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INTRODUCTION

The 2026 Oxford Seminar took place from 26–28 August at the Examination Schools, University of Oxford.

Since 2005, ecbi's Oxford Seminars have brought invited delegates from developing and European countries together in an informal setting ahead of the annual sessions of the Conferences of the Parties (COP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The Oxford Seminars, ecbi's flagship annual event, are held under the Chatham House Rule, which encourages open and frank exchange. Meeting reports, therefore, do not identify participants, except introductory speakers.

The Seminar was preceded by the annual Fellowship Colloquium, held from 24–26 August at Magdalen College. During the Colloquiums, developing country experts discuss key issues among themselves, develop proposals, and consolidate positions ahead of discussions with European partners.

The Seminar covered: the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA); Article 6 Implementation, including a session on Article 6.8 and Bulk Purchasing as a Climate Finance Multiplier; the Climate Finance Work Programme; the Just Transition Work Programme (JTWP) and Mechanism; the Mitigation Work Programme (MWP); the Global Stocktake (GST), specifically the Second Global Stocktake (GST2); Supporting Implementation; the Fund for responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD), including Innovative and Domestic Sources of Finance for Loss and Damage; and ecbi's Past, Present and Future Work, including Reimagining the UNFCCC Process.

Forty-two participants from 26 countries — 16 developing and 10 European — took part in the Seminar, together with representatives from ecbi, and academic and legal-support organisations. They included the COP CEO and the Lead Negotiator of the incoming COP32 Presidency, eight heads of delegation and six deputy or alternate heads, alongside lead negotiators and issue leads from key negotiating groups. Attendees also included the African Group of Negotiators Chair, the G77 Deputy Chair, the LDC Group's climate finance and Article 6 Coordinators, the Landlocked Developing Countries Climate Group Coordinator, the Like-Minded Developing Countries coordinator, a Standing Committee on Finance (SCF) Co-Chair, a JTWP Co-Chair, and a Co-Chair of the UAE Dialogue who also sits on the Warsaw International Mechanism Executive Committee. Women made up 55% of participants.

GLOBAL GOAL ON ADAPTATION

Xolisa Ngwadla, Consultant, South Africa, presented a summary of the discussions on the GGA that took place during the Fellowship Colloquium, and highlighted three points for discussion put forward by the Fellows:

- Lessons from the GGA indicators development process: At COP30, Parties adopted the 59 Belém Adaptation Indicators. The next step is to develop the underlying metadata and methodologies, so countries understand how to apply the indicators and what data are needed. The seventh session of the COP serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris

Agreement (CMA7), therefore, asked the Subsidiary Bodies (SBs) to undertake this technical work, including through a technical Task Force, feeding into the process up to CMA9. The Task Force proposal proved contentious at SB64 in Bonn in June 2026, where Parties could not agree on who should sit on the Task Force or what role Parties should play. Ngwadla invited reflections on its composition and working methods, and on lessons from the indicator process more broadly.

- Tripling adaptation finance by 2035: At COP30 in Belém, Brazil, in November 2025, countries agreed to triple adaptation finance by 2035. Ngwadla said a second concern at SB64, with real potential to undermine trust, was resistance to revisiting this goal. He invited participants to: discuss what COP31, COP32, and beyond could achieve in assessing implementation; identify vehicles for delivering and reporting progress; and consider the SCF mandate to report on progress, including a methodological assessment.

- Baku Adaptation Roadmap: The Roadmap has a mandate to bring coherence to the adaptation architecture under the UNFCCC and to address implementation and alignment with Articles 7.1 and 2.1(a), and means of implementation under Articles 9.1, 10, and 11.

Ngwadla invited participants to discuss how these aspects can be operationalised, and by when.

During the discussion, a developed country participant said the process itself had shown the limits of what a body like the UNFCCC can do to develop indicators that are globally meaningful, and cautioned that continuing to define more indicators would not, on its own, advance the urgent need for adaptation action. On tripling adaptation finance, the participant's understanding was that this would be tracked as part of progress toward the New Collective Quantified Goal on climate finance (NCQG), including adaptation finance. On the Baku Adaptation Roadmap's coherence mandate, the participant agreed coherence was needed, not only within the adaptation architecture but across the wider institutional architecture, and hoped the group could reach pragmatic, concrete solutions on adaptation.

Another developed country participant said the indicators should be seen as a technical instrument for reporting progress and learning, not an end in themselves, and that the overarching objective had to be accelerating implementation rather than prolonging discussion. The architecture built since the Paris Agreement was, broadly, already in place; the focus now needed to shift much more toward the concrete adaptation action countries can take nationally and in collaboration with others. On what is achievable at COP31 and COP32, the participant called for a multi-year perspective rather than a single-COP focus, citing the recent climate-induced disasters across Europe as evidence that implementation must be expedited. Welcoming the presence of colleagues from finance ministries, the participant noted that mainstreaming adaptation and resilience is central to handling adaptation as a cross-cutting issue across sectors. The participant reaffirmed the tripling of adaptation finance agreed at COP30.

A developed country participant expressed concern that too much time was focused on the negotiating process itself — modalities and membership — drawing attention away from

adaptation action. Noting some indicators are useful and others less so, he said participants should already be considering what GST2 will say about adaptation. Rebuilding trust would require taking politics out of the discussion where possible, understanding the constraints different countries face, and identifying ways to support action toward the tripling objective. He reiterated that the NCQG is the agreed framework for finance discussions.

Ngwadla responded that framing the discussion as a choice between indicators and targets on the one hand and implementation on the other was a false dichotomy: the Paris Agreement is premised on implementation. Adaptation, however, lags far behind mitigation in generating the information needed to support political discussions, so more investment in that information is needed.

On concrete action, Ngwadla explained that much can already be done. Decision 12/CMA.7 on the GGA, adopted at COP30, contains numerous provisions relating to implementation and action, but agreement on how to make use of what was agreed remains elusive. For example, paragraph 28 addresses the means of implementation needed to ensure adequate and predictable support, in line with Articles 9.1, 10, and 11 of the Paris Agreement. While these provisions provide opportunities for concrete discussions, the challenge faced is operationalising the mandates that have already been agreed.

A developing country participant agreed the NCQG now provides the decade-long framework needed, but cautioned against folding adaptation into it. Under the previous US$100 billion goal, adaptation finance was persistently outweighed by mitigation finance—precisely why Parties had agreed to double it rather than leave it undifferentiated. Lumping adaptation finance entirely into the NCQG risked repeating that imbalance; operationalising and reporting on the existing tripling decision was, therefore, important to safeguard a fair balance between adaptation and mitigation finance.

A developed country participant stressed that metrics remain important, noting that adaptation lacks the clear metrics mitigation has, which is part of why it struggles for political visibility. However, the participant cautioned against diving too deep into technical discussions at the expense of the bigger picture — a broadly shared sense that the process is shifting from negotiation toward implementation within an architecture that is largely already built. Indicators would be most useful as a vehicle for exchanging practical best practices across sectors and for drawing political attention to adaptation, the participant suggested, noting the emergence of a coalition of roughly 103 finance ministries now working to embed adaptation and resilience considerations into macroeconomic models.

On tripling adaptation finance, another developed country participant suggested this could be considered as part of the NCQG and emphasised the importance of discussing how to facilitate private finance for adaptation. Several dialogues with the private sector are already examining barriers to greater private investment in developing countries. Adaptation, however, too often continues to be treated as an afterthought.

A developing country participant cautioned against dismissing the indicators as merely technical, maintaining that Party oversight of the technical Task Force was still necessary. The participant suggested a Party-based steering committee at the political level working alongside the technical Task Force of experts and organisations, since relying solely on

periodic guidance from the SBs would leave too little time in the absence of convening intersessionally. Adaptation action, including the testing of indicators, is heavily contingent on the actual receipt of means of implementation, without which both the indicators work and adaptation action itself risk falling flat.

A developed country participant said hearing from countries piloting the indicators would be beneficial regarding how useful they had found them and what data-generation challenges had arisen. Indicators should help inform policy development, and it would be useful to understand how countries planned to use them. On the Task Force, the participant acknowledged calls for Party oversight but noted concerns that greater Party involvement could make the process more political rather than technical, objective, and science-based, given documented difficulties with the politicisation in the existing technical Task Force. The question was how Party oversight could be structured without politicising a technical process.

Another developed country participant explained that their national agency for coordinating adaptation implementation across sectors had tested the indicators as part of an ongoing domestic process to develop national indicators and better align reporting with the second Biennial Transparency Report (BTR2). The testing took five to six months. Many indicators proved too imprecise to measure because they were more conceptual than factual, and difficult for technical officials to determine where the issues were, in substance, political. Roughly 70% lacked available data, despite the country's comparatively strong statistical systems. Planning-related indicators, central to assessing local-level risk and to the country's adaptation approach, were largely absent from the set. Only around three or four were judged usable. The participant cautioned that using the indicators to guide adaptation action, rather than the reverse, would be a serious mistake as they do not capture the spatial and local planning the country heavily relies on. The participant closed by warning against defining adaptation too narrowly through the indicator framework, pointing to existing targets in National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) that the indicators do not necessarily capture.

Later in the discussion, a developing country participant offered a contrasting experience. Practitioners in her country designing national adaptation policy had found the GGA and its associated global targets extremely useful, using them to organise their NAP and drawing on what they saw as the best available international science, adapted to national circumstances. Of the 59 indicators, her country had begun measuring 42, and practitioners believed they could work toward the remainder. However, they requested more decisions, information, and guidance from the international process to support their domestic work and felt that following and influencing the indicators more closely was desirable.

The same participant reflected on the difficulty of managing the transition from technical to political work, illustrating this with the original indicator expert group. Created and mandated over roughly two years, the group had at one point sought further guidance from Parties; Parties, concerned it might not conclude its work, obliged, and the group narrowed thousands of candidate indicators down to around 100. When Parties received that technical output, there had been no prior agreement that the results would simply be accepted. In the ensuing political negotiation, of the initial round of interventions, 26 called for refining specific indicators, 20 for deleting some, and 20 for merging others, leaving only four indicators accepted outright at the first pass. The lesson, she said, is that when a technical group is commissioned, Parties need to agree in advance how the political process will treat

its output—a lesson she suggested applied directly to the current difficulty in agreeing on the Task Force's composition.

Another developing country participant offered a concrete example of using an indicator to drive domestic action. Examining an indicator related to heat, the participant's health ministry had recognised that heat-related deaths are frequently under-attributed: a death from a heart attack, for instance, may not be coded as heat-related. The ministry was consequently developing clinical guidelines so doctors could tag heat-related contributing factors, building a national evidence base over time. Parties should make the most of the 59 indicators as they stand rather than waiting for perfection, the participant said, treating information flow as a means to enhanced adaptation action rather than an end in itself — and linking this to the upcoming GST2, for which more reported information would support better assessment.

On the Task Force, the participant favoured beginning the work immediately, given the limited time ahead of the next Adaptation Committee report. Unlike the original indicator expert group, the successor arrangement under discussion would draw on individuals also connected to the Adaptation Committee, offering a partial bridge between purely technical and Party-inclusive participation, even if members were formally serving in a personal capacity.

On finance, the participant suggested narrowing the focus at the upcoming COP to access to adaptation finance—building on a paper reportedly circulated by Australia ahead of the COP—as a way to bank a concrete, demonstrable outcome alongside the indicator work. On the Baku Adaptation Roadmap, the first workshop had already addressed coherence; future workshops could focus on specific thematic and cross-cutting issues, such as food, water, health, ecosystems, and process topics such as evaluation and monitoring. The SB Chairs might set out a longer-term thematic programme across successive workshops, moving from food and water to health and ecosystems in turn, to work toward a cumulative outcome on collective resilience.

Benito Müller, ecbi Director, said he had been saddened, though not surprised, by an earlier account of the difficulty of communicating the need for adaptation to the private sector and to politicians. Abstract indicators, like the 1.5°C or 2°C mitigation goals themselves, mean little to people outside the process; what resonates is a concrete, relatable claim — for example, a politician being able to say that mortality risk was kept at an acceptable level despite rising temperatures because of adaptation measures taken. He urged the room to think harder about how to "sell" adaptation to the audiences that ultimately matter: voters, politicians, and the private sector.

In response, another developed country participant agreed that the Task Force's focus should be on what it needs to deliver, not on who sits on it. For example, a technical task force needs to deliver a technical product — metadata and methodologies grounded in the best available science — and should be time-bound, particularly given the budgetary and institutional complexity already flagged. On finance, the participant picked up on an earlier suggestion to focus on access, pointing to existing concrete language on access to finance in the Baku decision on the NCQG, which Parties should revisit to identify what can be operationalised. The Adaptation Fund's transition to serve the Paris Agreement was a relatively low-hanging

fruit: its governance needs to be completed and brought fully into line with the Agreement before Parties can be expected to increase funding to it. On the Baku Adaptation Roadmap, the participant urged focussing on implementing the GGA and the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience, with particular attention to the Framework's targets.

A developed country participant noted some bottlenecks in the current negotiations stem from an institutional architecture for adaptation that blends an older system with the newer, post-GGA one. The Adaptation Committee formally holds a coherence mandate but is not, in practice, able to exercise it; this, together with parallel work such as the Nairobi Work Programme's sectoral work — already captured in the indicators' thematic areas — consumes significant financial and human resources that are, in effect, underused. GST2 could provide an opportunity to look more closely at the institutional structure for adaptation, potentially creating a more modern, integrated model, such as a standing committee on adaptation with technical work streams beneath it. Such a committee would preserve Party oversight and enable specialised task force-style work without creating an entirely new constituted body, which the participant stressed was simply not fundable within the existing UNFCCC budget. Given the Oxford Seminar's traditional role as a space for thinking beyond day-to-day granularity, the participant urged the group to consider whether GST2 could be used to think about the architecture at that larger scale.

