



Kick-starting ambition under the Paris Agreement

The 2018 “Talanoa” Dialogue

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Summary	2
1. Introduction	2
2. Modalities	3
3. Scope	5
4. Possible outcomes	6
5. Next steps	7
Annex I	7

SUMMARY

The current and incoming Presidencies of the Conference of Parties (COP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Morocco and Fiji, have worked hard to generate consensus on the design and conduct of the 2018 Facilitative Dialogue. It is now clear that the Dialogue will include a preparatory phase and a political element, both designed to address three key questions:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we need to be?
- How do we get there?

The last of these questions will be the most important to answer – to identify the opportunities for, and benefits of, ambitious climate action under the Paris Agreement.

Some of the concerns regarding the scope of the Dialogue seem to have been allayed. Assurances have been given that the Dialogue will focus on collective ambition and avoid singling out individual countries. At the same time, key issues still remain to be resolved – such as how the preparatory phase will feed into the political element; how non-Party stakeholders can engage effectively in the Dialogue; and what the inputs and outputs of the Dialogue should be. It will also be a challenge to design the Dialogue – which is a collective process – in a way that it contributes to enhancing the climate ambition of individual Parties.

Further, the Paris outcome does not spell out what should happen between the Dialogue in 2018, and the updating or communication of nationally determined contributions (NDCs) in 2020. A clear political signal of intent will be needed from COP24 in 2018, with consideration of the wider context, including the UN Secretary-General's Climate Summit in 2019.

What is clear, however, is that the design of the Dialogue must be completed at COP23. The Fijian COP23 Presidency should continue to play an active role throughout 2018, working to make the Dialogue effective in achieving its goal, as the COP24 Presidency (Poland) is likely to have its hands full with the heavy workload of overseeing the completion of the implementation guidelines of the Paris Agreement. The ongoing role of Fiji, the first small island developing State (SIDS) Presidency, will also be important from the perspective of vulnerable countries.

I. INTRODUCTION

The [Paris Agreement](#) aims to limit the increase of global average temperature due to anthropogenic climate change to well below 2°C, aiming at 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. If this goal, and net zero emissions in the second half of the century, are to be achieved, we cannot wait until the first Global Stocktake (GST) in 2023 to increase mitigation ambition. The reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) clearly show that global emissions will have to peak by 2020 at the latest (the earlier the better), with substantial declines in emissions afterwards, to avoid the worst climate impacts. Failure to peak by 2020 will greatly undermine the ability of countries to adapt, especially the most vulnerable countries, communities and ecosystems, which would face greater difficulties to cope with, and survive, these accelerated climate changes.

The Facilitative Dialogue was mandated to take place in 2018 by [Decision 1/CP.21](#), adopted in Paris in 2015. This will be the first opportunity for countries to come together and consider the ambition of their NDCs,

after the entry into force of the Paris Agreement. It is a critical that the process is effective in contributing to achieving the Agreement's long-term temperature goals.

Decision 1/CP.21 states, in paragraph 20, that the objective of the Dialogue is to [...] *take stock of the collective efforts of Parties in relation to progress towards the long-term goal referred to in Article 4, paragraph 1, of the Agreement and to inform the preparation of nationally determined contributions pursuant to Article 4, paragraph 8, of the Agreement.*

While common ground is emerging among Parties on the modalities of the Dialogue, some issues still remain to be resolved. It is the aim of this policy brief to consider these issues, and offer suggestions for the way ahead.

2. MODALITIES

General considerations

To be effective in raising global ambition on climate change, it is now widely accepted that the Dialogue should be designed to ultimately answer three key questions:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we need to be?
- How do we get there?

The Dialogue will need to be conducted in a way that is simple, transparent and truly facilitative. These elements are well expressed by the Fijian concept of Talanoa – a process of inclusive, participatory and transparent dialogue that builds empathy and leads to decision-making for the common good. At the "Pre-COP" held in Nadi, Fiji in October 2017, the 2018 Facilitative Dialogue was renamed the "Talanoa" Dialogue.

Ultimately, the Talanoa Dialogue will need to be strongly linked to the goals of the Paris Agreement – namely, a long-term goal of keeping the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels while aiming to limit the increase to 1.5°C; and to achieve net zero emissions in the second half of the century. It will therefore need to be effective in increasing the ambition of NDCs by 2020 by generating the necessary political momentum. More specifically, the Dialogue should:

- contribute to an understanding of where we are by examining the state of implementation of Cancun pledges and NDCs, in order to inform where we need to be;
- create space for sharing experiences and lessons learned, including challenges and opportunities to address them;
- encourage and deepen cooperation among countries and stakeholders; and
- celebrate frontrunners, rather than point fingers, or seek to shame.

