2025 Bonn Seminar

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Introduction

The Bonn Seminars are an annual event hosted by ecbi held alongside the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body meetings, which take place around June every year in Bonn. Since 2005, the Bonn Seminars have provided an opportunity for invited delegates from developing and developed countries to share ideas on topical issues in an informal setting and build mutual understanding and trust. The meetings operate under Chatham House rules, meaning participants can speak off-the-record outside the formal negotiations.

The 2025 edition of ecbi's annual Bonn Seminar convened on the sidelines of the 62nd session of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies (SB62), bringing together more than 40 delegates from both developing and European countries. Seminar participants discussed efforts being taken on advancing the **Baku to Belém Roadmap to 1.3T**, which aims to scale up climate finance to developing countries to support low emissions and climate-resilient development pathways and implement nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and national adaptation plans (NAPs), "including through grants, concessional and non-debt creating instruments, and measures to create fiscal space, taking into account relevant multilateral initiatives as appropriate".

Another seminar session addressed the **Mitigation Work Programme (MWP)**, with one developing country and former MWP Co-Chair commenting that it was the best discussion on the MWP that he has participated in, with many innovative ideas about how to improve the process put forward. Topics raised by speakers related to, among others, how to make projects more attractive for investment such as aggregating small projects, and how to better scale up ambition and implementation.

An exchange then took place on the **Future of the Process**, with presentations addressing **reorganising the COPs**, which have become unruly with Summits, expos, and negotiations all happening at the same time in the same place. The numbers of participants attending these events are astronomical and prohibit small and vulnerable countries from holding COPs as they have limited infrastructure and hotel rooms. One proposal being floated for COP31 is that if Australia is chosen to host, it could partner with Fiji, which could host the negotiations so that the multiple events could take place in different venues, ensuring a small island country would be able to host.

Another presentation looked specifically at **repurposing the multilateral climate process** through, for example, reorganising and simplifying the agendas, moving to a multi-year programme of work so not every item needs to be addressed every time, developing different work formats and changing mindsets to focus more on implementation, and making better use of spaces held outside of the formal process, such as climate weeks.

The 2025 Bonn Seminar took place on 22 June La Redoute in Bad Godesberg, Bonn, and brought together more than 40 participants from both developing and European countries.

Opening of the Meeting

Opening the 2025 Bonn Seminar, ecbi Director Benito Müller reminded participants that the aim of the seminar is not to negotiate, but rather to discuss issues of relevance to the

negotiations in an open and frank manner and to build trust. He encouraged asking questions of each other, noting that while colleagues may not always agree with each other, they at least have a better understanding of each other's positions. This, he explained, is a huge step forward, because we do not want ideas and proposals to be rejected simply because of a lack trust or because positions are unclear or not understood. He thanked the Government of Denmark for their financial support.

Kishan Kumarsingh, Trinidad and Tobago and Head of the ecbi Fellowship and Trust Building Programme, moderated the seminar. He noted that the seminar agendas are usually not circulated in advance to ensure more organic discussions and participants do not read prepared statements. He added that reading materials are also not shared in advance so discussions are not confined in any way. Kumarsingh explained that the first half of the seminar would focus on topics under active negotiations and where an outcome is expected at COP30 in Brazil in November, with a broader discussion on the process to follow. Noting that covering all topics under discussion is impossible, he said views were solicited on the most appropriate topics to address.

Baku to Belém Roadmap to 1.3T

Anne Rasmussen, Samoa and lead negotiator for the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), presented on the Baku to Belém Roadmap to 1.3T, priorities for AOSIS on this issue, and what, from the Alliance's perspective, the Roadmap should include. Rasmussen explained that expectations for the Roadmap, from the point of view of AOSIS, include enabling the scaling up of financing to developing countries from public and private sources from USD 300 billion to USD 1.3 trillion.
She expected a report would be prepared and then presented at a high-level event at COP30 in Belém. She said a key focus should be on pathways to reach targets. She stressed increasing finance to SIDS and LDCs, more climate finance decision making at the local level, implementing key areas of actionable measures, and recognizing specific vulnerabilities.
She explained that while the underlying discussions, with their investment paradigms and focus on classic emerging market actions, suit some, they do not address specific fragilities. She said the Roadmap on access must include actionable measures in the short and medium term, and enhanced coherence with domestic planning instruments and an investment platform.