Another developing country participant suggested looking at how other political processes dealt with technical issues, citing the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators, which can be tailored to national contexts while remaining part of a global framework, supported by institutions such as the UN Statistical Commission. A task force could therefore be a sensible approach — though the participant questioned whether continuing to debate the technical process itself was a good idea. The participant also pointed to opportunities for peer learning, including through Voluntary National Reviews, which had helped bring different parts of government together around the SDGs.

On finance, the participant said some clarification was needed regarding why finance remained a stumbling block. Needs were clearly increasing while available resources remained limited, and developing countries were adapting to the consequences of the actions of others — making finance critical to the broader issue of trust. The technical process should follow established good practice, and, given the importance of finance, Parties should be able to have a substantive discussion on adaptation finance.

A developing country participant agreed with an earlier comment about "getting lost in process", and not only for adaptation. The draft decision Parties failed to agree on at SB64 was an example. Of its three parts: the first concerned who nominates the Task Force and when; the second, on the Roadmap, specified only that future workshop topics would be selected based on Party submissions; and the third set a date for submissions on reviewing the UAE Framework. It might even be a good sign that this text was not adopted, the participant suggested, since a climate regime producing decisions only about who does what and when offers very little to outside observers and can "drive people to despair". The participant called for a comprehensive look at whether the structure built up over many years required updating to be fit for purpose.

Another developing country participant agreed that many decisions are too focused on process, citing a recent study finding that 75% of decisions are procedural. He framed this as a credibility issue given the scale of climate-related disasters unfolding in real time, including the recent flash flooding in Nepal that happened during the Seminar. Echoing an earlier warning against confining the adaptation discussions to indicators alone, while affirming that measurement remains important for learning and for robust GST2 reporting, he reinforced that political traction comes from framing adaptation around concrete sectors — climate-resilient agriculture, food systems, and water management, for example. The UAE Framework already points toward tangible sectoral action in language ministers understand, whereas "adaptation" in the abstract does not resonate. He also stressed that coherence, in the context of the Roadmap, must extend beyond the UNFCCC to the many finance and delivery mechanisms operating outside the Convention.

A developing country participant offered a more sustained methodological critique, noting the drawbacks of separating "technical" from "political" work. The participant catalogued unresolved methodological problems regarding the indicators — counterfactual problems, self-referential denominators, attribution problems, and the limited capacity of many countries to conduct attribution science — and said they were not simply expert errors but the product of a political process shaping what experts were asked to produce. A self-referential denominator, for instance, embeds a political choice about what national behaviour is rewarded, and such choices cannot be left to experts alone. Hence, the proposal for Party oversight operating alongside independent technical expertise, with experts providing the methodologies and Parties deciding what gets measured and for what purpose. This was the core contention during SB64, the participant said.

Finally, a developing country participant stressed the urgency of action, linking the discussion to unfolding events — the "super El Niño", heat waves, and the recent disaster in Nepal, alongside ocean heat affecting food security. Stressing that adaptation is not optional as people are suffering and dying now, she urged participants to agree what should be prioritised. She warned that SB64 had consumed two and a half weeks with little to show for it while affected communities cannot wait for Parties to "agree to disagree".

ARTICLE 6 IMPLEMENTATION

Gebru Jember Endalew, Ethiopia, summarised the Fellows' discussion on Article 6, explaining that although the Article 6 rulebook was finalised three years earlier and the process was meant to be moving into implementation, a lag had emerged because the necessary infrastructure had not been finalised. He said his presentation would focus on the budget dimension of that gap rather than on technical Article 6 questions.

Endalew said the Article 6 international registry infrastructure, once ready, would not only facilitate carbon market transactions but also incorporate mitigation data, improve bottom-up information gathering, support the revision of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and ensure compliance with international reporting requirements. He set out the scale of the funding shortfall: for 2020–2023, roughly US$8.9 million had been needed but well under US$1 million was approved; for 2024–2025, roughly US$9.5 million had been needed against the approval of around US$ 2 million. Going into 2026–2027, cumulative

need, including carry-over, was around US$40 million, against a shortfall of the approximately US$8–9 million reported at SB64.

Funds are needed not only to build the infrastructure but to maintain it, and to fund the independent technical expert review essential to system integrity — a function that had already proven expensive under the much smaller transaction volumes of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) era, and which will become more resource-intensive as, potentially, every Party engages in carbon markets. Endalew also stressed the CDM-era lesson that many developing countries had been unable to engage actively because of capacity constraints, meaning technical expert review and capacity development needed to be pursued in parallel through regional centres and partners. Without this, he warned, credibility itself would be at risk. While countries stand ready to engage, the prerequisite infrastructure is not in place.

Endalew highlighted the key tensions that came up during the discussions at SB64:

- On funding quality, the need for adequate, predictable, reliable, stable, sufficient, sustainable and low-overhead finance.
- On equity, the need to reflect common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR–RC), broad and meaningful participation, no undue burden on developing countries, and particular attention to least developed countries (LDCs) and other vulnerable groups.
- On cost recovery, the tension between a "user pays"/self-financing logic and predictable public funding — supplementary budgets can bridge gaps but cannot be relied on indefinitely — and the role of private sector participation.

Endalew set out four funding options drawn from a Secretariat paper, each with distinct trade-offs:

- Core budget allocation: predictable and well suited to recurring functions such as technical review and capacity building, but carrying budget-pressure risk.
- Supplementary budget: useful for bridging gaps quickly but historically unreliable, with very little mobilised in recent years.
- Usage fees: aligned with the user-pays principle and suited to mature maintenance costs, but complex to set, poorly suited to funding capacity building, and potentially compromising the independence of technical expert review if charged per review.
- Participant or user fees from engaging Parties: supportive of self-financing, but risking a fixed burden that falls disproportionately on developing countries.

A differentiated mix of these options, rather than a single model, was likely to prove more reliable, Endalew said.

He also flagged unresolved equity, prioritisation, and governance questions raised during the SBI:

- Whether LDCs and small island developing States (SIDS) should be exempted from usage- and participant-fee options.

- Whether access to the international registry should be free for Parties lacking capacity, or limited to LDCs, given that many developing countries had understood registry access would be free and that cost could discourage participation and undermine market integrity.
- How to prioritise among competing needs — the Article 6.4 mechanism's database, technical expert review, and capacity building — and governance questions such as whether a trust fund is needed, who sets and updates fee schedules, and how transparency, reporting, and misreporting would be handled.

He closed by proposing remote review to reduce technical expert review costs, while cautioning that time zones and communications would need careful management and that a business-as-usual approach would not be scalable given the hundreds of Parties expected to engage.

In the ensuing discussion, a developing country participant noted that many countries are waiting for completion of the Article 6.4 infrastructure before activating Article 6.2 bilateral cooperation, even though Article 6.2 does not strictly depend on the 6.4 architecture. Most Parties are unwilling to risk building compliance mechanisms that may not align with a centralised architecture. The participant urged prioritising available funds to bring the infrastructure online in stages so that subsequent work could follow.

A developed country participant welcomed the framing of the issue as central to the operationalisation of Article 6, noting it reflected a broader pattern in which important structures and functions were created without the corresponding budget. Practically, any Party able to contribute to the initial infrastructure should do so — his country was exploring funding options — while the process should remain inclusive and not place undue burden on participation. Engagement with Article 6 will never be entirely cost-free for any Party, since it requires human resources, capacity, and institutions at the national level. Capacity building must not be left behind once the infrastructure is operational, based on his country's experience as an early and active user of carbon markets. He cautioned against moving too quickly: despite high expectations, building integrity-critical infrastructure requires time and patience.

Another developed country participant agreed the infrastructure and financing issue was important but said Article 6 implementation could not be reduced to an infrastructure or financing gap within the Secretariat. The participant pointed to the importance of ambition dialogues under Article 6.2 for policymakers, and to unresolved capacity issues around accounting, noting that technical expert reviews had already revealed inconsistent interpretations of agreed guidance. The participant added that addressing this substance is inseparable from the wider architecture question, and these exchanges and lessons will be increasingly important as the process approaches GST2.

A developing country participant agreed the financing question for the three Article 6 instruments was important and that substance mattered equally, describing Article 6 as sitting at the intersection of climate, trade, and political considerations. Methodologies need to be fast-tracked without compromising integrity; the participant cited a recently approved Supervisory Body methodology capping hydropower projects at 15 megawatts, which sat awkwardly alongside broader calls to enhance ambition and avoid temperature overshoot.

The participant also raised concerns, without naming countries, that some prominent project developers and independent standard bodies view the corresponding adjustment fee as having been shaped by a small number of front-running countries and multilateral institutions. The participant also noted friction in voluntary markets where actors seek authorisation without governments applying corresponding adjustments because of the fee involved.

Responding, Endalew said the funding was intended to be catalytic rather than permanent, noting the current system had already borrowed remaining CDM-era resources that will need to be returned to the Adaptation Fund once the new system generates its own resources. Expressing hope that the system would become self-sustaining, he observed that the shift away from the CDM— with its limited number of transactions — to a system in which every Party holds a commitment requires managing expectations, since some Parties are keen to sell available units without fully weighing corresponding adjustments. A robust monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) framework at the country level was a prerequisite for Parties to know what can credibly be sold, since selling the easiest "low-hanging fruit" units first can leave later corresponding adjustments harder to source. This was not a simple transaction, he stressed, but a shared undertaking between buyers and sellers requiring joint attention to integrity.

One developed country participant agreed with the range of financing sources presented but noted the underlying UNFCCC budget shortfall was a separate and larger issue. She cited her country's long experience — a CDM programme running over 20 years and bilateral engagement with Article 6 dating back to 2018 — as evidence that creating bilateral demand, including with private sector involvement, can itself generate both capacity and finance for infrastructure.

Another developed country participant suggested the Secretariat coordinate more actively among Parties supporting capacity development in this area, noting duplication and a lack of practical orientation in current efforts. On the corresponding adjustment fee, raising the underlying carbon price, rather than adjusting the fee mechanism, might be the more durable solution, since at current prices a corresponding adjustment deduction risks undermining the market's basic function.

A developed country participant noted that Parties must acknowledge that the UNFCCC budget alone cannot sustain this infrastructure, and expressed openness to user-pays or usage-based approaches as likely necessary parts of the solution. The participant pushed back gently on the idea that the budget question was separate from substantive decisions: every dollar added to the UNFCCC budget carries an opportunity cost against what is already committed. Colleagues should keep the sustainability of process funding at the forefront of every decision in this area.

Responding, Endalew agreed the system must ultimately sustain itself, and that a market mechanism that cannot do so should not proceed. He stressed, however, that the initial infrastructure gap remains a necessary bridge to be filled, since payment and fee structures would require time to design properly given questions of scale, criteria, and collection mechanics. He suggested a staged approach in the interim.

A developing country participant offered several forward-looking points: COP31, as an implementation-focused COP, should aim to deliver new methodologies and profile concrete projects under Article 6.4; a carefully balanced combination of the four financing options was likely needed to fund the Article 6.2 registry sustainably; and, under Article 6.8, the non-market platform needed to demonstrate concrete matching and delivery.

He said capacity building deserved sustained attention and resourcing, citing ongoing support to countries engaging on Article 6.2 projects, including World Bank support for transparency and integrity. He called for greater coordination among buyers so that participating countries are not confronted with a patchwork of differing requirements. He closed with a broader appeal that Article 6 is fundamentally about raising ambition, directing finance where it is needed, safeguarding environmental integrity, and delivering host-country co-benefits — work that is "way overdue".

Article 6.8: Bulk Purchasing as a Climate Finance Multiplier

A separate discussion on Article 6.8 (non-market approaches, or NMA) followed. Introducing the session, Müller recalled the origin of a 2021 ecbi report on bulk purchasing as a non-market climate activity, which was inspired by a newspaper story about an Indian government programme selling cheap LED bulbs to low-income households. In January 2014, the market price for an LED bulb had been around ₹600. The Indian government bought close to 3 million bulbs through reverse-auction bulk purchasing across 2014–2016, bringing the market price down to around ₹10. Müller framed this as an example of using market forces directly: an individual small country might lack the budget to run such a programme alone, but a regional grouping could pool resources to do so.

Philip Mann, Honorary Research Associate, Environmental Change Institute, University of Oxford, then presented the findings of an updated 2026 ecbi draft paper. He said the update draws on new data, with a focus on SIDS, and reflects a changed context since 2021. Container shipping costs rose roughly sevenfold in the 18 months after March 2020, and in the first seven months of 2026 alone the cost of shipping a 40-foot container rose by close to 75%, driven by ongoing conflicts. These shocks are compounded by trade disputes affecting the intermediary countries through which SIDS typically import, so tariff and trade measures imposed elsewhere can hit SIDS importers hard. Even though the cost of underlying climate technologies has fallen substantially over the past decade, those savings are often not passed on. Mann also noted that international public climate finance, discussed in headline figures as reaching into the trillions, remains under real budgetary pressure — reinforcing the importance of maximising the impact of every dollar.

Beyond the cost reductions demonstrated by reverse auctioning in the original paper, Mann said more recent Caribbean experience pointed to a further benefit: direct purchasing from supplier countries and bypassing intermediaries, which strengthens supply chain resilience. The new draft examined two case studies. In Antigua and Barbuda, a public climate fund initially made loans directly to consumers, reaching relatively few people, before switching mid-programme to bulk purchasing, which reduced costs by around 30% and significantly increased impact. In Mauritius, the national electricity utility bulk purchased photovoltaic systems and installed them across up to 10,000 households.