Sufficient time is necessary to carry out the Talanoa Dialogue effectively, despite the heavy workload in 2018 that will be needed to deliver the implementation guidelines for the Paris Agreement. At the same time, due consideration is necessary to conduct both processes so as to allow Parties with limited capacity to fully participate in both.

The key challenge will be how the collective nature of the Talanoa Dialogue will translate into increased action at the level of individual countries. For the Dialogue to be effective, Parties will need to participate in good faith, and with an open mind on how they will act on its outcomes. The Dialogue is meant to inform what

Parties will do next. Therefore, it will be against the spirit of the Paris Agreement and the purpose of the Dialogue if Parties engage after already deciding that they will not raise the ambition of their NDCs.

How do we get there?

A key task for the Dialogue will be to identify and highlight the size of the task that lies ahead. We do not need to wait for the IPCC's Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 °C (SR15) to know that we are far short of the required level of ambition. There is already plenty of evidence regarding the need for urgent climate action. It will not be enough for the Dialogue to only identify the mitigation gap and re-emphasise the case for climate action. Rather, the Dialogue should prioritise the question of how we get there, and be truly facilitative and creative in finding answers.

The Talanoa Dialogue should demonstrate that increased ambition is not only necessary, but also possible. It should be facilitative, resulting in ideas, solutions, partnerships, alliances, opportunities and momentum for all Parties to go further and faster. The Dialogue should clearly demonstrate the economic benefits of enhanced climate action, showing how climate action can contribute to economic growth and prosperity and to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, while allowing countries to capitalise on the technological revolution in renewables and energy efficiency. The global greenhouse gas emission pathways for achieving 1.5°C, to be described in IPCC's SR15, could be useful in this context.

At the same time, the Dialogue should clearly recognise that increased mitigation ambition is not merely a matter of willingness or good faith, but also of economic, social, technological and other problems, barriers or constraints that may limit what countries – particularly developing countries – can do.

The importance of non-Party stakeholder engagement in the Dialogue is widely acknowledged, but it still not clear how this could be best actioned in practice. For example, how can non-Party stakeholders such as “champions” and sectoral advocates contribute effectively? How will inputs from non-Party stakeholders be aggregated, if at all? Will aggregation be useful in addressing the implementation gap? How can outputs from events such as the Global Climate Action Summit, to be held in San Francisco in September 2018, be taken into account in the Dialogue?

Preparatory phase

There is a growing understanding that the Talanoa Dialogue will have a preparatory phase, and a political element.

The preparatory phase will need to inform Parties on the three questions to be addressed by the Dialogue. Inputs into this phase will therefore need to be focused, concise, robust and, where appropriate, quantifiable and capable of aggregation. Such inputs could include:

- submissions from Parties and accredited Observers;
- updated syntheses report on NDCs by the UNFCCC Secretariat;
- the IPCC's SR15;
- reports from the “measurement, reporting and verification” (MRV) system, produced by UNFCCC Secretariat;
- reports from international organisations such as the UN Environment Programme (including the UNEP Gap Report); the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA); the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); and the International Energy Agency (IEA);
- reports and recommendations from the Global Climate Action Agenda (GCAA), including from the climate champions;

- biennial assessment of the Standing Committee on Finance;
- other relevant reports prepared by UNFCCC bodies;
- summary reports of in-session workshops on long-term climate finance in 2017 and 2018; and
- outcomes of key events such as the 2018 Global Climate Action Summit.

The timing of these reports will also be a consideration. For instance, the IPCC's SR15 is due to be finalised only in October 2018 – this may be late for its findings to be taken into account effectively in the Dialogue. A draft of the report or key pieces of peer reviewed literature contributing to SR15 could be presented to the SBSTA Research Dialogue in May 2018, and the final report considered at a special event or a UNFCCC intersessional meeting ahead of the COP.

In addition, 2050 strategies that have been submitted by the time of the Talanoa Dialogue could be celebrated and should be part of discussions.

Political element

The outcomes of the preparatory phase will ultimately have to be communicated to ministers, to inform the political element of the Dialogue – possibly through a summary of the preparatory phase discussions, focusing in particular on solutions and opportunities. Such a summary, however, raises the question of who should prepare it. The UNFCCC Secretariat could have a role to play in this. Alternatively, negotiators could choose to summarise the discussions for their political masters themselves, based on their understanding of the discussions during the preparatory phase. In this scenario there would be no collective summary report.

