

ECO

A LOT OF TALK AND TOO LITTLE ACTION

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We Aren't Heading for a Happy Ending

As SB56 reminds us of a fantasy world far from reality, we are reminded of a book where wizards must follow certain rules. The first rule states, "People will believe a lie because they want it to be true or because they're afraid it might be true". Another one: "Willfully turning aside from the truth is treason to oneself" because then you fall victim to the first rule.

ECO likes to think along the same lines as the wise wizard in the story. So, dear Parties, here goes truth number 1: The last two weeks have been a deliberate waste of time. Truth number 2: Your endless talking is killing people. Truth number 3: What we **do** here and at COP27 matters, and what we **don't do** here and at COP27 also matters.

The objective of SB56 was to come up with solutions, but instead we have just been talking. Your inability to deliver has deepened distrust and has failed on our 'check box' of climate justice and integrity. As a reminder, here is the list of insufficiency:

- **The Santiago Network:** While developing countries want an institution that is fit for support, developed countries only want a checkbox exercise.
- **Glasgow Dialogue:** ECO feels that any small spirit of empathy, solidarity and collaboration displayed last Saturday has not followed through. It is clear that developed countries do not care. If they did, they would create a Loss & Damage Finance Facility to address loss & damage. Crocodile tears and tactics of conceptual confusion and institutional games have deepened distrust.
- **Mitigation Work Program:** The less mitigation you get, the more adaptation, L&D and finance you need. The MWP has arisen as a response to Parties' lack of ambition in meeting

the critical 1.5°C target. At SB56 Parties continued this lack of ambition by delaying and delivering nothing. Parties are reminded that if the work to date is not captured, then you just grew older in Chamber Hall for no reason.

- **Global Goal of Adaptation:** ECO knows that if we adapt there will be less need for L&D finance. But Parties have not moved forward at all towards the GGA in six hours of so-called workshops. And, after twice that time, you haven't been able to even agree on the most simplest of arrangements for the next steps. Your prevarications on National Adaptation Plans will fail the least developed countries on your commitment to facilitate their NAPs within the year. The GST has started to consider how to measure adaptation progress – but you've got to actually make some progress first.
- **Finance:** Without adequate, scaled and grant-based finance you are increasing the debt burden of countries, and pushes the ability of developing countries to progress a just transition into clean energy in the next three years further out of reach. Finance is integral to climate justice. Where is the balance of adaptation finance promised? The 100 billion, a drop in the ocean, remains elusive.

Parties, these are truths that should motivate your negotiations. Otherwise, you will fall victim to the first rule and fail the mission of these SBs, which was to center on the needs of those stricken hardest by climate impacts, and to set clear expectations and prepare a strong foundation for the work awaiting us in Sharm el-Sheikh. The time to take action is now. No more empty words and no more wasting time!

Climate Wars – Episode SB56: The Crushed Hopes of Glasgow

A long time ago, in a conference hall far far away, COP26 saw the Scottish government put £2 million on the table – de-tabooing a tabooed issue. But since this show of solidarity, the plea of civil society and of First Minister Sturgeon has remained unanswered.

The Glasgow Dialogue must deliver a Loss & Damage Finance Facility. In the closing hours of the COP, Antigua and Barbuda reminded the Presidency of the compromise. We saw rich countries showing sympathy, but ECO felt the pain when we saw that once again they have gone back to their old ways, spending hours of the GD chatting about Avert and Minimise when what we need is to Address so people can recover from climate impacts and rebuild their

lives and livelihoods.

They now want to discuss the issue next year, and ECO expects they will want to keep discussing and not paying. Such apathy towards vulnerable people and communities has consequences for people most at risk of losing their homes, farms, incomes, and lives.

As we go into an African COP – the COP of the vulnerable – loss & damage must be on the agenda and this must lead to a Loss & Damage Finance Facility that provides needs-based, accessible support for people who are facing the climate emergency now.

If rich countries do not deliver, then this will be a betrayal those who come here each time seeking justice.

Watching Delegates Play the MWP is Lava!

After 10 days of “intense” negotiations, delegates are tired and bored, and decided to start playing ‘Mitigation Work Programme (MWP) is lava’ in the Chamber Hall. The rules are simple: in this game, all Parties pretend that the MWP informal note is made of lava, and thus must avoid touching (agreeing to) it.

What Parties are forgetting is that tackling climate change is at the heart of the Convention and of the Paris Agreement, and that the new MWP is our chance to close the 2030 mitigation ambition and implementation gap.

The issue is tricky as some countries see this focus as inequitable and a risk of transferring more responsibility from developed to developing countries since the former have not delivered on their past promises of emissions reduction and support for the latter.

Undelivered climate action by rich countries thus stands in the way of future action by all, as developing countries demand both enhanced action from developed

countries, as well as a greater sense of urgency on adaptation and the delivery of loss and damage finance before agreeing to a meaningful UNFCCC process on mitigation.