Drawing cross-cutting lessons, Mann said there is no single blueprint for who should act as an "aggregator". While the aggregator need not be a public authority, it must be a credible, creditworthy body with demand-aggregation and procurement expertise — a national fund, a cooperative, or a regional institution. Bulk purchasing has the greatest impact in relatively fragmented markets with high import dependence, high freight costs, and standardisable technologies — conditions that describe SIDS, and the Caribbean in particular, especially well. Framing this as a "non-market" approach does not mean sidelining the private sector or competition: multiple qualified suppliers are essential, and local private sector capacity and agency need to be preserved.

On the role of Article 6.8, Mann said the mechanism's activity pipeline remains thin — five listed activities when the paper was drafted, six as of the day before his presentation — and receives far less attention than the market-based elements of Article 6, leaving a limited track record to draw on. The draft's conclusions were, therefore, more speculative than evidence-based, but suggested Article 6.8 could give bulk purchasing the recognition and visibility it currently lacks in most bilateral and multilateral programming, and could serve a coordination function among buyers and sellers — potentially as a core function considered in this year's review of the NMA Platform. It could also play a role in standardisation and verification, covering procurement processes and MRV. Article 6.8 does not come with dedicated finance, Mann cautioned, though if it functioned well, it could attract climate finance.

On policy recommendations, Mann said the evidence pointed toward lowering technology delivery costs to broaden the reach of climate finance, reducing exposure to intermediaries through direct sourcing, and creating markets of sufficient scale — with the greatest near-term potential at the regional level. He noted that the Caribbean Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency is developing a bulk procurement initiative for climate technology designed around Article 6.8 from the outset, though not yet mature enough to feature in the current paper.

Mann closed by noting that: bulk purchasing must be recognised as a core climate finance delivery option within donor procurement practice, whether bilaterally or through mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF); the SIDS context offers the greatest potential gains, given exposure to freight costs and third-country tariff policy; and scaling from national to regional aggregation will be essential for very small countries, since the scale achieved in India — hundreds of millions of units — is not achievable for a single SIDS acting alone.

Müller flagged the need to generate genuine demand for the products alongside the purchasing exercise itself; cheap bulk-purchased goods are of little use if demand for them has not been secured.

During the discussion, a developed country participant recalled a comparable debate in France roughly five years earlier over a "social leasing" scheme intended to give lower-income households access to electric vehicles. A state bulk-purchase-and-redistribution option had been considered but was set aside in favour of a market-based approach, partly on standardisation and scale grounds.

He raised two points. First, whether bulk purchasing could be combined with efforts to localise value chains for key technologies such as renewables, solar batteries, and heat pumps, given growing Party interest in local value chains. Second, whether, given current overcapacity in the production of technologies such as solar panels and electric vehicles — linked to the dominance of a single geopolitical and economic power across much of the value chain — there was room for further price reductions. Many economies, including the US, the EU, Brazil, and India, are increasingly turning to tariffs to localise production. Tools such as bulk and direct purchasing, he suggested, might offer a more constructive way to work around an often ideologically charged trade debate.

A developed country participant questioned whether an NMA was the appropriate framework for this issue within the UNFCCC, given it is fundamentally also a trade issue, and that good intentions behind bulk purchase partnerships could run up against World Trade Organization (WTO) rules. While noting potential opportunity in WTO provisions such as special and differential treatment for LDCs and SIDS, he suggested the ongoing discussions on the trade-and-climate nexus might be the more appropriate venue, alongside lessons from regional bodies such as the African Union and precedents such as bulk vaccine purchasing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A developing country participant agreed this looked like a strong example of a mitigation co-benefit, and asked whether Article 6.8 could function as an "incubator" for approaches that might eventually migrate toward Articles 6.2 and 6.4 — though this would be easier said than done, given that current ambition levels under 6.4 do not match the rhetoric. He also underscored that a one-size-fits-all approach would not work given the diversity of country and regional circumstances and, responding to the earlier question about value chains, suggested that for small countries or regions local assembly or manufacturing is often unrealistic. Value is more likely to be captured through capacity building for long-term maintenance, so imported equipment, such as solar panels, does not require ongoing dependence on foreign technicians for routine upkeep.

Mann agreed that localising value chains is essential in principle but said the right approach varies by context — some locations are well suited to full local value capture, others perhaps only to fabrication rather than manufacturing — and acknowledged there was no short answer to the wider set of comments raised.

CLIMATE FINANCE WORK PROGRAMME

This session was moderated by Frode Neergaard, Member of the ecbi Advisory Group, who invited Ambassador Janine Felson of Belize to introduce the topic on behalf of the Fellows. Felson invited participants to step outside familiar climate finance framings and use the session for genuine co-creation. She acknowledged that many present had arrived with a degree of fatigue from the same debates in at SB64 in June, but said a different approach would enable the group to explore ideas productively ahead of COP31.

Felson set out that the CMA has a standing responsibility to review implementation of the Agreement's provisions, including Article 9. Three existing levers currently do this work on finance:

- The financial mechanism, covering guidance to the GCF, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Adaptation Fund, and the FRLD.
- The SCF, a technical body focused on the mobilisation of climate finance, whose products feed into the CMA and which also monitors Article 9.5 ex-ante obligations.
- The Article 2.1(c) discussion, which began in the Sharm el-Sheikh Dialogue and now continues under a newly created dialogue, with an explicit safeguard that it does not become a substitute for Article 9.1.

Felson noted that none of these three levers actually provides standing oversight of the core obligation under Article 9.1 — developed countries' obligation to provide finance. Guidance to the operating entities concerns those institutions' delivery; the SCF's work under the relevant CMA decision concerns overall finance flows and will, from 2028, deal with the NCQG; and the 2.1(c) dialogue is explicitly about mobilisation and safeguarded from becoming a substitute for 9.1. Oversight of Article 9.1 is a missing piece of the finance puzzle, she said, as recently affirmed by the International Court of Justice's Advisory Opinion on the Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change.

Felson connected this to the previous day's adaptation discussion about the widening gap between the finance needed for ambitious climate action and what is available. What typically captures headlines from the SB sessions, she observed, is an argument over an agenda item rather than substance — a procedural misstep that could be corrected so the group could focus on what a genuine climate finance work programme could look like.

She posed several questions for discussion:

- What would be needed to correct the procedural impasse, and why should consideration of a work programme be delayed by it?
- What lessons could be drawn from the development of comparable work programmes and dialogues?
- What options exist for sequencing a work plan?
- What substantive considerations — adaptation finance, loss and damage, the relationship with the 2.1(c) dialogue, and the nature and possible outputs of the programme — should shape its design?

In the discussion that followed, a developed country participant said they were surprised the presentation did not mention the NCQG, recalling the three years of technical expert dialogues that preceded the Baku decision and noting that implementation of Article 9, including 9.1, is an integral part of that decision.

A developing country participant offered a pointed critique of developed country positioning since the change in US administrations. Statements from European leadership, he said, no longer even paid lip service to CBDR–RC, professed continued belief in science while trends suggested otherwise, and called for preserving multilateralism while undermining its fundamentals. He cited a large domestic coal reserve his country had been told not to develop on mitigation grounds, contrasting this with European countries that are reopening coal capacity amid the continent's own energy shifts. He explained European policymakers need to understand that climate change, unlike migration, cannot be kept out with walls or defence

spending. On his reading of the past year's trends, one major developed country had halved its climate finance while another had also reduced its contribution; a developed world retreat from this strand of multilateralism would prompt developing countries to reconsider their own commitments across the wider multilateral system.

A developed country participant said they had been equally surprised by the continuing focus on 9.1 and, offering what they called a provocative but sincere question, suggested Article 9.1 is in a sense already working. Citing public national figures, the participant noted their country's climate finance had increased from roughly €3–4 billion in the year after the Paris Agreement to €7.8 billion in 2024, and cumulatively around €60 billion over the past decade, albeit unevenly. Was the real discussion needed under 9.1 about the scale of headline numbers, or about something more specific, that is the balance between concessional and non-concessional finance, and the role of private investment? Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) data suggested the mobilisation ratio of private finance per dollar of public finance had not meaningfully improved over the past decade, a critical issue since it determines the volume of resources that ultimately reach affected communities.

Another developed country participant who had earlier queried the absence of the NCQG asked what, specifically, in the existing architecture — including the enhanced transparency framework (ETF) and BTRs, through which reporting on finance provided is already public — was not delivering, to merit a new discussion track. She asked whether the underlying assumption was that more clarity on finance provided by developed countries alone would solve climate change, cautioning that this would overlook the need to mobilise the full range of funding streams, including from donors and innovative sources.

Another developed country participant thanked the presenter for handling a complex, passionate issue in a dispassionate manner and, picking up the theme of what keeps countries invested in the regime, made a factual correction to an earlier reference: her country's climate finance commitment had not been halved but restructured, and delivered against a cut to the official development assistance (ODA) budget from 0.5% to 0.3% of GDP. Preserving climate finance as a priority had been a difficult internal fight, and when that goes unrecognised it becomes harder to sustain domestic political support. Framing the debate in binary terms — as though finance was simply not flowing — undermines trust on all sides. A more productive framing, she said, would be to accept that finance is flowing and obligations are being met, while continuing to address the widening gap between needs and available finance.

A developing country participant rebutted the idea that Article 9.1 could simply be absorbed into the NCQG process. Article 9.1, she said, is a mandatory obligation — "developed countries shall provide" — and a different animal from Article 9.3, which is what the NCQG's operative paragraph 8 actually implements, in compliance with paragraph 53 of the Paris decision.

The distinction mattered, she noted, because ambitious NDCs depend on finance actually arriving. She cited a Climate Policy Initiative report indicating that of roughly US$2 trillion mobilised, US$1.2 trillion was in developing countries, of which 87% was mobilised by developing countries themselves — leaving only around US$56–57 billion that was not self-mobilised. The gap is not a lack of viable projects or missing architecture, since developing countries had shown they could mobilise finance for themselves, but the high cost of capital

they face, driven substantially by sovereign credit ratings, which makes many projects commercially unviable without public support. What gets financed easily is what would have been commercially viable anyway, mostly in mitigation. Adaptation — assessed against a return-on-investment logic it was never designed to satisfy — struggles to attract capital and requires public de-risking, guarantees, and international public sector support that only 9.1 can meaningfully speak to.

The underlying issue was not intent but capacity, technology, and finance constraints, she said, expressing concern that, absent a forum in which the 9.1 work programme agreed at COP30 could be discussed, all that would remain were seminars and workshops disconnected from CMA decision-making.

Several participants built on this exchange. One developing country participant, agreeing fully with the earlier critique, drew a comparison to a recent GCF Board meeting reportedly overshadowed by one developed country's revocation of a US$1.1 billion promissory note. This was contrasted with the far more exacting conditions developing countries are held to in other bilateral and trade contexts. The language of "donors", she said, should give way to the language of historical climate debt and intergenerational inequity. In her own country, a rapid expansion of solar power — now roughly a quarter of households — had strained the national grid because the government could not sustain the associated costs, illustrating that every dimension of climate action ultimately depends on finance.

Another developing country participant observed that while recognising flows already occurring under 9.1 was important — as SCF reports on the prior US$100 billion goal have done, and a forthcoming report is expected to do again — this did not mean current flows were sufficient. Roughly 75% of global climate finance still flows within developed countries themselves; many developing countries' NDCs are conditional on financial support; and the cost of capital constrains how much can realistically be delivered against increasingly ambitious NDC cycles. This creates a catch-22, where governments are held accountable domestically for NDC delivery they cannot achieve without finance they cannot unlock. The participant also flagged concern over fund replenishment trends, noting a recent GEF replenishment in which only 9% (roughly US$351 million) was allocated to climate, and over expectations for the next GCF replenishment against a 2030 target to triple the operating entities' outflows.

Responding, Felson reminded the group not to re-litigate whether a climate finance work programme will exist as it had already been agreed and will proceed. She said the NCQG's absence from the slides had been deliberate — the decision establishing the work programme carries a footnote that it will not prejudge NCQG implementation, and the drafters had understood that some participants held specific sensitivities on this point, though the NCQG will inevitably be a reference point in any substantive discussion. She also noted a timing opportunity: the period from 2026 to 2028 precedes full NCQG implementation, giving the work programme room for a more balanced conversation than the current agenda affords, since the existing levers cover the operating entities, SCF-led mobilisation, and 2.1(c) mobilisation, but no venue currently specifically discusses provision.

A developing country participant said the work programme could help developed countries unpack the "provision" element of Article 9.1 in a way that also builds confidence around

NCQG implementation. He recalled that three years of NCQG negotiations had achieved neither an explicit textual link between the NCQG's paragraph 8 and Article 9.1 nor an adaptation finance target — outcomes he linked directly to why the tripling of adaptation finance by 2035 had emerged instead, given adaptation finance's historical ratio of roughly one to five against mitigation finance.

A developed country participant reiterated that the climate finance work programme already exists, having been launched at COP30 with co-chairs appointed, submissions received, and workshops held. On mobilisation, he welcomed developing countries' own efforts as a complement to, not a substitute for, developed country provision, but cautioned strongly against conflating 9.1 funding with the cost of capital. The UNFCCC process cannot resolve cost-of-capital dynamics, which are addressed elsewhere in the international financial system, and suggesting otherwise would be misleading.