The political element of the Dialogue could consist of a ministerial session at COP24, structured to consider each of the three questions sequentially. In any event, ministerial time should be used effectively – the interaction between ministers should be truly interactive, facilitating exchange and discourse. A plenary setting must be avoided at all costs, and pre-prepared ministerial statements should be strongly discouraged.

Presentations by authoritative figures, such as the climate champions and representatives of the IPCC; messages from specific sectors and non-Party stakeholders; and roundtables and panel discussions could all be part of the political element. Lessons learned from other settings that have allowed for effective ministerial engagement and interaction should be identified and considered, and best practice incorporated.

Duplication should be avoided, with due consideration given to possible overlaps between the political element and COP24 events such as the High-Level Segment, the GCAA High Level Event, and the Finance Ministerial.

3. SCOPE

The scope for the Talanoa Dialogue set out in the mandate from Paris is focused on mitigation. This is in contrast to the GST, which also includes adaptation and means of implementation within its scope.

While some Parties feel that expanding the scope of the Dialogue beyond mitigation could risk diluting its focus, others point out that the issue of scope is not so cut and dried – for example, Article 4.1, referred to in the objective of the 2018 Dialogue, also refers to equity and poverty eradication. All agree that at the very least, means of implementation for enhanced mitigation action, and the economic benefits of mitigation action, will need to be part of the conversation.

To prevent the question of scope becoming a destructively divisive issue, the preparatory phase of the Talanoa Dialogue should be mitigation focused, in accordance with the Paris mandate. At the same time, however, it must be recognised that raising mitigation ambition necessitates consideration of means of implementation.

Ways will also need to be found to assure concerned Parties that other aspects of the Paris Agreement – especially finance and adaptation – will have adequate political space for discussion in 2018, including, for instance, at the ministerial session on finance at COP24. A space should be provided at COP24 to highlight the adaptation co-benefits of mitigation action – this element is particularly important to countries with low greenhouse gas emissions, but for whom adaptation is a priority. The link between adaptation and mitigation is widely recognised and will need to be acknowledged by the Talanoa Dialogue.

4. POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

The Talanoa Dialogue should deliver a clear response to the three key questions, and a signal of political intent to raise ambition. This and other outcomes should therefore inform domestic processes to update or formulate new NDCs, nine to twelve months before COP26 in November/December 2020.

Other outcomes of the Dialogue could include:

- suggestions on ways to make NDCs more clear, transparent and understandable;
- evidence of implementation of NDCs and pre-2020 pledges;
- communication of 2050 strategies;
- information on initiatives and partnerships that can be scaled up;
- capturing over-achievement, and highlighting actions of frontrunners (Parties and non-Party stakeholders);
- enhancing the ambition mechanism through the introduction of synchronised updating of NDCs (“common timeframes”); and
- an invitation to Parties, urging them to enhance their ambition in accordance with the mandate of the Paris outcome.

These outcomes will only be possible if the Dialogue is truly facilitative, identifying opportunities and highlighting the benefits of climate action, and avoiding finger pointing. The concept of Talanoa should be fully embraced.

It is worth recalling in this context that NDCs will need to be updated or communicated at least nine months before COP26 in 2020. At that time countries that currently have an NDC running to 2030 must communicate or update their NDCs, and Parties that currently have a 2025 NDC must present a new one. Successive NDCs must represent a progression beyond the current NDCs, and reflect the highest possible ambition.

However, other than specifying that the Talanoa Dialogue should inform the preparation of NDCs, the Paris outcome is silent on what should happen between the Dialogue and 2020. For further clarity, Ministers should be ready to give an indication – as part of the political signal – of what the domestic process will be in their country to receive and act on the output of the Dialogue. For instance, will national consultation processes follow? Will a formal national review of the NDC follow? Such a signal could be in response to an invitation by the COP Presidency, and could be captured in a COP decision that, for instance, invites Parties to organise national multi-stakeholder consultations to inform the update or communication of new NDCs.

In any event, parts of the political signal that are collective and not specific to individual countries should be given in a COP24 decision, as many countries require this to leverage national action, with a more unified and formal understanding of what countries need to do. A political declaration alone would therefore not be sufficient as an outcome.

Finally, the outcome can also highlight useful milestones between the 2018 Dialogue and the 2020 communication of NDCs, such as the 2019 UN Secretary-General's Climate Summit.

5. NEXT STEPS

The upcoming COP23 in November 2017 must complete the design of the Talanoa Dialogue, and provide clear guidance on next steps – including a timetable and deadlines for key elements of the Dialogue. Parties have agreed that the design of the Talanoa Dialogue should not be negotiated – instead, it should be taken forward by the COP22 and COP23 Presidencies. Therefore, while a comprehensive COP decision will not be necessary, a light-touch decision thanking the Presidencies for their work, noting their plans for the Talanoa Dialogue, and launching the preparatory phase will be required.