As a result, we leave Bonn with a document lacking legal standing and a long list of possible elements for a mitigation work programme. Although options in the MWP note are too many and there is a clear need for streamlining, these are really important as a first step in the discussions. If the note is rejected, the work done here will be lost and progress towards a decision to be adopted at COP27 will be drastically slowed.

Parties hold divergent views on intersessional work such as workshops and submissions, with significant support both for and against. Intersessional work will be key on the road to Sharm el-Sheikh. However, a call for submissions is minor progress and won't advance the process.

Santiago Network: All the Work is Still to be Done

One of the expected outcomes stated by many developed countries prior to the SBs in Bonn was operationalising the Santiago Network for Loss and Damage. Sadly, as we enter the final day, all the hard work remains. One of the critical obstacles to progress has been reaching agreement on the governance of the Santiago Network.

This difference of governance thinking reflects the more significant and divergent visions for the Santiago Network. The developed country vision is restricted by limited resources, while the developing country vision is expansive to establish a network that is commensurate with what is needed on the ground, to address loss and damage in communities already reeling from the climate emergency.

The developed countries want the Santiago Network to be overseen by the Executive Committee (ExCom) of the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM), whereas the developing countries suggest an inclusive advisory board. That is to say, not a replication of the advisory boards already in existence for the Green Climate Fund, the Adaptation Fund or the CTCN, but an advisory body that learns from these and adopts their strengths while learning from their challenges.

So why can't the ExCom provide the advisory function to the SNLD? ECO would like to highlight two

significant limitations.

Mandate: the mandate of the ExCom is focused on the policy arm of the WIM. It guides the implementation of the functions of the WIM, although in almost 10 years has failed to deliver on the third mandate of the WIM.

Capacity: the ExCom is already super busy, its schedule is already consumed with routine meetings, coordination with other constituted bodies under the convention, as well as overseeing the work of the five expert groups. The ExCom meetings already have a full agenda and expecting them to oversee the Santiago Network in a timely and responsive fashion is frankly an impossibility.

We need to recall that in Madrid, following the review of the WIM, the Santiago Network was proposed because the ExCom was failing to deliver. It was failing on the third mandate of the WIM -- enhancing action and support, including finance, technology and capacity-building, to address loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change.

So developed countries, please do your homework and come to Sharm el-Sheikh with a more realistic plan. The people facing the consequences of irreversible impacts due to runaway climate change cannot wait any longer, and their cries of urgency should spur immediate action.

Paris Prescription: 1.5 to Save Lives

Climate change is recognised as the greatest health threat of the 21st century, while action on climate change could offer the greatest health opportunity.

Health may not formally be on the agenda here in Bonn, but it flows through the veins of these negotiations. From health metrics as one option to measure progress towards the GGA (put forward by the Adaptation Committee last year), to whether future themes of the Koronivia joint work on agriculture might include malnutrition in all its forms, to health co-benefits through delivery of an ambitious mitigation work programme, to the AOSIS proposal to consider climate-smart health projects under Article 6, and to finance needed for health impacts alongside other losses and damages – mitigation and adaptation in the health sector should be monitored alongside other sectors as part of the Global Stocktake.

Climate change drives heatwaves and other extreme weather events, vector- and water-borne disease transmission, food and water insecurity, malnutrition, and negative mental health impacts, undermining the right to health. In addition, millions of deaths occur due to air pollution, which shares a common toxic root cause with climate change: fossil fuels. We all know someone who has had a heart attack or a stroke, maybe a close relative, a mother, a grandfather or a colleague. Did you know that 20% of all cardiovascular deaths alone are related to air pollution – more than three million deaths every year, with additional deaths from stroke and lung diseases, and millions more emergency room visits due to asthma? Imagine the pain, the work of doctors, nurses and other health professionals –

and the financial cost that could be avoided. Accelerating a just phase-out of fossil fuels use is the most critical action to avoid these health emergencies.

Bad prognosis? What's the treatment?

Urgent climate action can contribute to protecting human and planetary health as well as our economies. Diseases and deaths themselves are considered under “non-economic” losses and damages by the UNFCCC, but nevertheless have associated costs, whether because of health care provision or reduced work and labour productivity.

These costs **exceed** the costs of mitigation in many countries. In the 15 countries that emit the most greenhouse gas emissions, the health impacts of air pollution are estimated to cost more than 4% of their GDP – actions to meet the Paris goals would cost around 1% of global GDP. Parties have a choice to make between continuing to subsidise and invest in fossil fuels, locking in cycles which will fuel unhealthy societies, or to invest now in action to ensure a just phase-out of all fossil fuels locally and globally to enable healthy lives and a healthy planet.

We highlight the importance of framing a COP27 outcome in the context of health, specifically one that “Recognizes that stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations will promote health and positive health outcomes for people and planet.” Fossil fuel phase out will be a key enabler of this goal, along with the promotion of clean transport and active mobility, green urban infrastructure and buildings, sustainable food systems that support healthy and sustainable diets... but that's an ECO article for another day!