Similarly, linking ambitious NDCs directly to the availability of 9.1 funding was an unhelpful and, in his view, "dangerous" framing if taken literally, since no plausible level of 9.1 funding could finance the totality of the world's NDCs. He characterised part of the underlying dynamic as Parties seeking through a new work programme what they had not secured in the NCQG decision. He cautioned this would, if generalised as an approach to closed negotiations, complicate rather than resolve future decisions. Reaffirming that the work programme itself was a legitimate space for discussion once under way, he said adding it formally to the COP31 agenda would require consensus which does not currently exist, since doing so unilaterally would effectively reopen the decision that established it.

A developed country participant offered three reflections. First, much of the substance under discussion — cost of capital, de-risking, guarantees, mobilisation of private finance — connects directly to implementation of the Baku to Belém Roadmap to 1.3T. Cost-of-capital questions properly belong in discussions with the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and other partners rather than at the COP, and involving finance ministers more directly was valuable not only for the 9.1 conversation but for scaling climate finance flows more broadly.

Second, the work programme's value would come from being specific about sector-by-sector challenges — energy transition dynamics differ fundamentally from water and sanitation, for example. She cited de-risking instruments developed with African partners and explored with India's International Solar Alliance as models worth building on, rather than restating principles already settled in the Paris Agreement.

Third, on a point raised earlier about one developing country's coal transition, she noted active bilateral engagement, including through the Powering Past Coal Alliance, to find creative mechanisms — potentially including transition credits — to support that transition. No single financing model fits every context, and the work programme's real value would lie in convening practitioners, finance ministries, and development agencies to be concrete about sector-specific needs and results.

A developed country participant set out figures intended to push back on what he characterised as unfair generalised criticism: his country's doubling pledge had been met in 2023, three years ahead of the 2026 target; a new post-2026 climate finance target was under development; predictability was being strengthened through long-term partnerships; and the

country was expected to be among the largest purchasers under Article 6 which, while not climate finance as such, remained important for investment flows. He agreed with much of the diagnosis of unmet need but questioned whether a new agenda item was the right response, given the roughly 18 finance-related agenda items and an "underutilised" BTR/ETF reporting channel. A more productive question, he added, was how to use the Baku to Belém Roadmap and existing reporting infrastructure more effectively; framing everything through a narrow 9.1 lens risked missing the point that provision, mobilisation, and access all need to be addressed coherently, including with respect to the specific role of public finance for adaptation.

A developing country participant offered an account of what erodes trust from the recipient side, describing a recent GCF Board meeting during which no project from their region had reached the Board. This was not for lack of a technically sound pipeline, developed over four to six years in some cases, but because the GCF Secretariat had, at a late stage, asked project teams to add a private sector component and restructure public-good adaptation projects as loans rather than grants, reportedly at the request of donors.

Adaptation, assessed against a return-on-investment logic designed for the Fund's private-sector window, will systematically fail that test, he said, because resilience does not generate revenue. Applying investment-multiplication logic — "value for money", multiplying every dollar — to public-good adaptation projects effectively excludes them from funding even though they remain squarely within the Fund's mandate. Where, he asked, was this kind of provision conversation supposed to happen, since it clearly was not happening at the GCF Board?

A developing country participant explained that the focus on climate finance should not be viewed as overemphasis on a single issue, since finance is "the golden thread" connecting progress across the wider agenda, including debt sustainability, cost of capital, and access. The participant stressed the importance of clarity on the full scope of Article 9 obligations, concern over the pace of fund replenishments, and the need for a credible pathway toward mobilising the US$300 billion NCQG floor.

Another developing country participant offered a practical account of why a provision-focused conversation matters even where mobilisation tools exist. Describing efforts to structure an early coal-retirement project in Southeast Asia, he explained that private capital could not be mobilised until a public actor committed concessional, first-loss finance to de-risk the transaction. De-risking, in other words, presupposes provision, he said, and cannot be discussed in isolation from it.

An honest conversation is needed, he added, regarding where to prioritise public finance when it is constrained — mitigation, where private capital is often willing to enter, or adaptation, where it typically is not. He felt that trade-off cannot be discussed without first discussing provision. He proposed two further ideas: mapping more precisely which existing spaces already cover which aspects of finance, to avoid duplication and to fill gaps; and, more speculatively, exploring a coalition of countries, partners, and philanthropic organisations to help unlock the higher, currently unfunded tier of conditional NDC targets, which could generate a more granular picture of how much finance is achieving how much ambition.

Several other participants added national perspectives before the session closed. One developed country participant noted that international finance alone should not be expected to resolve every domestic gap, since NDCs and NAPs are themselves framed around multiple resource sources. However, he explained that the specific barriers already identified in existing texts deserved to be unpacked and addressed rather than restated in the abstract, including the trajectory implied by existing adaptation and NCQG figures.

Another developed country participant said her country maintains the UN's 0.7% of gross national income ODA target despite domestic political contestation, allocates roughly 30% of its development finance to climate (of which 60% goes to adaptation), and is pursuing blended finance and guarantee instruments explicitly to mobilise more adaptation finance. Her country's contribution, and that of the EU as the largest collective contributor, often goes unrecognised; maintaining a broader donor base consistent with the NCQG's framing, alongside continued domestic resource mobilisation by all countries, was essential given how much the world has changed since 1992.

A final developing country participant closed the session by recalling the COVID-19 period as a "microcosm" of extraordinary global mobilisation whose lessons had not been carried over into raising climate ambition. She described the technical difficulty and cost of stabilising national grids as renewable deployment scales up. She warned of a credibility crisis on both the finance and policy sides, closing with "what gets measured gets done" as an argument for moving beyond declared ambition toward demonstrated delivery.

In her final comments, Felson cautioned against treating insufficient funding as unique to climate finance, noting the same dynamic is present across many sectors and the SDGs more generally, and the task is to ensure mobilisation and prioritisation are done well. She clarified that the work programme was never intended to imply that all climate finance would come from the public sector; confirmed no consensus exists for a formal agenda item at this stage; and noted the discussion had not directly addressed modalities, though existing work programmes offered a useful precedent for structuring dialogue. She proposed organising the work programme's substance around three roles the public sector can play — provider, mobilising partner, and innovator — and called for a solutions-oriented rather than finger-pointing framing, with outputs centred on knowledge-sharing, matchmaking, and feeding into the wider finance architecture.

JUST TRANSITION WORK PROGRAMME AND MECHANISM

Pheladi Thalakgale, South Africa, and Maria Cristina, Colombia, presented the outcomes of the Fellowship Colloquium on the existing JTWP and the new Just Transition Mechanism (JTM).

They set out current thinking on the JTM, to be defined by COP31, saying it will be built around the previously agreed just transition elements: means of implementation (finance identified through other work streams); technology (access, transfer, deployment, and innovation); and capacity building (institutional, technical, and social, including social protection and decent work). Stating that the design of the JTM had been discussed at length in previous conversations in different settings, the presenters focused on: how the

mechanism should function: whether to promote North–South and South–South/triangular cooperation; how to coordinate across existing UNFCCC work streams to connect what already exists rather than duplicate it; and how a serious diagnostic of demand-driven needs could support peer learning and partnerships that preserve Party ownership and connect to national priorities already reflected in NDCs.

Describing the Fellows' thinking on a coordinating body, the presenters floated the idea of a focal point or expert per relevant workstream who could flag where the mechanism could add value. They said this could help ensure, for instance, that mitigation pathways are pursued equitably, or that the 59 agreed adaptation indicators are implemented with attention to safeguards, inclusion and a differential approach for groups, such as Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendant communities, and children and youth.

They framed the core purpose of just transition as reducing the gap of injustice through social protection and decent work, while stressing that this requires not just policy design but attention to the enablers that make implementation possible — which is what makes just transition a cross-cutting issue.

They noted the Fellows had also revisited, from the previous year's Seminar, the open question of what "purpose" the negotiating item should ultimately serve. Framing the opportunity ahead of COP31, they identified four areas where the mechanism could add value:

- Translating dialogue outcomes, drawn from workshops already held under the JTWP on barriers and good models, into country-led implementation.
- Matching national needs with finance, technology, and expertise.
- Improving coherence across fragmented UNFCCC work streams.
- Strengthening participation, learning, and international solidarity.

While flagging the risk of duplication and overlap with existing negotiating items, they highlighted the need for predictable resources and clear governance with strong follow-up and accountability that is supply-driven, inclusive, not overly burdensome. They said the terms of reference for reviewing the JTWP were agreed at SB64, but the substantive question of the mechanism's approach, and how to avoid duplication while connecting to what already exists, remained open.

In the discussion that followed, a developed country participant said that despite agreed decisions and context, real differences remained on how to operationalise the JTM and why it is needed. Any discussion of just transition had to be anchored in the ultimate objective — keeping 1.5°C within reach and building climate-resilient, climate-neutral societies — and "implementable just transition pathways" should not be conceived as separate from existing channels such as long-term strategies, NDCs, or adaptation communications. National context and national ownership were essential, since needs vary not only between countries but within them, and the participant cautioned against creating a new, parallel implementation process. While acknowledging value in strengthened international cooperation, knowledge-sharing, and communication, the priority should be using existing tools at the domestic and international levels rather than setting up new external bodies.

Another developed country participant strongly agreed, noting that despite two days of discussions, the transition away from fossil fuels — in her view the biggest single challenge for just transition — had barely been mentioned. Drawing on her experience chairing a coordination structure for Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs) with several partner countries, she said the clearest lesson from five years of that work was the necessity of open governance: genuine domestic and international dialogue with the private sector, since private actors, not governments, create the jobs at stake, such as those held by coal miners and coal plant workers, and with local authorities, since unfairness in a transition is experienced locally even though the drivers are global.

She also raised the practical difficulty of bringing outside practitioners and other UN and international organisations working on labour issues into a process that otherwise risks becoming self-referential, and reiterated support for avoiding duplication. She was sceptical of an overly theoretical or principle-heavy approach that risks a gap between agreed text and the lived sense of unfairness on the ground.

A developed country participant noted civil society's strong interest in the just transition agenda but urged the group to be pragmatic about the JTM's limits. The wish-list of functions read like a list for an implementing agency, she said, but the mechanism will not be one. UN bodies, such as the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), already run relevant projects, for example on retraining and technology parks in former coal regions. The mechanism's realistic role was therefore to identify needs and connect them to existing implementing agencies outside the UNFCCC, rather than attempting to implement projects itself.

A developing country participant broadened the frame, observing that the challenge was not confined to negotiated text but spanned multiple sectors and institutions outside the UNFCCC's competence. The first was market access and taxation and whether developed markets would accept different regional wage standards as part of a just transition on labour rights. The second was technology transfer and intellectual property, governed by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) rather than the UNFCCC, alongside bodies such as the Least Developed Countries Technology Bank, whose practical effectiveness she questioned, and agencies including UNIDO and the United Nations Environment Programme. The third was tariff structures, which she said disadvantage developing country value addition as, for example, raw agricultural inputs often enter tariff-free while processed versions face tariffs of 25–100%.

Just transition, properly understood, is about ensuring every country has a fair shot at development, she said. Addressing it seriously within the UNFCCC would require engaging a much wider set of institutions, such as the WTO and WIPO, which, she conceded, makes the negotiating task considerably harder.

A developed country participant cautioned against overreach and inadvertently negotiating what amounted to a new treaty, saying it was always difficult to begin an intervention on just transition "because it is absolutely everything". She asked how the international dimension could be made meaningful without duplicating existing bodies such as the Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN), the Technology Mechanism, the roughly 18 existing finance-related agenda items, or NDCs themselves. "Just" should never be used as a

precondition that blocks climate ambition, she explained, citing domestic experience where opponents invoke fairness concerns, such as road taxation, to resist climate policy in a way rarely applied to areas like health or education. This instrumentalization of "just" as a brake on ambition needed to be named and resisted.

On integration, she said the more productive question was how just transition considerations could inform the NDC and NAP processes that already exist, noting a parallel structure was the wrong approach. She drew an analogy to gender, where a COP decision had integrated gender considerations into the mandates and reporting requirements of other work streams. She suggested this model could be replicated for just transition in a COP31 decision, alongside clear signals to Parties and the private sector on support.

The UNFCCC's greatest strength is as a convener, she noted, pointing to the loss and damage process as a precedent where the Convention had brought together the development, humanitarian, and climate communities that had not previously worked together. However, she strongly cautioned against the Convention attempting to redefine obligations, such as labour rights, which properly sit with other bodies like the International Labour Organization (ILO), emphasising that diluting well-established international guidance elsewhere would be a serious risk. The JTM presented real potential, she concluded, but also carried the risk of creating an unproductive "parallel universe" that dilutes rather than strengthens integration.

A developing country participant observed that the discussion, while appearing divergent, in fact showed considerable convergence. No proposal on the table sought duplication or a parallel structure, and the question was what a just transition mechanism adds that NAPs, NDCs, adaptation communications, and long-term strategies do not — namely an explicit lens of equity, sustainable development, and poverty eradication as countries pursue low-carbon, climate-resilient transitions. Existing decision text states the mechanism should complement existing UNFCCC architecture and structures beyond it, framing the UNFCCC's role as providing normative guidance rather than deciding on behalf of other bodies. The Convention could help ensure transitions do not create winners and losers, whether among workers domestically or among countries internationally, since just transition, understood as linked to development, inherently carries this international dimension.