Rasmussen said a mix of instruments is needed, lamenting that most of the current finance is in the form of loans rather than concessional, and that the NCQG decision lacks information on types of finance. She underscored that the Roadmap must also focus on adaptation and loss and damage, which are priorities for SIDS.

She called for reporting systems for transparency and accountability to ensure equitable distribution of financing; underscored that financial flows must also be for adaptation and loss and damage; and emphasized the sharing of country experiences and lessons learned, the need to reform the multilateral development banks (MDBs), ensuring SIDS get specific attention, and looking at non-traditional finance sources. She also mentioned: increasing the catalytic effect of public resources; restructuring should address realities of developing countries; and public intervention to mobilize private sector financing.

Noting that discussions are ongoing, she lamented that the workplan currently under negotiation is more procedural than substantial, and urged that consultations of heads of delegations should take place at the pre-COP.

Rasmussen noted relevant multilateral initiatives that should be anchored in the Roadmap, mentioning, in particular, paragraph 16 of the NCQG decision taken at CMA6. She also urged exploring restructuring and relief mechanisms and said the Roadmap should provide a scenario for ramping up different sources. Rasmussan explained that regional approaches to reach scale require technical assistance.

During the ensuing discussion, a developed country speaker, discussing enabling environments and restraints, noted the need to explore how to bring more money into the system and to consider the private sector, triggers, risk, rate of return, and market size. He highlighted, as an example, the work of the International Solar Alliance in Africa to bring solar pumps for agriculture. He suggested bundling to see if such efforts could be turned into a single market for suppliers rather than focusing on each country alone, as well as thinking about what more countries can do to attract financing.

Another developed country agreed that potential investments are too small, and that we must find ways to bundle and make things more interesting for investors. Calling for concrete recommendations in the report, he wondered how it will be brought into the process and how it will be used. He said we should reflect on whether it will be a report at the COP or whether there will be a decision out of the report, and what would be most useful for the COP itself. On enabling environments, he urged looking at work being undertaken and examples of what actions would be useful.

ecbi Director Benito Müller said needs assessments show we will need trillions to fight climate change, and that we have entered a new paradigm with loss and damage. He added that while mitigation and adaptation are a choice, loss and damage is not. He noted benefits of having domestic trust funds for loss and damage and adaptation. As an example, he mentioned Fiji's trust fund which gets money from cruise liners and entertainment venues.

While noting the importance of reforming the financial architecture, he said we cannot wait another 20 years to do something. He said even some movement forward is a sign of good faith, citing small initiatives as an example. He described the proposed Climate Solidarity Alliance, which would advance the establishment of domestic climate trust funds with loss and damage window.

One developed country wondered how this issue will land at COP30, and what will be done with the Roadmap, noting the incoming COP Presidency's aversion to cover decisions. On initiatives to scale up finance from all sources, she underscored the need for private finance.

A developing country commented that reforming the financing landscape goes beyond the climate space and asked what other financing instruments can help increase flows. She said the communication gap must be bridged and wondered how to get from USD 300 billion to 1.3 trillion.

Another developing country wondered how we can continue to build trust over time, and how to develop enabling environments in developing countries, especially for LDCs, noting one size does not fit all. He said developing country partners must view climate change from the perspective of recipients. He urged assessing how developing country partners are responding to government needs, emphasizing that each government has different needs, as does each partner organization.

A developed country asked how developing countries can put themselves "in the driver's seat, instead of running after every donor" and adjusting to their requirements to those of the donors. He wondered whether countries could take their NDCs to potential investors and see which parts they are interested in. He queried how the UN system can help us meet countries' goals as opposed to running after the priorities of the 40+ UN agencies.

