

ECO

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BREAKING: COP26 will take place in space

ECO has heard COP26 will be held in space so we can escape the pandemic! Forget about electric buses,. Elon Musk and SpaceX will be special sponsors and ensure equitable participation of all parties and observers. It's clear: Aerosols don't spread as fast in empty space... ECO heard. And if there is a COVID outbreak, delegates can simply be denied access to Earth until they recover. Easy! But, no, wait... maybe that's just a rumour. We would not want to speculate.

At the same time, ECO also heard that this year's COP26 is going to take place in Glasgow (on Earth) and the usual gift and freebies basket for delegates will include COP-themed masks and some Vitamein C pills and a ginger shot to boost your immune system - after all, there is a pandemic. ECO cannot wait.

On a serious note., ECO only feels comfortable sharing these rumours because they are obviously silly. You get the point, dear delegates and UK Presidency: The lack of clarity is fertile ground for speculation and rumours, making it hard to trust the process. And trust is the very foundation of any multilateral process. The lack of clarity also makes it also hard to plan - for visas, hotels, budgets, the effective participation of those most impacted by the climate crisis, and more. And speaking of trust: ECO cannot believe rich nations remain so self-centred and ignorant to the COVID crisis in other parts of the world, that even after the G7 leaders' Summit, Germany and the UK government have not supported the TRIPS waiver for a People's Vaccine yet.

ECO knows the logistics of COP are never easy and in particular this year. Anyone feeling jealous about not being on the COP26 logistics team, look forward to COP in Glasgow because of the weather and healthy Scottish cuisine. ECO understands it's hard and it's too early to make final decisions. ECO keeps hearing affirmations that COP26 will go ahead physically and ECO agrees a virtual COP is not an option. For the COP to make decisions and to be a success, it has to be in person and with inclusive participation of all countries, observers, Indigenous Peoples and civil society.

Therefore, going forward, details about the "inclusive and imaginative catering" from the latest logistics briefing might not be as high on everyone's list as some other questions.

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While final decision-making will still take some time, ECO suggests that the UK presidency, and UNFCCC Bureau members at their meeting tomorrow present at the very least clear and detailed scenarios as well as a timeline with decision-making points for the COP planning process going forward. These should include:

- credible options for further intersessional work between this SB and COP26, including options for virtual and physical meetings, because while ECO is quite annoyed by some parties who abuse an imbalance to slow down overall progress, we at the same time want to reiterate the need for such balance in the form of time allocated as well as the overall agenda at another session before or at COP26;
- the number of total participants, observers, and journalists at COP26;
- further details about safety measures on the conference site, including those concerning quarantine, testing, or potential plans for vaccination of delegates and observers;
- detailed measures to secure inclusivity and equitable access from all countries, Indigenous Peoples, civil society, and journalists - including guaranteeing accessibility to the COP for persons with disabilities.

President-designate Alok Sharma committed to making COP-26 the most inclusive COP ever and we wholeheartedly welcome this courageous commitment. Advance notice and effective communication of scenarios for the COP is key to delivering on this commitment.

ECO looks forward to hearing from you, dear UK Presidency by the end of this session, and to more frenzied speculations about COP26 logistics. Underwater seems a neglected and sensible option to contain the spread of COVID.