A developing country participant strongly endorsed this framing, saying the omission of CBDR–RC and equity language from recent developed country statements was, in his assessment, intentional rather than accidental. He drew parallels to comparable equity disputes in other multilateral fora, such as the pandemic treaty negotiations at the World Health Organization and the plastics negotiations, noting that just transition inherently touches debt, technology, food, fertiliser and textiles, and that "somebody has to bear the cost".

Building on earlier warnings about cross-cutting sprawl, a developing country participant asked what "cross-cutting" means in practice, and whether different modalities are needed for cross-cutting issues such as finance, gender, and now just transition, as opposed to more contained, standalone negotiating items. The participant warned that without this discipline the discussion risked becoming unmanageable where everything connects to everything but nothing is resolved.

In response, a developed country participant said the question was not whether integration was needed, but what a work programme and mechanism could practically add.

A developing country participant observed that many of the issues raised — trust deficits, resistance to restating agreed obligations, differing weight placed on CBDR–RC — recur across every agenda item. She suggested the pattern itself, rather than any single topic, might warrant a more serious reflection on the wider negotiating process. She stressed that discussions of "transition" should not lose sight of countries, particularly in parts of Africa, that lack even basic energy access and remain dependent on biomass, for whom the frame of "transition" understates a more fundamental access gap.

Another developed country participant reiterated that the mechanism's international dimension remained contentious and was better suited to continued discussion within a time-bound, country-driven work programme, while a separate mechanism function — potentially reaching beyond the UNFCCC to mobilise interest, resources, and capacities not otherwise available — handled the more settled, consensus areas.

A participant called for anchoring discussion in the definition of outputs, echoing earlier questions about work programme outputs generally, and suggested the JTM's real contribution should be connecting what already exists — support structures inside the UNFCCC system, such as the CTCN, and outside it, such as the ILO and UNDP — to national implementation needs, while framing just transition explicitly as an enabler of, rather than a precondition for, higher ambition.

Closing with a broader synthesis, the presenters reminded the room that the decision to establish a JTM had already been taken by consensus in Belém, so questioning whether to have one was no longer productive. The agreed elements of the JTWP already address most concerns raised in the room — links to NDCs, sustainable development, workforce participation, inclusive stakeholder engagement, international cooperation, workforce transformation — and the task ahead was translating COP30's decision into an operational design consistent with those elements.

They flagged a forthcoming informal workshop in Sydney, Australia, from 30 September to 2 October, as the moment to move from questioning the mechanism's existence to detailing its structure. They identified three deliverables expected at COP31: key messages from the remaining dialogues; a review of the JTWP, expected largely to affirm its value with incremental improvements; and the design of the JTM.

In closing reflections, they highlighted the importance of assessing — not merely mapping — how just transition is currently considered across institutions, and reaffirmed the now widely shared framing of just transition as an enabler, not a precondition, of climate ambition. They recalled that, when the JTM was agreed, a minister had described the goal as giving just transition "an institutional home" by pulling fragmented pieces into one coherent, coordinated space. They invited participants to carry this framing into the Sydney workshop discussions, alongside the ideas on sequencing, guiding questions, and connecting national and international gaps raised throughout the session.

MITIGATION WORK PROGRAMME

Manjeet Dhakal, Nepal, introduced a discussion on the MWP. Highlighting areas of convergence, he noted that the technical dialogues and global dialogue and investment-focused events on mitigation had helped surface good practice, lessons learned, and real on-the-ground activity, bringing implementers, financiers, and practitioners into a conversation usually dominated by negotiators. There was shared interest in making the dialogues more accessible and practically useful, and clear recognition of the value of greater practitioner engagement.

He then set out areas of divergence:

- What "scale" of mitigation ambition and implementation means in practice.
- How closely the MWP and GST outputs should be linked, including whether MWP outputs should feed into successive NDCs, and how the paragraph 16 Sharm el-Sheikh safeguards (Decision 4/CMA.4) should be interpreted in that context.
- Whether the MWP should remain primarily a dialogue platform or become more action- and implementation-oriented.
- How explicitly the MWP should engage with the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C reference and current overshoot risk.

Rather than attempt to resolve all of these, Dhakal proposed three practical questions for the room:

- How the safeguards should function in practice without breaching Paris Agreement principles or encroaching on nationally determined action.
- How the dialogue and investment-focused event modalities might be improved, including their relationship to the Article 6.8 NMA Platform.
- How the MWP relates to other mitigation-relevant initiatives operating partly inside and partly outside the formal process, such as a COP Presidency-led implementation initiative.

During the discussion, a developing country participant said the MWP directly serves the Convention's core objective of stabilising greenhouse gas concentrations, and that a dedicated agenda item for this, after years of circling around it, was valuable. He supported continuing the programme until 2030 with a further evaluation at that point, and stressed the value of the dialogues as a channel through which practitioner and investor experience could inform NDC design. That many more investors and practitioners attend adjacent events, such as regional climate weeks, than the UNFCCC's own dialogues was a gap worth addressing directly.

A developing country participant said the MWP had provided a valuable space to discuss sectoral barriers and opportunities, but that difficulty arose when dialogue outputs were "cherry-picked" and treated as prescriptive for what must remain a nationally determined process. He called for capturing useful lessons without building a "clamp-down architecture" prescriptive element around them. He called for increasing the visibility of investment-

focused event results — the volume of projects presented and funded, and their impact — as a way of creating a positive feedback loop for further ambition.

A developed country participant described the MWP as the first response mechanism to address the post-Paris ambition gap, and cautioned it was hard to judge whether it had closed that gap. She agreed the dialogues had been useful and inclusive in bringing different actors and perspectives together, even if the right actors were not always present. The more difficult, unresolved question was how to translate dialogue content into more formal signals on closing the ambition gap without being prescriptive or top-down. Other work programmes, such as agriculture — which accumulates lessons into periodic decisions rather than continuous negotiation — might offer useful alternative models. If every UNFCCC decision were as heavily framed as the MWP decision by what it must not do, she said, decisions across the system would look very different, warning that this framing risked functioning as "a killer for any engagement".

A developing country participant said the more critical question was whether the group was reviewing the programme or simply preserving its original mandate. The participant supported strengthening the investment-focused events' matchmaking function, as well as building synergies with other relevant Presidency-led initiatives such as the Belém Mission to 1.5.

A developed country participant raised what they called the "tricky, unresolved part of the conversation": given the safeguards in the relevant decision, what is the group expected to do with dialogue outputs, since useful knowledge sharing does not automatically translate into text. "Signal" means different things to different people, he noted. There was room to treat some dialogue conclusions as reflecting global concerns requiring a collective response — for instance, prior conclusions on the need for expanded grids and storage — without this constituting an imposition on any individual country. He called for a better shared understanding of how to reflect discussions usefully without triggering fears of prescriptiveness on one side or a sense of being denied recognition on the other.

A developed country participant agreed the MWP should continue but said the safeguards were sometimes applied in ways that limited substantive depth rather than merely preventing attribution to individual Parties. The real improvement needed was greater depth in dialogue outputs useful to policymakers and practitioners. Affirming the UNFCCC's strength as a convener, she nevertheless expressed longstanding scepticism about the MWP's capacity to matchmake at a granular, transactional level.

A participant offered what he explicitly framed as a provocative idea. Rather than have the Secretariat, and then Parties, spend extended negotiating time each session summarising dialogue outcomes, he suggested applying a standard, jointly agreed AI prompt to session recordings to generate rapid, consistent summaries, freeing negotiating time for substantive discussion on issues Parties actually wished to negotiate.

He offered two further ideas: framing MWP discussion explicitly around collective solutions, for example grid and storage needs, which he suggested should also be reflected in the JTWP's international cooperation strand; and using the MWP to convene coalitions of countries and

other actors, such as philanthropic funders and financial institutions, specifically to help unlock currently unfunded conditional NDC targets.

A developing country participant cautioned against a narrative that discredited the entire body of prior UNFCCC signalling, since visible progress had been achieved. Resistance to further prescriptive signalling from countries invoking the paragraph 16 safeguards should not be read as a lack of mitigation effort, she said, since those pushing hardest for the safeguards were often also taking substantial mitigation action domestically. The safeguards exist to preserve space for CBDR–RC-consistent national approaches, not to block the MWP's core function, and honest engagement with that point was a precondition for progress, he added.

A developed country participant said the safeguards were not themselves contested, but that people outside the process struggle to understand why it is so difficult to discuss what was agreed, in a space created to facilitate implementation and increase mitigation ambition.

Another developed country participant said the MWP's central unresolved task was addressing "disenablers", or barriers to implementation, in detail rather than as a broad general debate. She stressed that the MWP should be understood as one part of a wider landscape — alongside the GGA, the JTWP, and other strands — that ultimately needs to feed in a coherent manner into the GST, the appropriate venue for holistic assessment. She supported a revised MWP that preserved what works while becoming a substantive input to GST discussions rather than a prescriptive list of national actions.

A developed country participant noted that positive signalling should not be underestimated, quoting a finance sector contact's remark that "hell does not sell", while affirming that the collective nature of every Paris Agreement target is itself the structural safeguard against prescriptiveness.

Providing an update on Presidency-led initiatives undertaken in parallel to the formal process, a developing country participant reported that the COP29, COP30, and COP31 Presidencies were working intensively, under significant coordination demands, to finalise a "blueprint" or charter for what the drafters preferred to call "the Accelerator", rather than the Global Implementation Accelerator. It was intended not as a new institution but as a light mechanism to select scalable, potentially transformative solutions from the existing Global Climate Action Agenda. A parallel four-Presidency Mission 1.5 initiative had just completed a Secretariat synthesis of Party submissions on its renewed scope, with further events planned around the New York Climate Week, the pre-COP, and COP itself.

A developed country participant reaffirmed the case for the MWP as the shared space for addressing a global and local challenge, and welcomed the recent renewable energy deployment stories shared by other delegations during the Seminar as evidence of what sharing experience achieves. The participant gently pushed back on the AI proposal — saying the process needs human intelligence and mutual understanding of barriers, not only summarisation — while agreeing the MWP, Mission 1.5, and the Accelerator needed to be brought together in one coherent package.

A developing country participant proposed a structural mechanism to link the MWP to the finance and JTWP discussions: GST-identified mitigation gaps could serve as the starting point; the JTWP could help identify enabling conditions, without becoming a precondition; a technical body or committee — potentially the same institutional gap-filling body discussed in the JTWP session — could connect specific national mitigation needs to financial mechanisms and modalities already existing under the UNFCCC; and resulting implementation could then be reported back through the BTRs into the GST, closing the loop between the day's three main topics.

A developed country participant returned to the idea of "positive signalling", observing that the Belém decision's language describing the green transition as "irreversible" was itself an important signal. She offered a further example of what kind of international-level signal might help: encouragement toward regulatory settings, such as spatial planning frameworks, conducive to local and sub-national mitigation action. She reiterated that the Paris Agreement's collective, nationally determined design is itself the built-in safeguard against prescriptiveness, since all GST-referenced targets are explicitly collective rather than individually assigned.

A developing country participant said the true signal — the roughly US$5.8–5.9 trillion gap between needs and available finance identified through the GST process — was already well understood, and that the priority should now shift decisively toward implementing what is already known and agreed, rather than further debate over new signalling mechanisms.

SECOND GLOBAL STOCKTAKE

Carlos Fuller, Belize, presented the outcome of the Fellows' discussion on the second Global Stocktake (GST2). He said the Fellows had concluded that the most useful approach was not to relitigate what went right or wrong in the first cycle, but to use that experience to deliberate what the group wants GST2 to achieve.

Fuller flagged three process lessons from GST1:

- A weak handover between the technical and political phases: the two facilitators who ran the technical dialogues, cafés, and poster sessions — which had genuinely engaged non-Party stakeholders — passed responsibility to two newly appointed political-phase facilitators without an effective transfer of the technical work's substance.
- Open questions about whether the modalities used to gather technical input — presentations from UN agencies, specialised groups, experts, and regional and national bodies — had delivered the assessment needed to judge Paris Agreement implementation, even though they had engaged stakeholders successfully.
- An open question about the right number of technical dialogues for GST2, since current guidance allows for two with a discretionary option for a third, against three held in the first cycle.

On substantive inputs, Fuller noted the continuing UNFCCC commitment to "best available science", understood to include equity and national circumstances alongside the peer-reviewed assessments of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). However,

he flagged a risk that the IPCC's Seventh Assessment Report might not be ready in time to inform the GST2 technical phase. The IPCC was expected to consider this question at its October session.

GST2 would also have access to inputs unavailable for GST1, including BTRs, which provide implementation data on NDCs that the first cycle lacked, and adaptation indicators now being piloted by several countries.

Fuller invited participants to consider the overall purpose of GST2, including how it should address the risk of a 1.5°C overshoot, assess progress toward net zero and means of implementation (finance, capacity building, technology transfer), and strengthen international cooperation. He invited reflections from the negotiator who had drafted the GST1 outcome text and from the two facilitators currently running the intersessional dialogue that succeeded GST1.

The participant who had drafted the GST1 outcome offered two process suggestions: appointing GST2's political phase co-facilitators earlier, to give them more time to negotiate the final outcome with Parties; and ensuring the technical co-facilitators design their process — and especially their report — to be inclusive and broadly owned by Parties. The GST1 technical report, while widely accepted, had run into difficulty whenever Parties sought to selectively invoke specific parts of it.

A developed country participant, drawing on a domestic simulation exercise run over two days in July 2026, flagged the risk of simply repeating GST1's structure without adding value. GST2's distinctive contribution should be "connecting the dots" among an unusually rich set of existing roadmaps — Baku to Belém, deforestation, fossil fuel transition, adaptation — rather than treating them as a list to append. She also suggested: using the wealth of technical material from the adaptation indicator work to propose more specific, collective, potentially sectoral commitments, for instance on water and food security, rather than leaving adaptation content comparatively thin; and considering a collective commitment on short-lived "super pollutants" such as methane in the oil and gas sector, where the science base has substantially improved since GST1 and abatement costs are often net-negative.