Another developed country raised issues related to, among others: taking elements from other areas and bring them into the Roadmap; use of the Roadmap by Parties, as well as other actors, including at the subnational level; and how to make the Roadmap operational, with detailed implementation and finance plans.

Echoing a previous intervention regarding his country's strategy of helping countries make their NDCs investable, one speaker mentioned that it had helped Cabo Verde to update its NDC and make it investable.

One participant noted high expectations for this Roadmap, and that we must ensure continued commitment and develop models to leverage private finance.

A developing country mentioned trying to organize investment-focused elements alongside the Global Dialogue, and making better use of NDCs to include and stimulate investment from the private and financial sectors. A developing country from Latin America noted ongoing challenges as most financial flows are creating more debt for our climate finance.

A SIDS representative said that they are doing everything that is being asked of them at every level. However, when it comes to the bottom line of funding agencies, SIDS are being left behind. He explained that they "look with envy" at the larger developing countries that are getting most of the money for climate-sector projects.

Mitigation Work Programme

Maesela Kekana, Deputy Director General, Climate Change and Air Quality Management, Department of Forestry Fisheries and the Environment, reviewed the background and mandate of the MWP, noting its establishment following a decision taken in Glasgow, with the aim of scaling up ambition and facilitating implementation. However, he acknowledged the latter is not happening in a significant way, and said a decision must be taken at COP30 on whether to continue with the MWP.

He cited difficulties with respect to raising ambition, said countries must submit NDCs in line with the 1.5°C goal, and called for placing more focus on implementation.

Kekana called for enhancing matchmaking and explained that Brazil (COP30 presidency) and others are proposing a digital platform for this purpose. While the response with respect to the digital platform has been positive, he wondered what its value added would be and whether it could really do the matchmaking. He said delegates must reflect on and convey what they need. He wondered where else NDCs would be discussed, noting there is no space in the process for that discussion, and hoped we would soon have a report from the first Global Dialogue.

Müller queried how work programmes operate, and wondered what can be done to enhance this space to ensure more implementation.

Kekana lamented the lack of interaction among the SB Chairs, the MWP Co-Chairs, and the Dialogue facilitators. For the Dialogue, he explained that Parties come with their ideas and choose topics. Noting some success stories, he explained that only six projects have received funding, and that the lessons learned from one another are the added value. He welcomed the presence of the MWP Co-Chairs at the ecbi Bonn Seminar.

During the discussion, a developing country lamented the lack of investment in SIDS, citing a "hopeful hologram of apparent activity". He said they went to Panama for Climate Week in May, but there was nothing for SIDS, noting that everyone assumed that the supply side of finance was already taken care of. Despite consultations and putting forward investment plans, he warned that nothing is being funded and reiterated that the MWP has not delivered for everyone. He reminded participants that much of what has been accomplished in the UNFCCC process has been because of what has happened in SIDS and because of efforts made by them. For example, he said that while NAPs were first intended for LDCs and SIDS, now most developing countries submit them. He wondered how we can make things happen for everyone rather than just for the big developing countries.

One developing country participant said the focus should be more on solutions and invited Parties and stakeholders to share at the investment-focused events and to recommend smaller projects. He explained that we must ask whether the projects are investable and supportable, as well as determine their risks and returns, and that negotiators must be able to explain this. He also suggested asking solution providers to discuss what kinds of solutions they have.

A developed country explained that the Global Dialogues would take place over two days twice a year and be focused on action and investment. In Panama, she noted over 40 interventions on the issue, and that more informal discussions could happen in the virtual space.

One developing country acknowledged that not everyone has the same understanding about how the MWP can achieve its full potential, noting one view is that it consists only of the Dialogue and investment focused events, in which case the MWP is working. However, he said for his country, the MWP is much more and involves identifying concrete lessons

learned, challenges and opportunities to be able to provide guidance and recommendations on how to scale up ambition and implementation. He failed to understand how the NWP completely ignores the GST decision despite a "clear invitation" that invites all constituency bodies and work programs to integrate in their mandates the outcomes of the GST. He wondered how a mitigation programme that is focused on scaling ambition mitigation is not linked to or is completely disconnected from the recommendations of the best process we have to identify concrete transformations in many sectors. He said beyond the energy transition, it is also about ecosystems, carbon sinks, the ocean, and forests, etc., and thus many elements that must also be addressed and considered under the MWP. He said the Dialogues are facing constraints with low participation levels, including by financial institutions, and since its main purpose is matchmaking then we must find ways to address these constraints. If the modalities of the MWP are not useful, then maybe modalities need to be redefined.

