

## Erosion of differentiation between developed and developing countries at COP28

Bonn, 6 June (Eqram Mustaqeem) – In assessing the outcomes of COP 28 in Dubai, UAE held last year, delegates from developing countries pointed to the erosion of differentiation between developed and developing countries with similar mitigation goals being imposed on all Parties.

These views were expressed at a side-event organized on Monday, the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June, by the Plurinational State of Bolivia, in collaboration with the Third World Network (TWN) on the sidelines of the 60th sessions of the UNFCCC's meeting of Subsidiary Bodies (SB60) in Bonn, Germany.

The panel comprised of distinguished veterans of the UNFCCC process, **Diego Pacheco (Bolivia)**, **Wael Aboulmagd (Egypt)**, **Vicente Paolo Yu (Philippines)** and **Meena Raman (TWN)**. The theme of the event was on assessing the outcomes of COP 28 which took place in Dubai, UAE last year.

The discussion kicked off with **Diego Pacheco** who shared the Bolivian context, of it being a country that is mostly rural and inhabited by indigenous peoples that tries to live in harmony with Mother Earth and opined that the UNFCCC was seen as being beneficial to addressing climate issues, along with the Paris Agreement (PA), despite the constant efforts by developed countries to bend the rules of the UNFCCC.

He said that in Glasgow however, at COP 26 in 2021, developed countries tried to create a different narrative, one that shifted away the responsibility of addressing the climate crisis as an obligation of developed countries to the shoulders of developing countries, using the facade of keeping the 1.5°C temperature goal in reach, with the goal of net zero for all by 2050. This he said is the essence of the problem, as we cannot allow for similar goals between developed and developing countries because it blocks the Global South's rights to development and to just and equitable carbon space.

Pacheco continued by stating that at COP27 in 2022, the Egyptian Presidency tried to redress this narrative (of similar goals for all) by strongly emphasising the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibility and respective capability (CBDR-RC) between developed and developing countries. However, this narrative resurfaced again at COP28 in 2023 in Dubai, with the outcome of the global stocktake (GST), especially paragraphs 33 and 34 on efforts towards halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation by 2030 for all countries. This he said, essentially forces countries where most emissions come from agriculture, forestry and other land use sectors such as that of Bolivia to achieve net-zero by

2030 instead of 2050, which is even faster than developed countries. This he said is against common sense, climate justice and the spirit of the PA.

In the spirit of confronting the narrative pushed by developed countries, Pacheco explained that Bolivia had proposed two new agenda items at SB60 for **“Developed Countries’ immediate and urgent action to achieve net-zero emissions latest by 2030 and net-negative emissions thereafter”** and for a **“Road map on financial support and means of implementation for alternative policy approaches to results-based payments such as joint mitigation and adaptation approaches for the integral and sustainable management of forests”**, the latter specifically would be essential for Bolivia to access financing if it is to halt and reverse deforestation by 2030. (However, these two agenda items were dropped from the provisional agendas as there was no consensus to include them, with the understanding that informal consultations on these items would be conducted on them by the Chairs and they would report back to Parties regarding the progress made at the closing plenary on June 12).

**Wael Aboulmagd** in his intervention stressed that there need not be winners and losers in the UNFCCC process but the approach right now entails more losses being incurred by one side, while one sides reaps benefits from it. He continued by stating the positives of COP28 and its outcomes, among them being the adoption of the decision of the first GST and its finance part which confirmed that the new collective quantified goal (NCQG) should reflect the evolving needs of developing countries and the need to support current nationally determined contributions (NDCs), the establishment of the Loss and Damage Fund which had made strong progress after the intense civil society push to get it on the agenda at COP27 the year before, and the adoption of the UAE Framework For Global Climate Resilience in relation to the global goal on adaptation (GGA).

Pivoting to the challenges at COP28, he indicated that there was pushback from developed countries against differentiation between developed and developing countries, ever since his experience in COP24 (2018) in Katowice, but COP28 supported the gradual and incremental shift away from differentiation. Even prior to the PA itself, when

historical responsibility was the foundational principle that all Parties worked upon in the UNFCCC, we saw the PA relegating historical responsibility merely into CBDR, and since then, interpretations on how and where it applied has always been problematic. The further push for ambitious, economy wide NDCs that are 1.5°C aligned in GST decision is further adding burdens on developing countries, whilst financial support is not forthcoming from developed countries, and this is in itself, a sign of greater erosion of differentiation.