A developing country participant supported earlier publication of technical synthesis reports, citing AI-assisted drafting as a possible tool, along with some deliberate overlap between the technical and political phases without politicising the technical phase itself, and stronger mechanisms to follow up on GST2's outcomes.

A developed country participant set out several priorities for substance:

- A platform for discussing the fossil fuel phase-out and energy transition with a strong focus on national implementation.
- NDC communication.
- Robust adaptation reporting building on the indicators as far as their current limitations allow, alongside metadata and progress on NAP implementation, which carries its own GST1-derived target that all countries have NAP implementation under way by 2030.
- Explicit attention to adaptation-mitigation co-benefits and the overshoot question as a shared mitigation and adaptation issue.

- Coherence with the Global Implementation Accelerator and the renewed Mission 1.5, both of which, the participant noted, also carry adaptation relevance and should not be treated as mitigation-only initiatives.
- Space to address loss and damage.

A developing country participant said GST2 will benefit from more information than GST1, including full BTR cycles and richer indicator data. She urged the incoming SB Chairs and technical co-facilitators to resolve straightforward procedural questions — such as the number, timing, and format of technical dialogues — quickly, rather than let them become entangled with more difficult substantive disputes. On inputs, she reiterated the importance of resolving the IPCC timing question collectively. She also noted that the mandate of the Forum on the impact of the implementation of response measures to feed into the GST had itself proved contentious, alongside continued uncertainty about how loss and damage reporting would formally feed into the GST. Informal brainstorming on GST2's outputs should begin well in advance of COP31 given how differently negotiating groups currently see this question. Seriously addressing overshoot would also mean confronting its implications for adaptation limits, finance needs, and loss and damage exposure.

A developing country participant said GST2 must be forward-looking, and not only a retrospective stocktake. The technical co-facilitators' choice of engagement tools — world cafés, posters, submissions — needed to be assessed regarding whether they translate into usable political-phase guidance, with better sequencing between the technical and political phases so the latter is not compressed into such a short period of time. Loss and damage work, largely absent from GST1, required proper reflection in GST2 given how central it has become in many countries' domestic climate conversations. She flagged a scheduling mismatch between the GST2 timeline and the NCQG's first progress report, expected around 2028. She called for early attention to resolving it, given how central means of implementation reporting will be to a credible forward-looking assessment.

A developed country participant noted delegations appeared to be starting GST2 preparation earlier than for GST1, with BTRs a direct and concrete contribution to that preparation. She cautioned against repeating the GST1 template simply because it is familiar, urging a fresh look at who GST2's underlying "audience" should be beyond Parties themselves. Supporting an integration-based lens across GST2's substantive areas — linking sectoral discussions to just transition and to synergies with the other Rio Conventions — she also called for a careful, sensitive space to discuss overshoot. She suggested GST2 should be an opportunity to ask whether the wider Paris Agreement architecture and tools remain fit for purpose.

A developing country participant agreed that early appointment of political-phase (contact group) facilitators, and stronger buy-in for the technical synthesis report, were the two clearest lessons from GST1's difficult handover. She proposed a simple three-question structure for future technical synthesis reports, modelled loosely on the Talanoa Dialogue's "where do we need to be/where are we/how do we close the gap" framing, drawing on IPCC and Party-submitted material for the first question, BTR synthesis for the second, and options analysis for the third.

The "implementation gap" identified in GST1 had been persistently underdiscussed, she said — the fact that even the mitigation measures Parties have already committed to are often

not fully implemented, meaning headline NDC ambition can overstate real progress. This, she explained, reflected a structural weakness: the UNFCCC process is comparatively well designed for treaty-making, policy design, and mutual pressure, but not for facilitating implementation itself.

She further noted that GST1 had received no dedicated technical input on international cooperation, despite it being one of only two formal GST outcome categories, alongside nationally determined enhanced action and support. The UNFCCC should use its convening legitimacy more deliberately to engage the wider international economic architecture that shapes how ambitious NDCs can be, even though it currently has little influence over those external actors.

A developed country participant supported at least three technical dialogues and called for adequate time for the technical phase, suggesting intersessional work and phase overlap to manage this. She stressed the value of starting preparation early, including through BTRs as direct GST2 contributions, and proposed integration as an organising lens across GST2's substantive areas, including with just transition considerations and with the other Rio Conventions on nature-based solutions. On overshoot, she echoed the call for a safe, careful space to explore what remains scientifically uncertain, and suggested GST2 offered a further opportunity to assess whether the process's own tools and mechanisms remain fit for purpose.

A developing country participant echoed the importance of early Presidency engagement, noting the GST1 facilitators had worked closely with the relevant COP Presidency; agreed BTRs would be a critical, comprehensive input covering both the ambition and implementation gaps; and reflected on the difficulty of deciding how the many partnerships and initiatives under the wider Action Agenda should be reflected without attempting to catalogue them all within a single decision text.

The two current facilitators of the intersessional dialogue that succeeded GST1 then offered an update. The dialogue, established to capture GST1 lessons, challenges, opportunities, barriers, and needs, including on finance, capacity building, and technology, held its first session at SB64, structured around mitigation and response measures, adaptation and loss and damage, and international cooperation and enablers, with a report in preparation. A further session is planned in 2027. One facilitator reflected that the central design challenge ahead was ensuring the next dialogue was more focused and in-depth than the first. This would require genuine prioritisation given limited time; the group was still working out which format — smaller working-group style exchange or plenary — best serves the dialogue's mandate to facilitate the sharing of experiences while still producing a report with enough ownership to be usefully referenced elsewhere.

A developing country participant recalled the shock of the "toxic, low-trust atmosphere" her delegation had encountered on first engaging with GST1 in 2023 after a change of government and stressed the importance of a more constructive tone for GST2. The "photograph" GST2 produces in 2028 may be an uncomfortable one, she cautioned, given multiple compounding gaps and a challenging global order. Parties will need to make deliberate political choice on whether to present that reality honestly or to greenwash. Loss and damage will require a more prominent place within the stocktake. Finally, the GST should

not be allowed to dominate the negotiating space for the next two years to the detriment of continued progress in other bodies and support networks, since it is intended to be one COP decision among several needed to keep the wider system functioning.

SUPPORTING IMPLEMENTATION

This session provided negotiators with a space to link their work to real-world experiences, and to reflect on how they could support implementation on the ground. It consisted of two presentations: the first, a case study of good practice on locally-led adaptation, highlighting the limits of the current climate finance model in supporting scale-up; and, the second, exploring those limits in more detail and presenting possible ways to address them.

Maureen Musya and Rex Otieno of Akiba Mashinani Trust, Kenya, presented their experience supporting the municipal government of Homa Bay, Kenya, in developing a Climate Resilient People's Adaptation – Local Physical and Land Use Development Plan.

Anju Sharma, ecbi, first presented the background. Urban citizens living in informal settlements — up to 60% of the urban population in some African cities — are among the most vulnerable to climate-related flooding, heat, and health and livelihood impacts. They rarely benefit from risk-reducing infrastructure, public services, or inclusion in formal planning processes, including adaptation planning. In response, Slum Dwellers International, a global network with national affiliates in more than 16 developing countries, had pioneered a methodology for locally-led planning in informal settlements. This was implemented in Homa Bay with strong support from the Governor, Gladys Wanga, and her government. Because the municipality had no local land use plan, climate change considerations were integrated into a Local Physical and Land Use Development Plan. Due process was followed in formally notifying the plan and securing its adoption by the county government, so it could access national budgetary resources. This made it possibly the first land use development plan led by the informal citizens of a municipality, putting the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable at the centre, Sharma said.

Presenting the planning process in more detail, Musya said around 30% of Homa Bay's population live in informal settlements, and the local economy depends on farming and fishing, both highly climate vulnerable. Before this process, the municipality had no land use plan at all, so the initiative became both a climate adaptation planning exercise and, out of necessity, the municipality's first land use and physical development plan. It integrated climate vulnerability and risk analysis with the formal statutory planning process, including a notice of intention to plan to ensure legal standing.

Musya and Otieno explained that the process began with residents themselves collecting household-level data across the settlements, with strong support and buy-in from the municipal government. More than 21,000 households were mapped, capturing lived experience and local understanding of climate impacts and generating an evidence base to support both implementation and negotiation with the county government. The process was explicitly collaborative, drawing in civil society organisations, other NGOs holding sector-specific data, and a local university. Students from Tom Mboya University were involved from the outset, both to build capacity and to give them direct experience of a genuinely community-centred planning process.

To illustrate a key climate risk, the presenters showed maps of flood risk across the municipality. Risk was unevenly distributed, with sizeable areas falling into the “high” and “very high” categories. They also showed maps illustrating what they termed a “poverty penalty” for basic services: only 14% of households have piped water, and those without pay roughly five times more per unit from private vendors. This leaves the same households simultaneously more exposed to drought-driven water scarcity and less able to recover from flood damage to property and livelihoods.

The plan, now formally notified, has opened access to national planning and implementation funds. The presenters closed by identifying the next challenge: securing the financing needed not just to implement the plan in Homa Bay but to scale the methodology across the country, so that other municipalities and counties can adopt similar inclusive approaches to adaptation planning. Project-based funding from the GCF or the Adaptation Fund was unlikely to support such scaling, they said.

Sharma explained the challenge further. A project-based approach is not suited to scaling up good practice: it is too fragmented and limited in ambition, evaluated by the success of individual projects rather than by systemic or institutional change. Capacities built for a project’s duration tend to dissolve once funding ends, she said, and success metrics such as headline counts of “people made more resilient” are unlikely to reflect what communities can sustain on their own once a project closes. As an example of the model’s limits, she cited a rule under which readiness finance from major funds cannot be used to invest in the salaries or capacity of existing government staff; funds must instead go to consultants, despite the stated goal of strengthening institutional capacity.

The Enhanced Direct Access modality was initially designed to move away from a project-based approach toward a more programmatic one, and to devolve power, subsidiarity, and accountability to the local level, she noted. However, she added, it is now in danger of being painted into a corner characterised by small grants to community groups, rather than supporting its original intention of systems change.

Sharma proposed that climate funds and the wider system shift from financing discrete projects toward supporting change in the institutional systems so that the integration of climate-resilient, adaptive planning becomes business as usual. She proposed a “National Climate Systems Roadmap”, with progress judged through periodic reviews rather than repeated proposal cycles. Projects would be only the first step of a five-rung “Systems Embedding Ladder” — demonstrate, replicate, inform policy, embed, institutionalise — used to track institutional transformation over time. A relatively modest grant helping an existing national institution, such as a development bank or social protection system, absorb climate risk into its core mandate could ultimately shape far larger volumes of investment than a standalone project.

Success twenty years from now should not be measured by the number of completed projects, Sharma concluded, but by whether ministries of finance routinely budget for climate resilience, whether local governments receive predictable climate finance through national systems, and whether communities participate directly in public finance decisions. She proposed a set of questions to guide project and roadmap design:

- How should ministries of finance allocate resources and reward resilience through fiscal transfers?
- Which institutions need reform to integrate climate risk routinely?
- Which existing institutions and processes already reach vulnerable populations, so that new parallel channels are not built where existing ones could be strengthened?
- How can local governments and communities share in investment decisions?

In the discussion that followed, several participants situated the argument within their own national or institutional experience. A developing country participant recounted serving on the board of a regional research institute that produces valuable, locally grounded research but struggles to secure funding for institutional strengthening as distinct from project-specific support. The moment was right, he suggested — including in the context of ongoing UN reform discussions — to reconsider reliance on traditional development partners as a "crutch", in favour of building local capacity directly.

A developed country participant recalled a decades-old UNFCCC decision affirming that national adaptation planning should be a continuous, iterative process integrated within national development strategies, noting the shared frustration that the system had remained largely project-based ever since. The UNFCCC community needed to find ways to translate long-standing intentions and agreements into practice.

Another developed country participant added that his country increasingly coordinates adaptation-related development cooperation through the ministry of finance, given adaptation's cross-sectoral nature. He pointed to the Global Implementation Accelerator, and to the question of whether climate funds should move toward larger, less project-based financing, as strategic issues requiring resolution. He called for stronger links to the NAP process and the NAP Implementation Alliance.

Another developing country participant welcomed the discussion as a needed complement to more abstract negotiating conversations about the GST or the GGA, warning of the risk of negotiators becoming "armchair intellectuals" disconnected from implementation reality. Funds, such as the GCF. can take a long time to approve projects because of due diligence requirements. Citing a bilateral programmatic support relationship and a national disaster response mechanism using country systems, he also pointed to a structural incentive problem. He mentioned that a project budgeting the bulk of its funds for international or national consultants tends to be approved without difficulty, while a project seeking to direct that same money toward building government, civil society, or citizen capacity attracts scrutiny. This raises the question of whether the system is really building national capacity or simply supporting consultants.

A developing country participant welcomed the demonstration that affected communities are not simply waiting for external projects but organising to help themselves.

Another developing country participant said nearly three decades of adaptation implementation experience, beginning with the early National Adaptation Programmes of Action, needed to be documented and learned from, noting many completed activities show little lasting impact once evaluated. Planning must be genuinely integrated, and must

account for whole catchments, not just the lower-catchment areas where informal settlements are typically concentrated. It must also square new land use plans with existing government master plans. Integration also needs to extend to resource allocation, mobilisation, budgeting, and reporting, rather than being run through standalone project offices.