Through the Bottom of the GlaSS

It sort of doesn't matter what the details are that have delayed progress this session towards the operationalisation of the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA). To the millions condemned to autonomous adaptation – that is people dealing with the increasing impacts of the climate crisis on their own – this means that they are going to be waiting for help even longer. Still, there remains a global responsibility for adaptation and it is in these halls that Parties are meant to have been working on meeting it.

The workshops last week might have made some progress after an initial false start – when Parties pretended to carry out negotiations but very quickly went back to quibbling, wasting more time on that than was set up for the workshops. And they still don't have an agreed text to send to the SBs. This means that we don't know how the next seven workshops (which is the GlaSS work programme) are going to be organised. It appears to ECO that some Parties still prefer the quite useless mode that failed so notably last

week. So, sorry to those flooded in India, parched in Somalia and sweltering in Pakistan; you are just going to have to wait. And the delays have also put off any discussion about finance. Yesterday saw the comprehensive collapse of the session for formulating and implementing National Adaptation Plans. The discussion on addressing priority gaps and needs was taken over by the money negotiators, adaptation people were swept aside, and nothing was achieved. Decisions will be left to the already over-full agenda for COP27. The elephant in the room really does take up all the space.

So, what of the rights to food security, to water, to health, to benefit from biodiversity? Achieving the GGA could well be measured by these universal challenges of the climate crisis. If in doing so, the GGA transforms the inequalities and gross injustices faced by the world's most marginalised and vulnerable people, and recognises that while adaptation is a global responsibility it is down to local and locally led action, then ECO will celebrate rights upheld and justice done.

Set the Record Straight, We're Here to Participate!

At times, ECO feels like a broken record. Perhaps our tune isn't catchy enough. Or perhaps you haven't heard it because observers have rarely been given the floor. So, we'll say it one more time: public participation and the ability of people to freely participate, including in UNFCCC meetings, is a human right and essential to effective climate outcomes.

ECO worries that when delegates enter the World Conference Center you forget about those with yellow badges. Unlike the double lines on a rapid antigen test, the yellow line on badges isn't going to hurt you. People don't threaten the party-driven process. We are here to help. But over the course of the last two weeks, we have faced appalling hurdles to our participation – from platform issues to not being able to intervene in sessions focused on enhancing our participation and on developing an ACE workplan (here's a hint: that's about the right to participate too).

All of this has ECO very worried as we head into COP27. ECO knows about the shrinking civic space and situation of

environmental and human rights defenders in Egypt. And we remember the participation issues at COP26.

And there's more -- it's not just about allowing participation, it's about enabling and promoting it. So, as we head into COP27, the UNFCCC Secretariat, the COP Presidency, and Parties need to think about how to enable and promote the free participation of observers, including Indigenous Peoples, women and people of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations, persons of color, persons with disabilities, and young people. This means reflecting on accessibility and how to decrease barriers, including those associated with travel (visas, costs), access (language, building design), and safety (speech, assembly).

When people participate, climate actions are more effective.

We'll say it here, we'll say it in Sharm el-Sheikh, and we'll keep repeating it until you hear it: People power, climate justice!

Goodbye... For Now!

As the SB56 comes to an end, a sigh of relief can be heard throughout the convention centre. Alas! Soon, two weeks of endless negotiations will be over, and delegations will return back to their capitals with the comforting sense of professional accomplishment. Alas! Soon, the ranting of climate activists, youth, and the victims of inaction shall no longer be heard, and governmental officials may go back to the blissful silence of their ministries – troubled only by the languid rustling of their offices' air conditioning. Alas...!

Unfortunately, the planet cannot afford the euphoric perspective of your uneventful homecoming. Honourable delegates, as you will soon enjoy the 'well-deserved' praises of your superiors (or not...?), ECO would like to address – one last time during this SB56 – their most apologetic condolences for the loss of your bureaucratic tranquillity. The end of SB56 does not amount to the end of our engagement and rest assured that you will continue to hear the voices

of our outrage well beyond the Bonn UN Campus. The walls of your ministries will never be thick enough to silence the united voice of millions of victims and the many more that are to come in face of your undelivered promises.

Luckily, your misery is not carved in stone – albeit ECO is saddened to inform you of the insufficiency of your SB56 performance. Would you finally act upon the responsibility that falls on your shoulders to ensure the passing of a liveable planet to – to whom indeed? Future generations? Your children? Yourselves in your final years? – only then would we stop our lament. Honourable delegates, if you won't take action for the sake of the Earth, the security of its inhabitants and the richness of its biodiversity, do it for your own sanity and the sweet vindication of knowing that you would finally shut down our complaints. On that note, we look forward seeing you in Sharm el-Sheikh. Have a safe return home!



Jana Merkelbach