Another developed country also did not think the MWP has met expectations, although he had hoped it would bring new energy to the process. He reiterated that it is not about setting new targets. Despite having an investor-focused event, he lamented that investors are not brought into the process. He suggested that going to the investors might be more successful, rather than expecting investors to come to us. He said we must revise the MWP in a way to scale up solutions.

Another commented that the platform was never agreed to, suggesting it had been imposed by the COP presidency in a COP cover decision.

One developed country suggested that "great things happen in small countries" and "small things happen in big countries", mentioning the UK's provision of money to small villages. He explained that one of the biggest obstacles is getting proposals to the pre-investment stage, and that good ideas must be translated into language that is appropriate and can be brought to the investor stage. He said people running projects do not always understand investors' requirements.

A developing country said more transformative intervention is needed. He reiterated that the MWP is not about big decisions but rather about implementation or supporting implementation.

Another reiterated that as the MWP was born from a cover decision, it has a "birth defect", and that some issues have been injected into the process without understanding the impact of what it is meant to achieve, mentioning the Just Transition Work Programme as another example. She expressed opposition to cover decisions. She underscored the need to be non-prescriptive, non-punitive, and respectful of national sovereignty.

Describing her attendance at one of the dialogues on forests in Panama during climate week, she cited several successful climate finance initiatives such as an Amazon Fund, which consists of non-refundable investments in forest projects, includes Norway as a major donor, and can be scaled up. She said that 20% of resources can be spent in tropical forest countries, and that the MWP should provide a space for expanding initiatives that

already work. The plan that already exists with a financial structure, she added, is to reforest 18 million hectares. She underscored the need for it to find its way to a working technical dialogue where countries can find initiatives that work

Another developing country wondered whether some of the failings were due to the cover decision and lack of trust in the process. She asked about the role of exchange programmes, what is currently working, and how we can do better. She urged identifying critical entry points.

