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Rolling Time Frames ... the Article 4.10 landing zone in Glasgow

Informal Ministerial Consultation on Common Time Frames for NDCs, 7 September 2021



A rolling Double Gloucester, NOT a rolling time frame

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Summary

On 7 September 2021, Minister Mujawamariya of Rwanda and Minister Sommaruga of Switzerland, invited by the COP 26 Presidency to consult with ministers on Common Time Frames (CTF) for NDCs, convened a [virtual informal ministerial CTF consultation](#). This was preceded by an OCP/ecbi prep-meeting on 3 September.



Simonetta Sommaruga and Jeanne d'Arc Mujawamariya

Judging from the interventions during the consultation, there remain only two 'process options' of what Parties to the Paris Agreement are meant to be doing regarding communication in 2025, namely to:

[1] communicate a 2040 NDC, i.e., an NDC with a time frame up to 2040 (10-year Option put forward by Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Arab Group), or

[2] communicate a 2035 NDC and repeat every 5 years (5-year Option endorsed by everyone else who referred to such a process option).

To be clear, Saudi Arabia did not insist that everyone adopt a 10-year time frame, but only that developing countries be given the flexibility to choose between a ten-year and a five year one, with developed countries required to adopt the latter. While one may well wonder why only developing countries are meant to be given this flexibility (could it be because the 5-year Option is recognised as intrinsically better for the planet?), the real question must be whether developing countries are actually interested in having that flexibility; and the answer, judging from the relevant group interventions at the consultation (see below), is most likely negative.

Yet, there are clearly some who would like to be able to choose Option [1]. How can they be accommodated? Hugh Sealy (Barbados), during the prep-meeting, described [2] as the combination of a 5-year with a 'rolling' 10-year time frame (i.e. with overlapping 10-year implementation periods), and is simple to come up with an Option that achieves the same combination for [1], namely:

[1+] communicate a 2035 and a 2040 NDC (and repeat every five years).

Nota bene: Option [1+] is as compatible with the [Glasgow Ambition Cycle](#) language (as referred to in the intervention by Colombia on behalf of AILAC, see below) as Option [2], and they do have a common time frame, in the sense of having common end-years for all NDCs.

For more see the Technical Paper on “[Common Time Frames Reducing the Options for a Decision in Glasgow](#)” produced for the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), or the [kick-off presentation](#) given at the pre-meeting

The Consultation: Opening, Closing, and Group Statements

In his opening statement, Alok Sharma, UK **COP 26 President designate**, reminded participants that “almost six years have passed since we agreed in Paris to resolve common timeframes, and despite the progress we have still not reached the solution. ... after years of negotiations we are familiar with one another’s positions. What we now need to do is to focus on finding solutions and developing consensus, if we are to put the Paris agreement into full operation and keeping 1.5 degrees within reach, as well as, of course, protecting our precious planet.”

He was followed by Marianne Karlsen, **Chair of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI)**, who very eloquently reminded participants that: “CTF is central to a well-functioning implementation of the Paris Agreement. For the NDC communication cycle, for accounting, cooperation under Article 6 and the global stock take. But more importantly, CTF enables parties to go together towards a low emission future. In different ways – nationally determined, but with the same rhythm. In that way Parties have the certainty that taking a step forward is not a step you take alone, it’s a step that everyone else will take too. No one can or will deliver on the Paris Agreement alone.”

Eight ministers took the floor after the SBI Chair, and they were followed by position statements of six negotiating groups.

Zimbabwe on behalf of the 55 countries of the **African Group of Negotiators (AGN)** confirmed that “The African Group supports a 5-year common Time frame. This position is a firm one with the view of avoiding lock in of low ambitions. We believe that a 5-year common time frame for NDCs will ensure proper alignment with the 5-year ambition cycle of the Paris agreement and will facilitate clarity, transparency, understanding and aggregation of NDCs. ... Accordingly, we strongly encourage that NDCs with a common time frame must be submitted in 2025 and to be implemented from 1st January 2031 to 31st December 2035.”

Australia, on behalf of the 12-country **Umbrella Group**, briefly took the floor and pointed out that “This is not one of the hardest issues we need resolve, but it is a critical one for us to agree at COP 26.”

He was followed by Bhutan on behalf of the **Least Developed Countries (LDC) Group**, who told participants that the LDC Group “supports the proposition of communicating by 2025 an NDC with a time frame up to 2035 and to do so every five years thereafter [and that countries] should keep enhancing their NDCs. Taking this into account, LDC Group emphasizes the need of calling the Parties to update their NDCs in 2025 with a time frame up to 2030”.

Saudi Arabia, on behalf of the 22-country **Arab Group**, began his intervention by acknowledging that CTF is as “critical agenda item that is integral to our collective efforts for implementing the Paris Agreement.” Having indicated that for his Group, “a 10-year period is the most suitable option” he re-iterated their well-known preference for what has been referred to as ‘common-but-differentiated-time-frames’, namely: “include flexibility provision for developing countries to choose a time frame ..., while developed countries fol-

low the five-year cycle." He agreed that a decision should be taken in Glasgow, but "only for indices that will be communicated in 2025 for the period from 2031 to the period of 2040."

He also contended that timeframes "have no bearing on the level of ambition," a view clearly not shared by Argentina, who spoke also on behalf of Brazil and Uruguay (**ABU**), who insisted that "It is important to keep in mind that you need to establish a single time frame that is the same for all parties to support ambitious NDCs." ABU is also of the view that "the adoption of a decision at COP26 is essential for the functioning of the Paris Agreement and the application of the principle of progression. A decision on this topic has a direct impact on the implementation of the Paris Agreement and it is also linked to many arrangements under the Agreement. The CMA should offer guidance to the Parties on the subject, in order to start their domestic processes for preparing the next NDCs."

Last but by no means least, Colombia made a passionate intervention on behalf of the 8 members of the **Asociación Independiente de Latinoamérica y el Caribe (AILAC)**, pointing out, in particular, that "the different options can integrate a 5-year update cycle of targets for an announced date in order to enhance ambition, using the outputs of the most recent GST and IPCC reports. For 10-year NDCs, the use of overlapping implementation periods can help this alignment. So, the critical issue is that Parties agree on the operational need to stick to the 5 years on both reporting NDC achievements and updating NDC ambition, AS STATED BY THE GLASGOW AMBITION CYCLE. [*Sic!*]"

As regards ambition, she emphasised that "it is important that the decision requires that all existing NDCs are updated in light of each Global Stocktake to reflect a Party's highest possible ambition" and concluded that "practically and operationally, agreeing on Common Timeframes that allows ambition to benefit from the Paris Agreement 5-year cycle is not a difficult thing to do. ... If we fail to do so in Glasgow, the world will rightly conclude that the COP is not serious about achieving the Paris goals." In her closing statement, Minister Sommaruga (**Switzerland**) highlighted what she is taking away from the consultation, and specifically that there are "clear expectations from all Parties to adopt a clear decision on Common Time Frames in Glasgow" and reminded participants of what "Alok Sharma said at the beginning: we need to find solutions and develop consensus."

This entry was posted in Uncategorized on 13 September 2021 [<http://blog.oxfordclimatepolicy.org/rolling-time-frames-the-article-4-10-landing-zone-in-glasgow/>] by Benito Muller.

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