to limit the JTWP, this time blocking a proposal from developing countries to guide the implementation of the programme through a work plan.

(The JTWP was established in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt in 2022, for discussion of pathways to achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement (PA). In Dubai last year, Parties finally agreed on the elements of the work programme, following stark divergences between developed and developing countries. (See [TWN update 1](#) and Paragraph 2 of the [decision 3/CMA.5](#)). The [Dubai decision](#) also stated that the SBs shall guide the implementation of the work programme through a joint contact group, to be convened starting at this SB 60 in Bonn, with a view to recommending a draft decision on this matter for consideration and adoption in Baku, Azerbaijan later this year. It also decided that at least two dialogues shall be held each year as part of the work programme, with one before this SB session (June 2024), which took place on 2-3 June and another one prior to the start of SB61 in Baku. See [TWN Update 3](#) on the dialogue).

The joint contact group, which started on June 4, was co-facilitated by **Marianne Karlsen (Norway)** and **Kishan Kumarsingh (Trinidad and Tobago)**, who released a [new draft](#) text for discussions early morning of June 10.

During the joint contact group on June 10, **Egypt**, on behalf of **G77 and China**, proposed to add the consideration of “a work plan” in addition to a draft decision. This proposal was supported by others including **Kenya** for the **African Group**, **Bolivia** for the **Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDC)**, **China** and **Burkina Faso**.

The work plan proposal initially came from the **G77 and China** when Parties reacted to the first draft [text](#) released by the Co-facilitators late night of 4 June. The Group was of the view that the text was not a good basis for further negotiations as most of the views from developing countries were not captured, and the language presented in the draft text was more preambular and lacked operative languages. Therefore, the G77/China suggested developing a work plan that would cover the period until 2026 and the workplan can include enhancement to the process of the linkages between the dialogue and the negotiations.

The **African Group** called for the “work plan” to

be reflected in both the draft SB conclusions and also the draft decision text for consideration and adoption in Baku and also registered its concern that its' conference room paper (CRP) had not been fully integrated into the draft decision text and called on the co-facilitators "to do that". It said, "The placeholder doesn't give us confidence that our input will be considered." (There is a "[Placeholder on the workplan for the work programme]" in the draft decision text. It was understood that AGN had drafted a decision text together with a workplan for 2024, specifying the activities, timeline and output that they intend to carry out under each of the elements as per Paragraph 2 of the [decision 3/CMA.5](#))

The G77/China's proposal was rejected by developed countries, including the **United States (US)**, **Canada**, **European Union (EU)**, **Japan** and **United Kingdom (UK)**.

The **US** said it does not support negotiating a new work plan. **Canada** commented that it is a "premature idea at this point" and suggested the creation of a work plan during the review process to take place in 2026 instead, citing the reason that "the JTWP is at its infancy stage".

Said Canada further, "It is important to allow for flexibility and opportunity to dive into some issues that are important...(with) new views,...new perspectives...best available science that emerges in this time span [through the dialogues]...to really develop this work programme rather than limit to what we will be discussing in the next 2 years." It also said that having the work plan will "block the participatory and iterative nature of the JTWP". In the previous session, Canada said it prefers not to renegotiate the decision from Dubai and utilize existing modalities including the dialogue, and high level ministerial roundtable to effectively implement the work programme.

This sentiment was echoed by the **EU** that "discussing a work plan will delay the JTWP and prevent inclusiveness of non-party stakeholders." The **UK** said it was surprised to see the work plan proposal as it did not recall this proposal last year. **Japan** said it "cannot support it" and **Australia** wanted to know what a work plan would do before agreeing.

China explained that the work plan is necessary to implement the work programme in a more

systematic manner for the next 2-3 years. Reacting to Canada's remark that the work plan proposal will block the participatory nature of JTWP, China said the development of a work plan is a party-driven process and "we are not excluding others...NGOs are not excluded, non-party stakeholders could contribute to the workplan, to make the workplan more perfect and more efficient for future work."

Reacting to Canada's argument that the work plan proposal is a premature idea, **Egypt** for the **G77 and China** said, "It's true that the work programme in its infancy stage...we came here and engaged in the first dialogue with high hopes and high expectation for a concrete outcome, but unfortunately, it is business as usual. If we keep it in its infancy stage for so long till the review process, we may not be able to stand up and walk."

On trade-related unilateral measures to combat climate change with cross-border impacts, which was highly contentious in the past negotiations (see [TWN update 19](#)), the first draft text included a para 14 which reads "*Further recalls paragraph 154 of decision 1/CMA.5 recognizing that Parties should cooperate on promoting a supportive and open international economic system aimed at achieving sustainable economic growth and development in all countries and thus enabling them to better to address the problems of climate change, noting that measures taken to combat climate change, including unilateral ones, should not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade.*" This paragraph was retained in the latest version of the draft which is still subject to further negotiations.

The issue of unilateral trade measures has been consistently brought up by **Brazil**, on behalf of **Group SUR (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay)**, **Venezuela**, **Saudi Arabia**, **Cuba** and **Bolivia** for the **LMDC**. Venezuela highlighted the need to look into unilateral trade measures and that just transitions will only be enabled if there is a fair distribution of the carbon budget, and delivery of finance, technology transfer and capacity building.

The **US** was opposed to any discussion on trade-related climate measures in this forum, saying that this is a matter for the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and so would like to delete paragraph 14. It also said that there is no definition of "unilateral

measures” and the nationally determined contributions (NDC) under the Paris Agreement (PA) are unilateral by nature too.