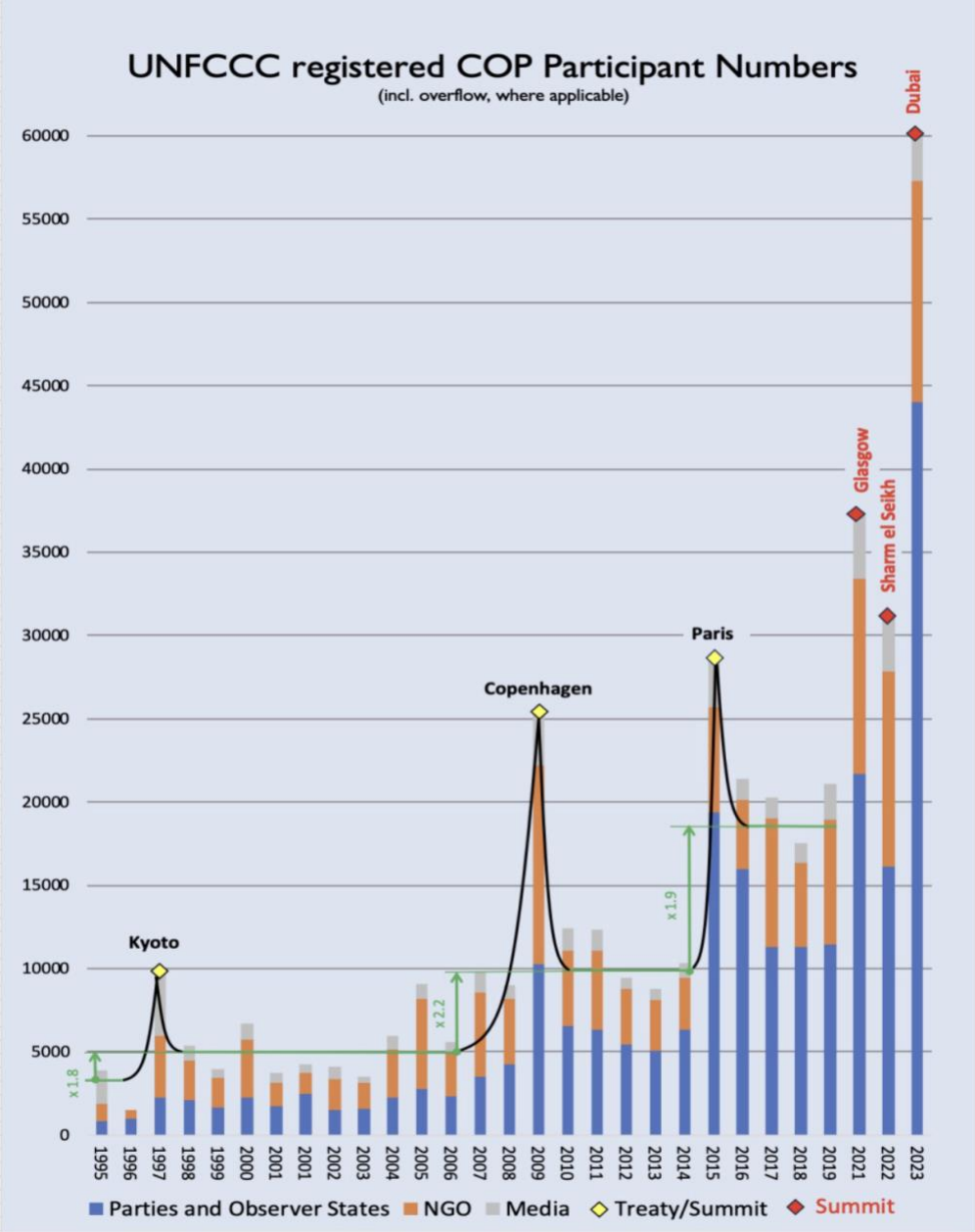
One developing country explained that the event in Panama was focused 100% on the private sector, wondered about lessons Panama could share, and said difficulties SIDS face in accessing finance was also highlighted.

Concluding the session, Kekana said it was one of the best MWP discussions he has heard with lots of ideas for improvement being shared, such as using AI to help sort through the thousands of submissions, and better bringing key outcomes of the Dialogue and investment events back to the MWP discussions. Kekana believed that a lot can be achieved through the MWP and lamented that the UNFCCC process itself has not fully transitioned from negotiations to implementation and thus cannot be as creative. He urged building links with national agendas and solution providers.

Reforming the Process

Quo Vadis COP?

On repurposing and reforming the climate process, repurposing of session, Benito Müller explained that after every treaty COP, the size of the conferences double in size. As such, poor and small countries are unable to take on the hosting and presiding of COPs, which, he said, is not good for the process. For example, in Dubai, he explained that there is very little opportunity for chance meetings with people, a phenomenon that has always been beneficial for the process. Citing three events negotiations, the Climate Summit, and the Expo Trade Fair that have grown organically, he said that they are also growing "cancerously". He suggested that these be dispersed and that pink badges could possibly be taken away from the Summit and Expos. He also said that the number of observer participants can be capped.



Yvo de Boer, former UNFCCC Executive Secretary, said he hoped to see parallels between increasing numbers and increasing actions, lamenting that the process is "suffering from a severe case of obesity" and has become unmanageable. He agreed that the sheer size makes it impossible for poor and smaller countries to host COPs. In addition, with so much happening at the same time, it has also become impossible for small delegations to cover everything that is in their national interest. With the Secretariat's limited budget, COPs are prohibitively expensive for these countries to attend. He explained that, furthermore, with the immense size and complexity of the agenda, intimacy and purpose are being lost.