He cited an estimate that less than 20% of climate finance reaches local communities under current practice, with the remainder absorbed by intermediaries. He noted that county-level land use planning needs to be harmonised across whole river basins to avoid maladaptive, catchment-blind interventions, citing a Malawi flood-protection example that was undermined because upstream catchment areas were left untreated.

Responding to a question on whether national coordination mechanisms were necessary, Sharma said a coordination and consolidation role was needed to counter fragmentation, but with a strong commitment to supporting devolution rather than centralising governance. Coordination committees and platforms, such as the new Country Platforms, have been tried before but are difficult to sustain and tend to founder on inter-ministerial politics. The more durable investment, she said, is in the institutions, capacities, and policies that help different sectors and actors internalise climate change, rather than in the coordinating body itself.

A developed country participant representing a donor agency praised the granularity of the Homa Bay data, noting that the water-price disparity both demonstrated an injustice and revealed a viable investment opportunity that could attract blended public and private finance. Country platforms, done well, should not create new committees but organise discussion and investment opportunity among governments, private actors, and communities. He cited energy-transition country platforms in Brazil and South Africa as more developed examples than anything yet seen on adaptation, which he saw as inherently more localised and harder to institutionalise nationally.

He cautioned against opposing big infrastructure projects and "programmatic" approaches, which both have a role to play, citing a large water-access investment in Jordan and an electrification project in Malawi that uses hydropower instead of coal. He also noted that donors ultimately need indicators of success they can report to domestic taxpayers, a tension he suggested could be resolved by measuring community-verified impact rather than superficial output metrics.

In response, Sharma agreed that badly designed key performance indicators can distort systems, but said credible, community-driven assessments of real-life impact are more persuasive to taxpayers than metrics that end up serving reporting requirements. Accountability to climate-affected communities, she added, should be as important as accountability to taxpayers.

A developing country participant said different countries have distinct, often already-functioning, coordination mechanisms which, though not labelled Country Platforms, perform an equivalent function. She cautioned against reinventing structures that already exist rather than strengthening the existing ones. She described her country's evolution from depending on external consultants for its first national communication to building a well-coordinated, multi-stakeholder national reporting system spanning civil society and the

private sector. The NAP chapter on youth engagement, for instance, was developed by young people themselves but coordinated through the central government.

Addressing another question on building the right conditions to scale, Sharma cited successful cases such as India's watershed programme and microfinance programmes in South Asia. These and other case studies showed that successful scaling depends on: involving the right actors, especially government, from the outset; securing genuine buy-in from all stakeholders; and building capacity intended to outlast individual projects through institutionalisation.

A developing country participant noted the challenge of mainstreaming adaptation across line ministries that were often already undertaking climate-relevant work without labelling it as such, citing a national figure of roughly 5.6% of GDP spent on adaptation-relevant activity across 40 to 50 central ministries. This work needed to be better recognised and connected rather than newly invented. She also described how lessons from national-level projects had in some cases fed upward into local government development planning at the district level.

A developing country participant cautioned against multilateral development banks and bilateral donors pushing new country platform terminology where functioning coordination mechanisms already exist, and called for building on what already exists.

THE FUND FOR RESPONDING TO LOSS AND DAMAGE

Lipika Roy, India, presented the Fellows' discussion on loss and damage. Describing the evolution of the loss and damage agenda under the UNFCCC from the Warsaw International Mechanism, through the Santiago Network, to the operationalisation of the FRLD, Roy noted the focus had progressively shifted from institution-building toward delivery.

She reported that COP30 had welcomed the Board's progress in establishing the Bridging Interim Modalities (BIM), the Fund's first grant window for 2025 and 2026. BIM is designed to support bottom-up, country-led and country-owned responses, and carries an envelope of US$250 million for the 2025–2026 start-up period, with individual funding requests expected in the range of US$5–20 million. Roy noted an emphasis on grants, rather than instruments that risk aggravating debt stress, and on multiple access routes, including through accredited entities and direct government access.

The first funding cycle produced a striking scale of demand. Of 198 requests received, 176 from 119 countries constituted the formal BIM pipeline, totalling around US$2.8 billion — roughly ten times the available envelope. The regional distribution was approximately US$1.4 billion in requests from Africa, US$751.1 million from the Asia-Pacific region, US$611 million from Latin America and the Caribbean, and US$54.3 million from Eastern Europe. Roughly 60.8% of the pipeline originated from SIDS, for whom 50% of the BIM envelope has been reserved.

Roy noted the Board had agreed, at its ninth meeting, not to allocate funding on a first-come, first-served basis, but to consider the full pipeline before approvals begin, with the next Board meeting scheduled for December 2026. She framed four issues for discussion:

- The scale of demand relative to available resources.
- The urgency of converting pledges into confirmed, predictable contributions.
- The ambition for an accelerated resource mobilisation and replenishment process by 2027.
- How to reflect loss and damage in GST2, which connects the FRLD to the wider assessment of collective progress, and, in the second round of BTRs, where loss and damage reporting guidance is now being developed.

During the discussion, a developed country participant acknowledged the high level of demand relative to available resources. The Board had secured roughly an additional US$100 million for the BIM at its most recent meeting, she reported. She identified the Fund's need to define its distinct niche within a crowded climate finance architecture as a central unresolved challenge — complicated by the absence of a single agreed definition of loss and damage and its evident continuum with adaptation. A related, unresolved question is complementarity with the Adaptation Fund, the GCF, and the GEF, she added. She stressed her country's continued strong commitment to the FRLD, alongside the need for rapid operationalisation and fair, timely treatment of the pipeline.

Another developed country participant cautioned that the Board had not yet formally decided on everything that would enter the pipeline, so headline demand figures should be viewed with some caution — though he agreed the demand was nonetheless overwhelming. As an independent fund with an independent Board, the Fund must manage its own operations; negotiators' role, in his view, is chiefly to provide guidance. He echoed concerns about the complexity of the wider loss and damage architecture, spanning the Fund, the Warsaw International Mechanism, and the Santiago Network. He suggested that in the current UNFCCC budget environment a broader conversation about whether every constituted body still demonstrates clear value added was warranted.

A developing country participant noted that the reality on the ground reflects both diminishing progress on mitigation and, as a result, more focus in developing countries on loss and damage rather than on adaptation, as loss and damage needs have grown sharply. He cautioned against treating the FRLD as the sole vehicle for addressing loss and damage, given its relatively small scale, and noted the NCQG's limited explicit hook for loss and damage, via a reference to tripling the outflows of relevant funds including the FRLD. GST2 was an important opportunity to assess both the scale of loss and damage support delivered and the direction of travel needed.

Another developed country participant emphasised that ambitious, 1.5-aligned mitigation remains the most effective way to limit future loss and damage. She recalled that the 2022 COP decision established "arrangements", in the plural, for loss and damage funding, not a single fund. She urged broadening the conversation to mobilise finance from the wider humanitarian and development finance landscape — including a UN Secretary-General-led convening of UN agencies on loss and damage, which had been called for but had not, in her understanding, been fully realised.

A developing country participant described the FRLD as one of the regime's clear success stories, moving from its creation in 2022 to a position where disbursement was becoming possible by late 2026. She commented that this was faster than for previous funds, despite early difficulties over its relationship with the World Bank as interim trustee and secretariat host. She nonetheless stressed the severity of the resourcing gap: roughly US$342 million confirmed against US$2.8 billion in requests from 119 countries, a nearly eight-fold shortfall. Of an initial pledge of roughly US$860–900 million announced at the opening of COP28, a substantial portion had not been transferred to the Fund. This, she said, is a provision problem rather than a mobilisation problem, especially given that even the Adaptation Fund's own mobilisation target of US$300 million had recently fallen short, raising only US$135 million. GST2 would need to prioritise loss and damage as an emerging and unavoidable reality of the current phase of climate impacts, grounded in equity and a commitment to leaving no one behind.

A developed country participant highlighted an unresolved lack of cooperation between the Santiago Network's technical assistance function and the Fund's project pipeline. The participant noted limited follow-through on the Secretary-General convening of relevant UN agencies.

A participant representing Nepal spoke directly to the ongoing flooding disaster in his country, thanking neighbouring and other countries for immediate bilateral support. He cautioned that international attention typically fades quickly after such events, as it did in the aftermath of the 2022 Pakistan floods, even as the scientific link to rising temperatures and glacial melt becomes increasingly clearer. He described the near-total loss of an automated flood early-warning system, destroyed by the very flooding it was meant to monitor, and noted that existing, proven technologies for early warning and evacuation are simply not sufficiently resourced or accessible. He highlighted the under-resourcing of the Santiago Network's technical assistance function relative to demand, citing an overwhelming response to a recent call for proposals covering Nepal and Bhutan. He observed that linking loss and damage discussions to the GST tends to become entangled with the separate and more politically fraught issue of response measures. He proposed consideration of an extraordinary FRLD Board meeting to address the Nepal situation directly. No country, he said, should have to depend indefinitely on ad hoc bilateral support after a disaster.

Innovative and Domestic Sources of Finance for Loss and Damage

Müller presented his work on the Climate Solidarity Alliance for loss and damage funding. He described more than twenty years of work on innovative climate finance sources, including a 2008 proposal by the LDC Group for an international air passenger adaptation levy, modelled on a French air-ticket solidarity levy for HIV/AIDS. Since 2023, that work had been reoriented toward loss and damage under the banner of a Climate Solidarity Alliance.

The core idea, he explained, is that countries expecting to receive solidarity support would establish domestic climate solidarity trust funds, which are easier to manage and more transparent than direct budget support and more attractive to private and philanthropic funders, who typically will not provide budget support. How alliance members that provide

support choose to raise their own contributions is left to them. He cited Fiji's 2019 Climate Relocation of Communities Trust Fund, created in response to sea-level-driven relocation needs and funded through a range of domestic tourism-linked levies on tourist vessels, licensed bars, nightclubs, bistros, and coffee shops. Fijian officials had told him directly that a country cannot wait for external finance to prepare for a core responsibility such as civil protection, even while also seeking to leverage additional external resources.

Müller described a "solidarity bonus mechanism", under which an alliance member expecting to receive support might commit a domestic contribution; providing members would then match it, contributing directly to the recipient's domestic trust fund, with an additional incentive bonus. The structure is intended to channel solidarity beyond the alliance's own membership, including potentially into the FRLD itself. He linked this to a "Premium Flyers Solidarity Coalition", involving African and European countries, which levies charges on premium — business and first class, not economy — airline tickets.

Fiji and the Maldives were already implementing similar measures, Müller noted, and further developed-country participation, including reportedly from a Nordic country, was expected. The idea traced back to the 2023 and 2025 Africa Climate Summits, and to a Paris financing summit, the 2023 Summit for a New Global Financing Pact, which was focused on reforming the international financial architecture. It also drew on an earlier international taxation task force, since renamed, on solidarity levies, of which he had been an expert group member. He recounted seeking Brazilian participation in the aviation levy coalition on the strength of a personal rapport between two heads of state, and being told by a senior diplomat that such a rapport was not, on its own, a sufficient basis for Brazilian foreign policy commitments, which tend to prioritise regional partners. This, he suggested, helps explain why the coalition has so far taken a more regional, Africa–Europe form.

At Müller's invitation, Ali Mohamed, Kenya, described his country's Financing Locally-Led Climate Action (FLLoCA) programme, which pairs a nationally administered programme account with dedicated special-purpose accounts at the county level, modelled on its County Climate Change Funds established over the past decade. Kenya was among the first countries to receive multilateral development bank support of this kind, including from the World Bank, which was subsequently supplemented by bilateral grant and concessional contributions from several European donors. Kenyan law now requires each of the country's 47 devolved county governments to establish its own climate change fund, financed in part from a share of national and county budgets. However, budgeted resources alone would never be sufficient, he stressed, given constrained fiscal space across the region. He pointed to newer instruments, such as a national investment fund and discussion of a sovereign wealth fund, as ways of mobilising resources for major climate-related programmes outside the constraints of annual budgets.

Endalew presented Ethiopia's newly established national disaster response fund. He said it grew out of an earlier, more narrowly projectised facility for adaptation and mitigation implementation that had proven unsustainable, an experience that prompted a shift toward integrating climate goals directly into national medium- and short-term planning. The fund was established over the past year, partly in response to the withdrawal of a major bilateral aid donor.

Endale described a governance arrangement drawing on a wide base of domestic revenue streams, including bank loan fees, insurance premiums, digital banking transaction charges, business licence and authentication fees, and levies on tobacco, chemical sales, and lotteries. They also include a small levy on domestic flights, roughly US$1 per ticket, spread across more than thirty domestic airports, and a very small per-litre levy on fuel sales. Each individual charge is negligible to the payer, he explained, but material in aggregate.

He underscored that Ethiopia's NDC requires more than US$150 billion, far beyond what multilateral and bilateral channels currently provide, and domestic innovative finance mechanisms should be seen as complementary to, not a replacement for, international support. He also described Ethiopia's Green Legacy tree-planting initiative, for which the national parliament has approved allocating 0.5–1% of annual federal revenue, expected to mobilise around US$200 million a year, to sustain reforestation and land rehabilitation. Those activities had already resulted in more than 50 billion trees planted over five years. Funding is tied to reporting on implementation work plans, and framed as complementary to, rather than a substitute for, carbon market finance.

