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Editorial: Andres Fuentes

Great? Good? Average! - Here's why the new GGA text is bang average.

Finally, ECO's practice of patience has come to an end. ECO woke up this morning to the much-awaited new iteration of the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) text. As ECO clicked on the link with shaky hands, one question loomed large: What will it be this time? And most importantly, will it be enough?

An initial glance gave ECO some relief. The revised text is a convergence of perspectives, even displaying some options on its initial pages! As it turns out, parties also found this version of the text to be more balanced than its previous iterations, prompting a collective decision to delve right into its content.

ECO does want to take a moment to celebrate the inclusion of its namesake throughout the GGA text. Particularly, ECO applauds the attention given to adaptation measures, emphasizing restoration, conservation, and the protection of terrestrial, inland water, marine, and coastal ecosystems. References through the text to local and Indigenous knowledge systems are similarly welcome, although parties could do a lot better to reinforce gender considerations.

While parties are now provided with an option to acknowledge the principles of equity and Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capacities (CBDR-RC) of the Paris Agreement and Convention, alas, the coveted standalone permanent agenda item on the GGA becomes another mirage in this desert. What we are given instead is a two-year work program to develop indicators based on some wishy-washy targets. As if we didn't have a work program of 2 years with 8 workshops behind us, this shiny new work program is supposed to deliver the level of ambition that will enable developing countries to track and measure their adaptation actions. And guess what – it will do this in another 2 years only! Phew! ECO is relieved to find out that nothing stands between us and urgent and swift adaptation action anymore. What's that you're asking? It's not aligned with NCQG, so where will the money come from for developing countries to formulate and implement their NAPs, and establish robust systems to collect data and track progress? But didn't you hear developed countries saying the finance discussion doesn't belong under the GGA?!

ECO will spell it out once again for those at the back: A GGA framework lacking quantifiable targets and means of implementation would be rendered

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Justice is the key to a fossil fuel phase out

The science is clear: We need to phase out *all* fossil fuels within the next 25 years, if not earlier. That is the only way to achieve the 1.5°C ambition at the heart of the Paris Agreement.

Last week's voluntary pledges and promises won't cut it. In the last two days, ECO has read not one but two studies confirming this, from both the International Energy Agency and Climate Action Tracker.

For this COP to be a success, there is a bright red line: it must secure an agreement to fully, rapidly, and equitably transition away from all fossil fuel production and use – to phase oil, gas, and coal out in a way that is fair, fast, full, funded, and forever. This must be part of a comprehensive energy package, alongside tripling renewable energy capacity and doubling energy efficiency deployment, securing a reduction in total energy demand – while enabling energy access for all. A package that also delivers rights, participation and real world action in the Just Transition Work Programme.

ECO takes heart that there is serious momentum to say bye to fossils and usher in a renewable future in the text one day before it is due. But some of the richest nations are trying to pretend everyone has the same role to play, hiding their decades of fossil gluttony and the fatter wallets it has given them. Without a commitment from rich countries to do and pay their fair share to make it happen, the energy package won't be worth the paper it is written on.

Countries already being pushed into debt by climate impacts need reassurances that they will receive the finance to be able to leapfrog to renewables. This success also depends on developed countries doing their homework and delivering on their historical responsibilities, and funding a just energy transition.

Let ECO be very clear: As ever, justice is the key to ambition and to the phasing out of fossil fuels. First, with explicit references to the principles of the Paris Agreement and Convention, acknowledgment of differentiation, and the fair funding and technology transfer developing nations are owed.

Second, ensuring the foundations of climate action are rooted in social justice and wealthy nations respond to developing states' calls in the JTWP.

And third, in the GGA – committing to opening up their wallets at or by next year's 'finance COP'.

Some of the richest nations are saying one thing while doing another. This is

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From the Mitigation Work Programme to Ministers

Your Excellencies,

ECO has - like this COP - reached an age where time matters. Since 1992 we have had a great time going to COPs and talking about solving the climate problem. As our 28th COP is spinning into its final days we paused to reflect on the urgency of our task, and our “slow hurry” to actually do it.