De Boer said, while a decision has yet to be made about the hosting of COP31, it could be an interesting opportunity to be bring change with a meaningful Pacific Island partnership. He agreed that different components of the process could be held in different locations. For

example, he argued that negotiations could take place in Fiji, as many who attend side events are not really interested in the negotiations he contended. Splitting up the components might not have severe negative consequences. He urged restoring focus and purpose, making attendance more affordable, and ensuring a stronger focus on science-based action.

Elisabeth Holland, former Professor of Ocean and Climate Change, University of the South Pacific (above right), using a boat metaphor, described the nature of decision making in the Pacific, with Fiji designing its efforts to give all the occupants of the boat a paddle. She described the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. Holland recalled Fiji's tenure as COP President in 2018, which Australia helped finance and Germany hosted, citing this as successful collective cooperation.

Holland mentioned many discussions with the Pacific Islands Forum and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme regarding the data on Fiji hosting the COP, including the fact that Fiji has 9300 available rooms, many near the airport and on nearby islands. She said one suggestion is holding the preparatory meetings for the COP in Fiji, which could include trainings for negotiators.

During the discussion, one developing country elaborated on a meaningful Pacific COP, which would not just be about showing attendees the realities in SIDS but also about have people on the ground talking to local people. He cited opportunities to highlight the special circumstances of SIDS to those that do not understand or have experience in this realm.

A developed country expressed appreciation for the creative thoughts, especially from those with a long history in the process. She cited interest in hosting a COP with meaningful engagement with the Pacific but acknowledged that the longer the decision on who will host COP31 remains an open question, the tighter the time frame to ensure meaningful collaboration and engagement with the Pacific. She said it was a "slow ship to turn", citing difficulties in doing things quickly given the many rules and practices in

place that are difficult to change. She explained that many negotiators play both policy and implementation roles. She wondered whether they would need to attend both events. However, she noted very little interaction between the negotiations and the green zone.

Director Müller said we must ensure that the reason such a partnership does not happen is not because the right people did not know about it, which is why talking about the possibility is critical. He also hoped that "collaboration does not end in tokenism".

Another participant explained that when he was negotiating for the EU prior to the Bali COP, he never had an opportunity to attend side events. He said we have been kicking these problems down the road for the past 30 years. He explained that the environment usually represents the weakest of the ministries, but that climate necessitates a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. He suggested that the Climate Summit with leaders present address the most difficult issues.

One Pacific Island representative suggested the possibility of having COPS once every two years, noting that while discussions with Australia are advancing the "runway is getting shorter and shorter".

Repurposing the Multilateral Climate Sessions

This presentation addressed the challenges of the current arrangements, including overloaded agendas and a growing number of mandated events, and what is meant by "repurposing". The issue is being elaborated on in a paper under development by ecbi
Introducing the topic, Stefan Ruchti, former Swiss negotiator, noted that traditionally, the focus of the climate sessions has been on negotiations, including treaty negotiation, and the development of rules. However, he said now is the time to focus on strengthening global action and implementation. He explained that the agendas are overloaded, and the number of mandated events and constituted bodies continues to grow. Noting implementation-oriented events are often left to minor members of the delegation, he lamented that we are too often faced with a mindset that does not value cooperation-oriented events and that they can strengthen implementation.
He said repurposing means, on the one hand, adjusting how climate sessions work, continuing to deliver outcomes from negotiations but doing so more effectively, and refocusing the content of the sessions and putting activities to strengthen implementation at the centre. He explained that, while negotiations remain a necessary modality, they are not well adapted to the challenges we face and not everything needs to be negotiated. He reaffirmed the centrality of the UNFCCC and the UN, but said they should do better at delivery.

Paul Watkinson, former negotiator for France and the EU (left), noting the development of a paper on the issue said suggestions and potential options are not meant to be exclusive. While many other things could be considered, several have been purposely excluded as they will not help us move forward. For example, he mentioned debates around introducing voting in the process or other issues that seem unlikely to produce results. He said, in advancing the issue, the focus is on areas where we think progress could be made.

