

ADVANCING MITIGATION OUTCOMES FOR COP27: THE MITIGATION WORK PROGRAMME AND THE MINISTERIAL ROUNDTABLE



Kaveh Guilanpour, C2ES

Catalina Cecchi Hucke, C2ES

CONTEXT

One of the stated aims of the Presidency for the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP) in advance of Glasgow was to keep “1.5 alive.” In other words, that the Glasgow outcome should maintain the possibility of keeping global temperature increases within the 1.5 degree C limit in the Paris Agreement. Coming out of Glasgow, commentators were generally of the view that the COP26 outcome had just about achieved that.

The recent report of Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) Working Group III (WGIII) contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report confirms that achieving the long-term temperature goal of the Paris Agreement remains possible and describes pathways for doing so.¹ At the same time, it is clear that without the full implementation of current Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and a significant enhancement of climate action beyond the ambition they currently represent, achieving this goal will not be possible.

Reflecting these realities, the main mitigation outcomes from COP26, as set out in decision 1/CMA.3,² include:

- Paragraph 22: “*Recognizes* that limiting global warming to 1.5°C requires rapid, deep and sustained reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions, including reducing global carbon dioxide emissions by 45 per cent by 2030 relative to the 2010 level and to net zero around mid-century as well as deep reductions in other greenhouse gases”
- Paragraph 23: “Also recognizes that this requires accelerated action in this critical decade, on the basis of the best available scientific knowledge and

equity, reflecting common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities in the light of different national circumstances and in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty”

- Paragraph 26: “Emphasizes the urgent need for Parties to increase their efforts to collectively reduce emissions through accelerated action and implementation of domestic mitigation measures in accordance with Article 4, paragraph 2, of the Paris Agreement”
- Paragraph 27: “Decides to establish a work programme to urgently scale up mitigation ambition and implementation in this critical decade and requests the Subsidiary Body for Implementation and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice to recommend a draft decision on this matter for consideration and adoption by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement at its fourth session, in a manner that complements the global stocktake”
- Paragraph 29: “Recalls Article 3 and Article 4, paragraphs 3, 4, 5 and 11, of the Paris Agreement and requests Parties to revisit and strengthen the 2030 targets in their nationally determined contributions as necessary to align with the Paris Agreement temperature goal by the end of 2022, taking into account different national circumstances”
- Paragraph 31: “Decides to convene an annual high-level ministerial roundtable on pre-2030 ambition, beginning at the fourth session of the Conference of

the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement”

- Paragraph 32: “Urges Parties that have not yet done so to communicate, by the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement, long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies referred to in Article 4, paragraph 19, of the Paris Agreement towards just transitions to net zero emissions by or around mid-century, taking into account different national circumstances”
- Paragraph 36: “Calls upon Parties to accelerate the development, deployment and dissemination of technologies, and the adoption of policies, to transition towards low-emission energy systems, including by rapidly scaling up the deployment of clean power generation and energy efficiency measures, including accelerating efforts towards the phasedown of unabated coal power and phase-out of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies, while providing targeted support to the poorest and most vulnerable in line with national circumstances and recognizing the need for support toward a just transition”

Given the mitigation outcomes from COP26 and the context of the latest reports of the IPCC, expectations will be high for COP27 in Sharm-el-Sheikh to deliver a clear signal of progress on mitigation ambition and implementation. There will also be expectations that the Ministerial Roundtable (MRT) and Mitigation Work Programme (MWP) will accelerate enhanced mitigation action, including on the basis of the global picture presented by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) synthesis reports on NDCs and long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies (LTS).

Delivering on these expectations will be an important measure of success at COP27. At the same time, COP27 will also need to show progress in areas aside from mitigation, including the work coming out of Glasgow that is not mandated to deliver in Sharm-el-Sheikh.

This note focuses on how to effectively deliver the Glasgow mandates on the MWP and the MRT.

PAST EXPERIENCE

As the Glasgow work is taken forward, it will be important to avoid reinventing the wheel. It also needs to be borne in mind that agreeing the MWP at COP27 will involve the adoption of a process decision (and not a substantive outcome). This is nothing new to the UNFCCC, and there are well known choices that will have to be made about the conduct and modalities of the MWP.

Similarly, the UNFCCC is well accustomed to hosting ministerial roundtables.