ECO might be growing old, but ECO does not fail to realize and appreciate that the goal line at this COP is indeed significant. We are finally addressing the root cause of our common problem: getting rid of fossil fuels. ECO is all in favour (cheering from the sidelines now that the negotiations are behind closed doors).

Fossil fuels must be phased out. However, ECO can't stop worrying about the time factor. To sort this mess, it is **in this critical decade we need to urgently scale up reductions**. We know this. We agreed on this. But so far we haven't done it.

This time Eco doesn't want another decision postponing action to happen in 2040 or 2050. This time we want action to begin **NOW**. We need a decision to have emissions peaking in 2025 and achieving a 43% reduction of emissions in relation to 2019 levels by 2030. That is science and, as we heard today in the Majlis, you don't

compromise with science – science is science.

Your excellencies, in honest confidence we all know that we have no experience at acting fast. To ensure we do what we say, and do what science says we must do, we will need to have check-ins on our progress at every COP and every SB session. In between, we must conduct both global and regional dialogues in order to identify what barriers are preventing renewable energy from displacing fossil fuels and work together on solutions to bridge those barriers (aka implementation, something we also need to work on while discussing ambition). And of course, if it needs to be mentioned, all of this won't happen without the necessary means of implementation, predictable and at scale.

For this, we can build a new Dubai or Baku Work programme to follow up on the GST guidance for the next round of NDCs. And we can strengthen the **Mitigation Work Programme**, in which we already agreed in Glasgow and Sharm that is with a focus on pre-2030. At this stage of the game we don't care about the name as long as it delivers urgent reductions in this critical decade, which could be my humble contribution to “keep 1.5°C alive”.

Yours, The Mitigation Work Programme

Article 6: take it or leave it?

ECO has been in the dark about the carbon market discussions yesterday. Is it foreshadowing what's to come under 6.2? Looking at Saturday's text, it sure seems like it.

If you think carbon markets are difficult to make sense of now, wait until the article 6.2 rules come into play. A review process that has no consequences, a confidentiality clause that has no limits, a step of actions that have no structure or order, and all of this within a framework which, let's face it, allows countries to trade pretty much whatever they want (yes, even if it's not measured in tCO₂e!) and use it to meet their NDCs. What. A. Mess.

Parties, when you see the final 6.2 text today, and you get to decide whether to “take it or leave it”, here are some of the things that ECO would like you to look for before you “take it”:

- A definition of what a cooperative approach is - not to limit how Parties can cooperate (ECO loves cooperation) but rather to clarify what it is you've been talking about for the past 8 years!
- A clear set of guardrails to ensure that only sensitive information is deemed confidential. Confidentiality should be the exception, not the rule, and there can be no confidentiality without legitimate justification.

- A real review process that flags problems and ensures that those who don't play by the rules don't get to play at all
- A system that bolsters confidence and predictability (yes, ECO opened its “private sector vocabulary” dictionary for this one) by ensuring that authorised credits which have been sold and/or used cannot have their authorisation revoked, unless activities infringed on Human Rights or had other significant negative impacts. Buyers should not claim/use ITMOs that are no longer real, additional, and verified.

And lest you think all is okay in Article 6.4. The latest version of the text that ECO saw from Saturday does not give ECO confidence that the necessary guidance is being given to the Supervisory Body to address the massive loopholes in the recommendations on activities involving removals. This guidance must include more specific directions on reversals (including the Reversal Risk Assessment Tool), monitoring, grievance redress, and protection of human rights and the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

ALL these elements must be in place before activities are authorized, or it won't be enough.

GGA Continued

hollow, amplifying concerns about the GGA's sincerity. Finance, after all, is the red thread that runs through almost all COP negotiations. The current text issues a call to developed countries to amplify and enhance adaptation finance, emphasizing a need to double their collective provision to developing country parties by 2025—a seemingly lofty and challenging goal. However, the absence of a roadmap to achieving that finance goal, as well as a lack of clear targets on various dimensions, prompts a demand for revisions. ECO is confident that parties can come up with a realistic timeframe and pathway for these. Developing countries' call to attach an overarching means of implementation target to all targets further amplifies the urgency for adequate support.

ECO would like to remind all involved that the world is keenly observing the unfolding dynamics of the GGA, and the spotlight remains on the need for tangible global targets, effective means of implementation – first and foremost finance – and an unwavering collective commitment to realizing a sustainable future.