In the discussion that followed, a developed country participant welcomed the systematic approach to loss and damage resource collection, noting his own country's difficulty over the past year in persuading fellow European countries to join an aviation levy coalition launched together with Kenya and Spain. Identifying genuine "fiscal opportunity" — new revenue sources that governments can defend domestically — remains the central constraint, he said, stressing the importance of engaging finance ministers directly and building on related international processes, such as polluter-pays-oriented finance initiatives associated with recent G7 meetings and the upcoming UK-hosted G20 in 2027. He offered to help connect Ethiopian and Kenyan counterparts with European finance ministries to explain how the domestic mechanisms work.

Another developing country participant welcomed the examples as evidence of what is achievable once countries actively look for funding streams, while noting the underlying unfairness that developing countries and LDCs are, in effect, expected to fund core state responsibilities for public safety from their own constrained resources. He echoed the call to work through finance ministries and singled out aviation taxation as comparatively low-hanging fruit, since it functions as a tax on wealthier travellers and because aviation fuel, kerosene, remains largely untaxed internationally.

Session moderator Frode Neergaard, ecbi Advisory Group member, said the two case studies demonstrate that innovative finance mechanisms work, and that the ecbi Seminar series itself has a track record of generating ideas that go on to shape formal outcomes — a theme picked up directly in the next session.

ECBI: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE WORK

Kishan Kumarsingh, Head of the ecbi Fellowship and Training Programme, presented the history, milestones, and impact of the ecbi Seminar series over the past two decades. He noted the Seminars' critical role, *inter alia*, in the 2007 operationalisation of the Kyoto Protocol's Adaptation Fund, establishment of the SCF, the development and operationalisation of the Enhanced Direct Access modality, the resolution of common

adaptation and mitigation reporting timeframes, and establishment of the FRLD. He said these examples, elaborated in a blog on ecbi, illustrated the important role of sustained, informal, Chatham House Rule engagement among practitioners in shaping formal multilateral outcomes over time.

Müller then presented on ecbi's current work, specifically on reforming the UNFCCC process. He elaborated on what he termed the "jamboree" problem: the scale of COP participation. COPs had, without any deliberate design, expanded from governing body sessions into an amalgam of negotiations, leaders' summits, and large trade fair-style expositions with pavilions. This creates three distinct problems: an equity problem, since the smallest and poorest countries cannot realistically host an event of this scale, undermining fair rotation of the COP presidency; a loss of the informal, serendipitous networking value that smaller sessions used to provide; and a reputational risk, since an event bringing up to 100,000 people together to produce a comparatively modest negotiated outcome risks bringing the UN system itself into disrepute.

He proposed conceptually separating the three elements: the COP sessions, COP Presidency Summits, and COP Presidency Expos, the pavilions and associated large-scale programming. He suggested the latter two elements might instead be co-located with regional Climate Weeks held in the region of the sitting COP presidency. This would allow the formal sessions to become more manageable with participation in the 5000 range without needing to impose an explicit cap on observer access. He presented data showing participant numbers roughly doubling after each COP associated with a new treaty (Kyoto, an unsuccessful attempt at Copenhagen, and Paris) before stagnating. This was followed by exponential growth beginning with the first non-treaty COP to feature a large leaders' summit in Glasgow, UK, in 2021. He attributed this growth in part to a self-reinforcing "fear of missing out" dynamic. He also referenced a companion discussion paper by Ovais Samad, former UNFCCC Executive Secretary, addressing how Climate Weeks themselves might be reimagined, including the idea of holding at least one of the Secretariat-organised Climate Weeks in the region of the sitting Presidency.

REIMAGINING THE UNFCCC PROCESS

The final substantive presentation introduced an ecbi paper proposing a broader reform of the UNFCCC's working methods. It was presented by the co-authors of the paper, Paul Watkinson, former Chief Climate Negotiator, France, and Stefan Ruchti-Crowley, former Head of Environment, Energy and Health at the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

The presenters noted that while the Paris Agreement and the wider UNFCCC regime have successfully delivered a global framework, the central current challenge is implementation. The system, in their assessment, struggles to adapt to changing circumstances, translate support into delivery, and manage the proliferation of overlapping institutions and processes that have accumulated without an overall design.

They identified four dimensions of what they called a structural mismatch:

- Negotiation dominates other modes of engagement.

- Agendas are overcrowded.
- Implementing practitioners are largely absent from the process.
- Existing cooperative tools are underused.

They proposed four tools for reform, stressing that none implied any change to the mandate of the Convention or the Paris Agreement, only to working methods:

- Streamlining and de-cluttering crowded and overlapping agendas.
- Organising the programme of work more strategically, including through a multi-year work programme.
- Explicitly recognising that not every issue requires a negotiated outcome, and creating more space for peer exchange and shared learning where it does not.
- Pursuing structural changes to broaden participation, in particular making the process more attractive and useful to implementing practitioners rather than exclusively to diplomats.

They acknowledged that reform faces real resistance, since it requires Parties and institutions to question their own roles, but said a combination of pressures made some degree of change all but inevitable: a genuine risk of major budget constraints beyond the following two-year budget cycle; and rising public, scientific, and political dissatisfaction with the lack of visible progress. That left open only the question of who would provide the leadership to drive it, with suggestions including the COP Presidencies, SB Chairs, COP Bureau, and Secretariat.

In the ensuing discussion, a developed country participant called for situating the reform conversation within the wider landscape of the three Rio Conventions and the proliferating array of other UN-linked summits, such as ocean summits and the annual UN Secretary-General's Climate Summit, asking how these pieces fit together and where political attention should be directed. He distinguished two functions that current arrangements conflate: showcasing and sharing best practices, which he associated with Climate Weeks and which, in his view, need to be more local and specific; and a more technical accountability function, delivered through transparency frameworks that verify whether commitments are being met. Few UN processes successfully combine both functions coherently, he noted, which is a central design question for any reform.

A developing country participant said the growth in the size of the COPs reflects the ongoing increase in climate change's political salience, pointing to the parallel proliferation of city-level Climate Weeks around the world, including recent and forthcoming examples in Africa. He questioned the practical influence of leaders' summits held immediately before negotiating sessions, and cautioned against further proliferation of overlapping constituted bodies, citing existing duplication across various committees and mechanisms where new proposed structures might instead be absorbed by existing ones. He also questioned the proposal to separate the negotiations from climate action programming, since the two increasingly reinforce one another.

Responding, Watkinson agreed on the need for "better COPs" rather than necessarily smaller ones. He welcomed the restructuring of the Action Agenda undertaken by the COP30 Presidency as a valuable precedent for future presidencies to build on. He also noted that closer synergy between the action agenda and the formal negotiating process — including

using leaders' attendance to reinforce delivery messages rather than to simply make statements — was the more productive direction of travel.

A developing country participant highlighted modest reforms already delivering results: strict speaking-time limits and moving the deadline for closing plenary statements earlier in the Bonn sessions. Reform must be judged against its ultimate purpose — delivering the goals of the Paris Agreement, given that current NDC and finance commitments both fall short of what is needed — and should not be treated as an end in itself. He flagged the capacity implications for some delegations, should any part of the process be separated from the other components.

A developed country participant reflected that the word "reform" itself carries different meanings for different Parties and needs to be "demystified". She called for a stepwise approach beginning with organisational "quick wins". Noting that the coming UNFCCC budget negotiations were likely to sharpen the debate regardless, she also highlighted the practical burden that far-flung Climate Week venues place on smaller delegations' capacity to participate.

A developed country participant observed that some existing bodies, such as the Adaptation Committee, are no longer functioning actively even though their underlying mandates remain valid. GST2 offers a natural opportunity to review the institutional architecture, he said, calling for precise, disciplined mandate drafting, given that all bodies in the process trace back to a mandate Parties themselves created.

A developing country participant noted that while the broad diagnosis — a shift from negotiation toward implementation — is widely shared, the meaning of "implementation" is not. One meaning concerns compliance with the Paris Agreement's own procedural obligations: communicating NDCs and adaptation communications, preparing NAPs, and reporting through BTRs. Many countries still lack the institutional arrangements for this. A second, distinct meaning concerns real-world domestic mitigation and adaptation action, which depends heavily on financial and technology actors outside the UNFCCC's remit. The proposed reform "toolbox" needs to address explicitly how the process engages those outside actors, he noted, citing the international dimension of the JTM discussion as one example. Without that engagement, the implementation gap will persist regardless of process reform.

A developing country participant welcomed the paper as a thorough and largely accurate diagnosis, noting that several of its proposed remedies were already happening organically, and citing the Mission 1.5 initiative, the Global Implementation Accelerator, and Presidency roadmaps as existing "alternative modalities". She also cited the Facilitative Multilateral Consideration of Progress under the ETF as an existing, under-recognised forum for peer learning rather than a box-ticking exercise.

She pushed back, however, on any suggestion that delegations should favour practitioners over diplomats: it is not for others to tell sovereign states who should represent them, and language barriers affect sectoral ministers and practitioners as much as diplomats. Reform stalls not for lack of good ideas, she said, but because not every Party wants it — some benefit from the process's complexity as a means of controlling the pace of both negotiations and climate action. A COP Presidency needs to make reform an explicit priority and convene

heads of delegation directly, since the existing arrangements for intergovernmental meetings track, staffed by junior negotiators, is not equipped to drive structural change. She further warned that the steady expansion of the agenda into adjacent policy areas, such as human rights, children's rights, and minority rights, is compounding the capacity challenge faced by delegations: these areas are appropriate to other UN bodies but strain an agreement not designed around a rights framework. She also highlighted the process's continued reliance on provisional, rather than permanent, rules of procedure as a structural vulnerability, allowing any Party to block a COP by withholding consensus on their adoption, alongside chronic late adoption of the agenda itself.

Several additional participants provided brief interventions. One called for agreeing on quick, achievable wins — such as simplifying and cleaning up mandates and agenda items — and for sustained engagement with the Secretariat, the Presidencies, and the SB chairs to build momentum for further change. Another asked what role the Executive Secretary, alongside the COP Presidencies, should play in driving reform, warning that framing reform primarily around cost risks creating a blind spot around the separate question of whether the system works, and for whom. She called for more systematic, rather than ad hoc, engagement with entities outside the regime, on whose cooperation implementation ultimately depends.

Another developing country participant stressed the importance of protecting the process's consensus-based, near-universal and inclusive character — in particular the right of smaller and more vulnerable countries to raise agenda items reflecting years of effort — even while pursuing efficiency. He suggested drawing lessons from other UN bodies' working methods and reform efforts, citing the Human Rights Council's long-running agenda item on the subject.

A participant cautioned that any criterion used to guide a rationalisation exercise, whether cost or coherence, tends to be self-reinforcing in favour of whatever already exists, since coherence is inevitably judged against the existing map of institutions. She urged Parties to agree on the criteria for any such exercise before undertaking it, rather than after, to avoid producing an answer to a question no one actually asked.

Closing the session and the Seminar, the Watkinson and Ruchti-Crowley agreed that a narrowly cost-driven framing was the wrong starting point: the better question was whether the process delivers real-world results, and how that could be better tracked and shared. Meaningful change would require sustained leadership from the COP Presidencies, continuity of institutional memory from the Secretariat, and heads of delegation accepting collective responsibility for the process's effectiveness — ultimately what all Parties will be judged on.

FEEDBACK

In the closing session, participants credited the value of the Oxford Seminar as a space where participants can speak in a personal capacity, candidly, and without attribution — a format that has repeatedly proven able to feed constructive ideas back into the formal process over time.

Additional feedback was provided through feedback forms. The majority of respondents confirmed that the event achieved its central aim of helping participants explain and understand each other's views. Participants from both developing and European countries singled out the non-negotiating setting, the Chatham House Rule, and the time spent together outside sessions (over meals, drinks, and social events) as where much of the Seminar's value was created. Several described the relationships built at Oxford as something they would carry directly into the COP.

Respondents noted that the distinctive value of the Oxford Seminar lay in understanding why those positions are held. "The value was not simply in hearing positions, which we already do in the formal process, but in understanding why people hold them, testing ideas without immediately negotiating text, and identifying where apparent disagreements are substantive and where they may be overcome through better framing or institutional design," one developing country participant wrote.

"I left feeling I understand much more about colleagues and where they are coming from and had built some trust and engagement that we could build on at COP," a European participant wrote.

Respondents valued the depth of the discussions on climate finance, adaptation, loss and damage, just transition, markets and the GST, and several found the sessions on implementation and the future of the COPs and the UNFCCC process thought-provoking and constructive. "A space is provided not only in better understanding positions, but to find solutions and potentially unlock difficult areas in the negotiations," another developing country participant wrote.

Some participants highlighted the event's potential to shape national processes as well as the international negotiations. "It not only strengthens our individual capacities as negotiators; it can also multiply its impact when we return to our countries," one developing country participant wrote. "Each of us has the opportunity to bring those lessons into national decision-making, the preparation of negotiating positions, and, ultimately, into the implementation of climate action at national and local levels."

"We did not always agree, but we came away understanding each other's concerns much better… That kind of honest conversation, where you understand not only what someone's position is, but why they hold it, was one of the Seminar's greatest strengths," another developing country participant noted.

"ecbi sessions at Oxford are edifying, inspiring, well-curated, and making everyone wanting to intervene all the time — a valued space to reflect on the climate regime and on what we can achieve together," another developing country participant wrote.

"I strongly believe that fostering such trust and collegiality is not merely beneficial, but essential to creating the conditions for constructive dialogue, bridging differences, and ultimately building the consensus needed to deliver meaningful outcomes in climate negotiations," wrote a COP Presidency team member.

Feedback on logistics was almost uniformly excellent, with many respondents describing the arrangements as “perfect”.