Finally, and in particular from the perspective of the most vulnerable countries, it will be crucial that the COP23 Presidency, the first from a small island developing State and with a strong stake in making the Dialogue effective, continues to play an active role through 2018 – particularly as the next Presidency will have its hands full with completing the implementation guidelines of the Paris Agreement.

ANNEX I

Relevant extracts from the Paris Agreement, 1/CP.21 & 1/CP.22

The Paris Agreement requires that:

- *Each Party shall prepare, communicate and maintain successive nationally determined contributions that it intends to achieve. Parties shall pursue domestic mitigation measures, with the aim of achieving the objectives of such contributions. [Article 4.2]*
- *Each Party's successive nationally determined contribution will represent a progression beyond the Party's then current nationally determined contribution and reflect its highest possible ambition, reflecting its common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances [Article 4.3]*
- *Developed country Parties should continue taking the lead by undertaking economy-wide absolute emission reduction targets. Developing country Parties should continue enhancing their mitigation efforts, and are encouraged to move over time towards economy-wide emission reduction or limitation targets in the light of different national circumstances [Article 4.4]*
- *Support shall be provided to developing country Parties for the implementation of this Article, in accordance with Articles 9, 10 and 11, recognizing that enhanced support for developing country Parties will allow for higher ambition in their actions. [Article 4.5]*
- *In communicating their nationally determined contributions, all Parties shall provide the information necessary for clarity, transparency and understanding in accordance with decision 1/CP.21 and any relevant decisions of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to this Agreement. [Article 4.8]*
- *Each Party shall communicate a nationally determined contribution every five years in accordance with decision 1/CP.21 and any relevant decisions of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to this Agreement and be informed by the outcomes of the global stocktake referred to in Article 14. [Article 4.9]*

In Article 14, the Paris Agreement establishes a regular cycle of stocktakes every five years so as to inform the updating, enhancing of progressively ambitious NDCs [Article 4.3]. On the other hand, the relationship between the outcome of the global stocktake (GST) and for mitigation contributions is expressed in Article 4.9, which indicates that each Party shall communicate an NDC every five years which shall be informed by the GST.

However, Article 14 also specifies that the first GST will only take place in 2023. As such, during the Paris agreement negotiations – 8 years ahead – Parties, not anticipating that the Agreement would enter into force as quickly as it did (i.e. before it would come into effect from 2020), decided to create a moment to encourage raised ambition before then: *convene a facilitative dialogue among Parties in 2018 to take stock of the collective efforts of Parties in relation to progress towards the long-term goal referred to in Article 4, paragraph 1, of the Agreement and to inform the preparation of nationally determined contributions pursuant to Article 4, paragraph 8, of the Agreement. [1/CP.21, para 20]*

In this context, Parties also invited the *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to provide a special report in 2018 on the impacts of global warming of 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways. [1/CP.21, paragraph 21]*

Parties furthermore specified that *those Parties whose intended nationally determined contribution pursuant to decision 1/CP.20 contains a time frame up to 2025 to communicate by 2020 a new nationally determined contribution and to do so every five years thereafter pursuant to Article 4, paragraph 9, of the Agreement [1/CP.21, paragraph 23] and those Parties whose intended nationally determined contribution pursuant to decision 1/CP.20 contains a*

time frame up to 2030 to communicate or update by 2020 these contributions and to do so every five years thereafter pursuant to Article 4, paragraph 9, of the Agreement. [1/COP.21, para 24]

Also of relevance, Parties decided that: Parties shall submit to the secretariat their nationally determined contributions referred to in Article 4 of the Agreement at least 9 to 12 months in advance of the relevant session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement with a view to facilitating the clarity, transparency and understanding of these contributions, including through a synthesis report prepared by the secretariat [1/CP.21, paragraph 25].

Beyond that, the Paris outcome says nothing about how the 2018 Facilitative Dialogue should be conducted, nor what the inputs, outputs or outcomes should be. Decision 1/CP.22, paragraph 16: *Requests the President of the Conference of the Parties at its twenty second session, in collaboration with the incoming President of the Conference of the Parties at its twenty third session, to undertake inclusive and transparent consultations with Parties on the organization of the facilitative dialogue referred to in decision 1/CP.21, paragraph 20, including during the sessions of the subsidiary bodies to be convened in May 2017 and the twenty third session of the Conference of the Parties, and to jointly report back to the Conference of the Parties at its twenty third session on the preparations for this dialogue.*