China in response said, “The UNFCCC is the right platform to deal with trade-related climate measures... and that Article 3.5 of the Convention and also the global stocktake (GST) decision (from Dubai) in para 154 also related to unilateral measures and so we need to elaborate further on this. The JTWP is the right forum dealing with this issue.”

(Article 3.5 of the Convention establishes that *“Parties should cooperate to promote a supportive and open international economic system that would lead to sustainable economic growth and development in all Parties, particularly developing country Parties, thus enabling them better to address the problems of climate change. Measures taken to combat climate change, including unilateral ones, should not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade.”* Para 154 of the GST decision text reads under the “International cooperation” section, as follows: *“Recognizes that Parties should cooperate on promoting a supportive and open international economic system aimed at achieving sustainable economic growth and development in all countries and thus enabling them to better to address the problems of climate change, noting that measures taken to combat climate change, including unilateral ones, should not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade.”*)

Kenya, for the **African Group** underlined the importance of having a broad framing on how countries transition towards meeting the goals of the PA, recognizing the challenges that countries facing within and outside the UNFCCC and that the UNFCCC is a multilateral space.

During the joint contact group discussions on June 4, **the EU, US, UK, Australia, Switzerland** for the **Environmental Integrity Group (EIG)** also called for the JTWP to serve as a follow up to the GST, specifically on paras 28(h), 42 and 140 to increase ambition in the next NDCs, citing para 186 in the GST that *“Invites the relevant work programmes and constituted bodies under or serving the Paris*

Agreement to integrate relevant outcomes of the first global stocktake in planning their future work, in line with their mandates.”

(In the GST decision, para 28(h) refers to : *“Phasing out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies that do not address energy poverty or just transitions, as soon as possible”*; Para 42 *“Urges Parties that have not yet done soto communicate or revise,...their long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies...towards just transitions to net zero emissions by or around mid-century, taking into account different national circumstances”*; while para 140 notes *“that just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs, and economic diversification are key to maximizing the positive and minimizing the negative impacts of response measures and that strategies related to just transition and economic diversification should be implemented taking into account different national circumstances and contexts”*.)

Many developing countries responded by saying just transitions should not be mitigation-centric and recalled the wider scope of the work programme which was agreed to in the Dubai decision last year.

Egypt for G77 and China reiterated its “common understanding that just transition pathways are of unique nature, reflecting each country’s circumstances and capabilities, while focusing on sustainable development and poverty eradication as their over-riding priorities in the expectation of creating a more inclusive, just, equitable, sustainable and climate-resilient world. The inclusive transitions approach agreed to (in Dubai), represents an evolution in the international community’s collective understanding of just transitions. We have moved past mitigation-centric, policy prescriptive and silo-sector approaches, towards a holistic and integrated approach that respects diverse national circumstances and capacities, where each country has an inalienable right to development and to pursue its own development pathways towards shared objectives.”

Elaborating further, the G77/China stated that, “We are finding that as developing countries confronting multiple challenges, we cannot achieve such grand ambition and realignment of our

economies and societies on our own. We need to also advance adaptation efforts, acknowledging interconnected global issues such as food security, livelihoods and economic diversification. We, therefore, aim that the operationalization of the work programme underscores the importance of finance, technology development and transfer and capacity building support to developing countries to achieve just and equitable transitions, nationally and globally.”

Many Parties also expressed concerns over the lack of a written summary report from each of the dialogue to inform the negotiations. **Canada** and **US** proposed to have an informal report after each dialogue to have something in writing. The June 10 session saw Parties including the **G77 and China** calling for the draft SB conclusions to be specific that there will be an informal summary report following each dialogue under the JTWP.

With regards to the second dialogue, **G77 and China** proposed that the SB Chairs, when deciding the topic of the dialogue, besides taking into account submissions...also undertake consultations with Parties. **Brazil** for **Group SUR** called for a more party-driven process for Parties to be more involved in the topic selection and the format of the dialogue.

Developed countries questioned the practicality and rationality of adding the language of “in consultation with Parties” as it may restrict the participation of non-party stakeholders, and that the SB Chairs already had clear guidance from Dubai on the topic selection.

Egypt for the **G77 and China** also recommended to add language in the draft conclusions that

encourages more participation from developing countries, including non-Party stakeholders in the second dialogue. The **US** however preferred to stick to the current text as it said, “specifying ‘developing countries’ feel like limiting it to developing countries, while it may not be the intent but the proposal sounds like that.”

Japan was opposed to such a proposal citing that the decision does not contain a distinction between developed and developing countries.

Developed countries also highlighted the budgetary implications of the proposals and requested information about the budget for every element or activity proposed in the draft text. In response, **Qatar** for the **Arab Group** said that matters on the budgetary information should take place in the “budget room.” (Discussions on the UNFCCC secretariat budget are taking place under separate agenda item).

Developed countries also called to delete para 6 of the draft conclusion, which referred to “...*holding the second dialogue under the work programme intersessionally,...*”

The **US** said it did not support an intersessional dialogue, citing the reason that “we already have one dialogue prior to SB and intersessional dialogue is less inclusive.”

Parties were encouraged to meet in informal-informal setting to work on bridging proposals after the contact group on June 10 adjourned. The contact group will continue discussions on June 11.