Discussing the agenda, he said the time allocated to each agenda item has decreased over the years as the number of agenda items has increased, meaning that many items do not get the consideration they deserve. He said there should be a broader scope to merge some agenda items. He also mentioned agenda fights and new items that lack a home and cannot be deal with elsewhere. He commented that while we tend to put everything on the agenda for every meeting, perhaps some items could be on the agenda every two or three years. However, he said this requires trust. He also said that all issues do not need to be dealt with in negotiations

Watkinson suggested using different formats of work to move from negotiations to implementation, commented that the pre-sessional week is not used in an effective manner and for preparation, and wondered how to create synergies with an improved action agenda.

During the discussion, Director Müller said that there should be more room for delegates who work in domestic implementation to discuss what is and is not working. He suggested that dialogues should not require a negotiated outcome.

One developed country reminded everyone that any reforms must be agreed by consensus. He said that, since COP26, many companies want to be part of the process and the negotiations. He wished the energy and enthusiasm of the companies could be brought into COPs and the energy from the action agenda into the negotiations. He agreed that agendas must be streamlined, as there are five agendas for the five bodies and hundreds of agenda items.

One developing country wondered what to do about groups of countries who try to block progress and consensus. Another lamented that often agreements are made in back rooms and then the following year we try to figure out what we agreed on.

Reimaging COPs and Climate Weeks

In his presentation, Ovais Sarmad, former UNFCCC Deputy Executive Secretary, contended that the process itself has become too unruly and too big to manage, and that the

Secretariat's work is consumed by COPs throughout the year, without being able to focus on direction and strategy. He noted efforts to look at decentralizing the process through, for example, regional climate weeks, which are hosted by the UNFCCC Secretariat. He said there is a great opportunity now to reform the process and wondered whether climate weeks could provide an opportunity to shift some of the burden from the COPs, which could then focus on implementation, driving ambition, and delivering on outcomes and results. He believed that it is the right time to make these sorts of changes so that the process remains relevant, noting the credibility and integrity of the whole system is at stake.

Sarmad explained that the Paris Agreement does not require further negotiations, as it has already been agreed. He said the most recent climate week in Panama had about 5000 participants and suggested one could take place where the COP is being held that year and the other in a different location.

He reiterated that the idea is to do something more innovative and transformative to bring about change that would help the process and climate action, and move away from negotiations. He lamented that the Climate Weeks have not been able to achieve anything groundbreaking up to this point. However, he said they are attracting many participants and showcasing more business and action-oriented innovations so their utility must be assessed. He cited a "fantastic opportunity" with the incoming presidency, to begin to "socialize this idea of shifting the burden".

Sarmad reiterated the need to decentralize and democratize, transform the focus, bring back the credibility of the climate change, and help stakeholders get to a stage where we can start seeing the bending of the emissions curve, which is currently not happening. He also said the entire UN system is under enormous strain, especially with the recent geopolitical challenges confronting the multilateral system and we cannot continue with the status quo.

He described the Secretariat as being extended in all directions, and urged changing both the structure and the way the process works and functions, and, then externally, in terms of addressing the existential threat of climate change. He hoped for a discussion that identifies ideas and recommendations that can be taken forward, how best to do that, and who and in what capacity.

During interventions from the floor, a developed country asked whether anybody has ever done the calculation of how much the COPS costs each year, and how that compares to the climate finance contributed each year. She said she has spent a lot of time and there has been a lot of good work in the Action Agenda space, although it could be more efficient.

Another developed country participant lamented that the process "has a problem discussing mitigation". He said the process is also extremely outsourced with the IPCC addressing science, GCOS addressing observations, etc., and that 10 years after the Paris Agreement, we need a better vision about what it is about.

A developed country reiterated that implementation should be the primary purpose of the COP at this point, and that negotiation issues that are stuck should be taken to the political level and should not be limited to consensus decision making.

Another supported the continued presence of the UN and the UNFCCC in Bonn. She said the new government in her country was committed to continuity, existing goals, and implementing the Paris Agreement. She explained that her country's new NDC is strong, and that climate is moving back to the environment ministry to help ensure climate policy that is closer to implementation. She stressed, however, that this does not mean the whole of government should not be involved.