He said that most of the climate finance in developing countries, especially from the private sector, is spent largely for mitigation measures, with adaptation being left behind and consequently having to be forked out by developing countries themselves, by reducing budgets for critical areas such as education, housing or healthcare. Aboulmagd ended his intervention by stating that the UNFCCC regime is a legally fragile one, and thus it relies on the buy in and goodwill of every Party. “Everyone has to genuinely believe that this is a regime that helps them and is not there to get them” he emphasized further.

**Vicente Paolo Yu**, (the coordinator of the Group of 77 and China for the GST), said that developed countries have always been trying to reinterpret the UNFCCC and the PA to shift it away from the fundamental basis of climate justice of what it was established for. Developed countries continue to push developing countries to undertake more ambition for mitigation without looking at what they have done in the past and what they continue to do in the present with examples of how the United States is the largest oil and gas producer and exporter, with Australia being the same for coal. He then continued with sharing the three important GST related agenda items. The first is the GST ‘annual dialogue’ which is to provide Parties the opportunity to share what they are doing in preparing their NDCs and getting themselves informed of the GST outcomes from last year as they prepare their new NDCs. It is only a dialogue and is not expected to be a negotiation.

Yu explained that the second one is the ‘UAE dialogue’ which is the dialogue on the finance section of the GST outcome (para 97 of the decision), that is supposed to look at the implementation of the finance related outcomes of

the GST. It would be a dialogue that would look at how much money there is in the pipeline that can be used to help developing countries implement work that is supposed to be done coming from the GST outcome, thus linking implementation and support. Developed countries are contesting this interpretation and instead want to use the dialogue to look at whether countries are in fact implementing different parts of the GST outcome, while not reflecting on the support side.

Said Yu further, the third part of the GST agenda is the refinement of the GST that is supposed to reflect the lessons learnt from the GST process in the past three years leading up to Dubai in the hopes of having a much robust process for GST 2.

He ended his intervention by saying that underneath all the technicalities is one simple truth that many developing countries are pushing, and that is that the world is highly unequal with that inequality being a consequence of colonization and imperialism in developing countries that needs to be addressed as part of how we move towards creating a just and equitable future for us all.

The last speaker, **Meena Raman** started by emphasizing that climate negotiations are so difficult because it is not just the climate regime that is responsible for what is happening in this world. She gave the example of the Columbian Minister, Susana Mohamad's statement at COP28 when the Columbian President announced to phase out of fossil fuels, the peso instantly plunged the day after, making it more difficult to access finance from the capital markets and increased its debt burden. Therefore, addressing the climate crisis is not just an environmental matter but has to be seen as part of the much bigger challenge of the need for economic transformation.

She continued by saying that the UNFCCC regime has to acknowledge the fact that there has been an overuse of the carbon budget for a 1.5°C limit by the developed world and that we are trending to deplete the remaining carbon budget that is left. She noted that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change had shown that the carbon budget to limit temperature rise to the 1.5°C limit is only around 500 giga tonnes and with current emissions, this will be exhausted in the next 10 years. Having the current targets of net-zero by

2050 for all countries with no net negative emissions for the developed world, and a fossil fuel transition that does not push for developed countries to do it now and rapidly, will make the transition very unjust and inequitable with severe ramifications for developing countries. Raman explained that the GST outcome on global mitigation efforts referred to the transitioning away from fossil fuels in a "just, orderly and equitable" manner, but questioned how this could be done when Parties self-define what their mitigation efforts will be in a nationally determined manner. She stressed that the "equitable access to atmospheric space" concept that was pushed by several developing countries even prior to the PA negotiations was opposed by developed countries, especially by the United States, which did not want any top-down aggregate set for emissions reductions.

She expressed concerns also on the carbon market explosion and the generation of dubious carbon credits and offsets that have been exposed by the mass media. Carbon offsets by developed countries allow them to escape from their responsibilities to reduce emissions and there should be no more room for offsets. Raman also expressed concerns on how the push for tripling renewable energy in the GST could come at the expense of developing countries of which much of the critical minerals for the renewable energy products are exploited from. She called for northern civil society to call on their governments to include the phasing out of fossil fuels in their NDCs with a clear and fast timeline. For developing countries, it is not as easy to phase out, as the transition has to be just, as they have critical and legitimate concerns over sustainable development and poverty eradication, and therefore finance support is paramount and this is where the developed countries should play their role in the NCQG negotiations.

Lastly, Raman ended her intervention by exposing that instead of rapidly reducing emissions, some developed countries and companies are pushing dangerous geoengineering experiments in the Global South which must be stopped.