Funding for the Financial Mechanism: Don't You Forget About Me

ECO knows a lot is going on – declarations, Majlis, infomats – but does that mean a certain Party talking hard cash and funding momentum has forgotten something major? ECO gets it. We all have those moments where things fall through the cracks, especially the fundamentals. But how can we have a COP where Means of Implementation and more Finance are the talk of town and not the Green Climate Fund (GCF)? Filling the GCF is crucial for implementing the Convention and Paris Agreement. With flashy financial commitments announced with fanfare outside of the Convention's financial mechanism, perhaps the COP Presidency got distracted by the shiny and new and forgot to consider contributing – voluntarily – to the tried and true?

And Developed country Parties, don't think you are off the hook! You should check your memories too. Some GCF contributors have apparently forgotten to announce new pledges (and some don't seem to know their fair share). Don't they remember that significant pledges, rapidly fulfilled, must back up any claims for wanting to push climate action and ambition? Memory lapses happen, but ECO can help you recall that since the first replenishment, the climate catastrophe has worsened and developing countries are further caught in a debt trap. Yet somehow, developed country contributors are stuck in

a matrix in which time - and costs – seemingly stood still and pledged the same, or even lower, than before. You remember and bemoan inflation when shopping but forget that euros, dollars or yen pledged today do not hold the same value as financial pledges from pre-inflation years.

As we consider the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) and that adaptation finance is decreasing as a share of overall climate finance, Parties also seem to have forgotten that funds under the financial mechanism provide the most grant finance to the most vulnerable. Don't forget the Adaptation Fund or the GCF's commitment to balancing between mitigation and adaptation!

While new commitments and partnerships range far and wide – and garner headlines - ECO reminds Parties that true leaders strengthen the financial mechanism and its fundamental institutions for effectiveness and sustainability in ways that meet current needs, rebuild trust and create predictability. The need for an ambitious GCF replenishment has never been clearer. The latest IPCC report, Adaptation Gap report, and the Global Stocktake synthesis compel an urgent upward shift in climate finance ambition – and success at COP28 depends on it. Those who claim climate leadership must remember what it really means.

Sore throat and stinging eyes? Keeping strong fossil fuel phase out language in the text will help at future COPs

If you're feeling dizzy or out of breath, it might be more than the usual near-end to negotiations delirium - we're almost two weeks breathing air that's way over the WHO air pollution recommendations. PM2.5 in Dubai has been over 40 every day since Dec 2nd, and has been over 60 the least three days - which is eight times the WHO's maximum safe level. While there are grave health risks of long term exposure to air pollution, including stroke, heart disease and some cancers, even short term exposure to elevated PM2.5 has health risks, including asthma exacerbation, breathing challenges, and increased risk of respiratory infection - anyone get hit with that nasty COP cold going around?

Have you noticed the gas flaring on the metro en route to the COP28 venue, or been stuck in evening traffic gridlock? Air pollution in Dubai is in large part due to

vehicle emissions and fossil fuel energy production, we're all getting a taste of the results of inaction on fossil fuel phase out - it is tangy, metallic and not at all pleasant.

We're hoping that this two week exposure to this grating reality of so many, will motivate negotiators to keep fossil fuel phase out language in the GST text. Hiding behind abatement technology as an excuse for continued fossil fuel use and expansion doesn't only propel the climate crisis, but won't prevent the 5.1 million deaths caused by fossil fuel-driven PM air pollution annually. Dubai isn't alone in its air quality challenges - 99% of the world's population breathes air that exceeds WHO quality limits, and burning fossil fuels causes the majority of the world's air pollution. Keeping fossil fuel phase out in the GST would be a chance to get everyone breathing a little easier, both literally and figuratively.

Justice Continued

nothing new, of course: ECO has pointed out that just five rich countries are on track to be responsible for over half of the world's oil and gas expansion between now and 2050, even as they whisper seductive words around phasing out or phasing down fossils.

ECO will not stand for an energy transition that only serves to deepen existing injustices – and the reality is that an unjust or unfunded agreement for phaseout will mean no phaseout at all.

