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Welcome to Bonn: The Home Stretch To Paris

COP21 is approaching and the pressure of time is upon us to finalise the negotiating text and ensure the new agreement is legally binding, anchored within the requirements of science, and fair for everyone.

Here in Bonn, Parties have to advance discussion on the essentials while streamlining the unwieldy Geneva text. To help with this undertaking, here is ECO's take on the issues that need to be advanced this session.

Mitigation

The Paris agreement will come into force in 2020 and to be successful, a foundation of trust, ambition and fairness is needed. This requires that governments—especially those of developed countries—implement their current pledges and increase their overall mitigation ambition. Ambitious action from sub-national actors is a step in the right direction, but concrete policies and actions from governments is key.

The good news is that there are several ways governments can act to close the gigatonne gap, including (but not limited to): a massive expansion of renewable energy, greatly improved energy efficiency, a shifting of subsidies from fossil fuels to renewables, sustainable agricultural practices and developing zero carbon infrastructures. ECO calls for governments to pay full and due consideration to all these options. Yes, all of them. So don't procrastinate.

Additionally, ECO believes the technical examination process should continue to and beyond 2020. The Convention's technology and finance bodies should prioritise mitigation action with sustainable development co-benefits.

Finance

To facilitate the switch towards low-carbon, climate resilient development, the provision of support to developing countries remains a key item on the agenda. This support should come in the forms of technology and capacity building, and particularly through finance. Developed countries need to live up to past promises, with developing countries rightly calling for a roadmap that specifies how the US\$100 billion goal will be reached by 2020. Developed countries should respond to this call.

Even though it's primarily developed countries that need to provide financial support after 2020, ECO wonders if countries with comparable levels of responsibility and capability are ready to join the club of contributors, too. For the sake of predictability, ECO supports proposals laid out in the Geneva text to periodically set collective finance targets, with separate targets for mitigation and adaptation, based on support requirements of developing countries.

ECO also feels that more emphasis should be placed on setting up a process to mobilise finance from alternative sources. The balance between mitigation and adaptation needs be to improved when

allocating financial support, ensuring that adaptation finance corresponds to growing adaptation needs and is prioritised to the most vulnerable countries.

Long-Term Goal

It is key that Parties agree on a vision for the future. ECO would like this vision to include phasing out fossil fuel emissions, as early as possible, and no later than 2050. This vision should also include phasing in 100% renewable energy with provisions of sustainable energy for all. Such a vision will help drive ambitious action among businesses, cities and other actors by offering a clearer sense of where the international community is headed on climate change.

ECO suggests that this vision should be captured in the negotiating text coming out at the end of this intersessional.

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Ratcheting Up Mechanism

Paris should not lock in, unacceptably and dangerously, low ambition on mitigation and finance. Periodic upward revision of ambition based on changing circumstances should be built into the text to help close the pre-2020 emissions gap. The mechanism of ratcheting up would thus help reduce the risk of locking in irreversible emission trajectories.

This mechanism should not be limited to just mitigation but should be all encompassing. It should review the respective mitigation component of INDCs and their adequacy as well as fairness in relation to others. It should also allow for the regular setting and adjusting of targets for financial support. The mechanism should also look at potential areas where various UNFCCC institutions could play a much stronger facilitative role, for example the TEC and CTCN, particularly on adequacy-guided technological innovation.

There are disparate elements of this ratcheting up mechanism within the current draft text, and ECO asks Parties to flesh these elements out and afford the issue of ratcheting up the necessary negotiating time and priority.

Differentiation

‘Applicability to all’ has been agreed as a key feature of the Paris agreement, meaning every country needs to step up and play its part on climate action. The issue of responsibility

still needs to be addressed, however, and governments need to allow time for healthy debate on this topic in Bonn. It is clear that the world has changed since 1990, but inequality among countries—especially relating to capabilities—persists.

For the 2015 agreement to be successful, and for countries to fairly bear this common responsibility of action, ECO wants to see consideration of differentiated responsibilities, particularly on financing implementation, and on the speed of the transition toward 100% renewable energy.

Adaptation

There needs to be stronger recognition that the effects of climate change will necessitate increased adaptation. ECO would like to see these negotiations advance the issue of a global adaptation goal that also makes the direct link between mitigation efforts and adaptation requirements explicit. Guidance for this pillar should build on the principles—premised on the Cancun Adaptation Framework—of appropriateness, gender equitability and a rights-based approach to adaptation.

Loss and Damage

Last, but not least, loss and damage within the 2015 agreement should be placed on equal footing with adaptation, especially since loss and damage comes into play when adaptation is no longer feasible. There should

be provisions within the new agreement to anchor the Warsaw mechanism on loss and damage, give it real strength, and ensure additional finance. ECO also finds that the agreement should advance the development of compensatory approaches for those suffering from loss and damage.

Closing Thoughts

These Bonn talks are critical, not just in shaping the Paris agreement, but also in achieving a common understanding on a range of important issues. Governments need to start fleshing out areas of convergence within the text, and points of divergence should be discussed at length.

Negotiators should also keep in mind that these talks are not just about streamlining a text; they are about realising climate justice. Developed countries must focus on helping those most affected by, and in the weakest position to cope with, climate change, acknowledging they are part of the solution and ensuring all climate actions respect and promote human rights and gender equality.

ECO’s desired results from this session are not only a shorter text to be passed onto the next round, but also progress on the critical issues, a clearer vision for the Paris Agreement and a renewed sense of collaboration between Parties.

Germany: You’ve Done It Again

We get the impression that Germany likes being ahead of the curve. It appears that Germany is leading the pack when it comes to what developed countries are doing on climate finance. Last year, it was the first country to pledge to the Green Climate Fund. This year, just two weeks ago, at the Petersberg Climate Dialogue, Chancellor Angela Merkel announced a doubling of German climate finance by 2020.

ECO has been told that this is no empty pledge, and it actually refers to public finance from the government budget, which is currently said to be approximately €2 billion a year, and set to become €4 billion a year by 2020. And so you know, Germany, we’ll be watching you.

It’s not just Germany that we’ll be watching, though. ECO is excitedly looking around for others—yes, that’s you developed countries—to take up the challenge and use what time remains before Paris to prepare for their own announcement to match that of Germany. France, the US and Japan, please, no cheeky accounting of loans, including non-concessional ones, at face value, to look bigger than you are. Remember, we’re watching.

The other thing Merkel did was to call on developed countries to draft a roadmap of how to meet the US\$100 billion promise—an important push for its peers. For years, developed countries have

refused to present such a roadmap, ignoring repeated asks by the developing world and undermining trust in this process. Germany seems to have united with ECO now, understanding that such a roadmap may become a pre-condition for success in Paris. ECO suggest that the rest of the developed world trust Merkel’s political intuition and follow her call.

Any useful roadmap would naturally have to provide sufficient clarity on quantitative and qualitative aspects. This may include: by what level annual public finance will increase between now and 2020; the intended division between mitigation and adaptation (or between grants and loans); and the use of innovative sources to cough up new public finance.

While developed countries contemplate these ideas; ECO eagerly awaits Merkel’s next step. Next weekend’s G7 Summit—with climate finance and the \$100 billion promise on the agenda—could be a useful opportunity to rally support for crafting her desired roadmap.

To give comfort to those developed countries jealously reading all of this praise being heaped on Germany, rest assured that ECO will also examine its performance on export credit financing for dirty coal. It is a black stain on its climate financing record. Watch this space.