Weaponizing Water in Gaza: A Desperate Fight for Survival

It has been two months since Israel brazenly announced its intention to violate International Humanitarian Law by cutting off all food, water, and electricity to Palestinians in the already besieged Gaza. Simultaneously subjecting them to constant and indiscriminate bombings and ground attacks. From the second week of Israel's campaign in Gaza, my cousins in Nuseirat Refugee Camp in the central Gaza Strip were concerned about water:

"There is effectively no electricity or water in the Gaza Strip," wrote Mohammed, a mathematics professor and young father of one, on October 17th. "We're lucky to live next to an agricultural area so we can at least access [untreated] well water, but 90% of the population don't even have this option. Displaced people sheltering in UNRWA schools come to us sometimes asking for just one liter of agricultural water – they are desperate. Many people are drinking unsafe water."

Weeks later, the effects of being forced to drink unclean water began to show:

"All of my children have suffered from diarrhea for days," Wesam, a physician and mother of three children under the age of six, told me on November 11th.

Mohammed wrote on December 3rd that his two-year-old son is sick with gastrointestinal issues. He cannot find basic medications, like paracetamol, to relieve his symptoms. "All the pharmacies have run out because so many children are infected. According to our doctors, contaminated water is the main cause of illness now."

"Non-potable water only comes one day a week, and it doesn't reach many homes," he writes. "Many people use sea water [for washing], which is already very polluted. Without fuel for the pumps, sewage has begun to mix with water in the aquifers,

posing an even greater danger."

After more than two months of heightened siege and Israeli bombardment, which has also damaged vital water and sanitation infrastructure, most governments refuse to even condemn Israel's actions, let alone take meaningful action themselves to end the attacks and siege on Gaza, and alleviate the staggering humanitarian crisis they have caused.

Palestinians have not been surprised by the lack of action from the international community. On the contrary, they have always understood that institutions promoting human rights and international humanitarian law serve the interests of a world that Palestine, along with every other colonized, oppressed, and exploited nation, is not considered an equal part of.

This is a reality many researchers, activists, and human rights advocates have come to grips with in the past two months, as we watch these institutions so staggeringly and completely fail in their mandates to protect life and ensure justice. Now, as Palestinians in Gaza struggle to find drinkable water and children fall ill with no access to basic and vital medications, our collective understanding of the institutions we have studied, defended, and promoted is being reshaped. By declining to take significant action to halt the crimes being committed against Palestinians, governments render international law illegitimate, humanitarian principles ineffective, and themselves unworthy of respect for failing to uphold the principles they proclaim to stand for.

I write this in memory of Abeer, her husband Hani, and their three-year-old son Hassan, who were killed in their home by an Israeli airstrike on October 19th. They are survived by their three children, Ahmed (11), Ali (9), and Mariam (6), who were also injured in the airstrike.

Harmful tipping points show the need to respect the 1.5°C warming goal

ECO would like to remind delegates to the Second Periodic Review of the Climate Convention which was held 2021-2022 and finalized one year ago at COP 27 with the intention to feed into the GST negotiations. The Review identified 10 key messages such as:

- at 1.1°C warming, the world is already experiencing extreme climate change.
- climate impacts and risks, including risk of irreversible impacts, increase with every increment of warming
- it is still possible to achieve the long-term global goal with immediate and sustained emission reductions
- the window of opportunity to achieve climate-resilient development is rapidly closing
- the world is not on track to achieve the long-term global goal
- equity is key to achieving the long-term global goal.

ECO recognises that the rate of global warming is

occurring in line with projections or even worse. Global warming is happening faster and more drastically than anticipated while the projections for future climate impacts in coming decades might be exceeding the short-, mid-, and long-term projections even under low emissions scenarios.

This brings us closer to Tipping Points that might trigger a complete instability and extinction of entire ecosystems, irreversibility of weather and other patterns and resilience of human communities - even before exceeding 1.5°C. See also the new report by Lenton et al on Global Tipping Points for COP 28 where more than 200 scientists have contributed. Their main message is: Harmful tipping points in the natural world pose some of the gravest threats faced by humanity. Their triggering will severely damage our planet's life-support systems and threaten the stability of our societies.

For ECO the GST decision should in any case reflect that limiting global warming to 1.5°C is not safe.