In that context, inspiration could be sought from past experience. For example, at COP23, Parties decided that the COP24 stocktake on pre-2020 implementation and ambition would use a format similar to the 2018 Talanoa Dialogue. The stocktake was structured in two parts: a technical meeting in the first week of COP24 and a high-level meeting in the second week of COP24. Furthermore, Parties decided that the COP24 stocktake, would consider, *inter alia*:

- the inputs of the COP, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP), the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI), the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA), the constituted bodies under the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol, and the operating entities of the Financial Mechanism
- the mitigation efforts of Parties in the pre-2020 period
- the provision of support in the pre-2020 period
- the work of the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action, which includes the summaries for policymakers of the technical examination processes and the yearbooks on climate action prepared by the High-Level Champions (HLCs).

Additional stocktakes on pre-2020 implementation and ambition were held at COP24 and COP25.

In 2020, the UN Climate Dialogues hosted a virtual roundtable on pre-2020 implementation and ambition.³ The roundtable was set up to start with short ice-breaker presentations.⁴ Participants provided updates on the status of pre-2020 implementation and ambition, considering aspects relating to mitigation, adaptation, and means of implementation. Following these presentations, participants engaged in focused discussions that, based

on pre-2020 experiences, addressed good practices and lessons learned for accelerating greenhouse gas emission reduction, strengthening resilience, and mobilizing support, including climate finance and shifting financial flows toward low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development. A representative mix of Parties and non-Party stakeholders (NPS) were invited to participate in the ministerial discussion and the roundtable was livestreamed.

Additionally, other past processes could provide inspiration for how to organize the MWP and the MRT, such as:

- The technical process and political segment of the Talanoa Dialogue at COP22, which was organized around the guiding questions of: “Where are we? Where do we want to go? How do we get there?”⁵
- The groundbreaking 2019 UN Climate Action Summit, which invited Parties and NPS to explore solutions to advance climate ambition across mitigation, adaptation & resilience, and finance.⁶ The adaptation work was co-led by the United Kingdom and Egypt, now COP26 Presidency and incoming COP27 Presidency, respectively, both of whom might have valuable experience to share.

THE MITIGATION WORK PROGRAMME

CONTEXT OF THE MWP

Considering the recent IPCC reports, the MWP will be a key part of maintaining the momentum on mitigation coming out of COP26; it is also a critical expected deliverable for COP27. The 56th session of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies (SBs) meetings in June will be an important moment toward agreeing the MWP in Sharm el-Sheikh.

At the same time, and as noted above, it is important to recognize that COP27 is only expected to deliver a procedural decision to operationalize the MWP. By itself, this decision will not respond to the more urgent expectations generated in light of the IPCC WGIII report. There seems to be some confusion and false expectations, including among NPS and civil society, that the MWP will achieve immediate results.

In that context it should be recalled that, as noted above, delivering on the MWP is not the only mandate

coming out of COP26, and COP27 will need to show progress and deliver in relation to these other mandates as well, including in relation to NDC updates, LTS, and implementation. The next UNFCCC NDC synthesis report must reflect that urgency by showing progress on mitigation action. Effective use of the SBs, as well as fora outside the UNFCCC, is needed to make progress in relation to these mandates as well.

The COP26 mandate does not provide any guidance in relation to the MWP, other than it is to “...urgently scale up mitigation ambition and implementation in this critical decade ... in a manner that complements the global stocktake.” Parties have yet to decide how the MWP should do this.

The issue of the MWP will be taken up at the 56th Subsidiary Bodies Session in June (SB56) under a joint SBI and SBSTA agenda item.⁷ Recently, SBSTA and SBI scenario notes were published indicating that a pair of co-facilitators would be designated to help guide discussions on the work program’s scope and modalities.⁸ It will be important for the MWP to add value to and complement the global stocktake (GST) and not lead to duplication of efforts, as highlighted by Parties during the informal consultations with heads of delegation convened by the COP26 and 27 Presidencies in April 2022.

The MWP will need to deliver on both aspects of its mandate—namely, scaling up ambition and implementation in this critical decade—and will need to effectively contribute to an overall narrative of commitment to doing so. To be practical, the MWP will also need to look at how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while not negatively impacting economic growth.

GENERAL MWP DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

While the design and adoption of the MWP will require negotiation, once established, the MWP itself should not be a forum for negotiation or political discussion, which would be duplicative and unhelpful in delivering on its mandate. Related to this, the MWP should respect existing mandates under the Paris Agreement and avoid replicating other processes under the UNFCCC. The MWP should also respect national sovereignty—including in relation to the updating of NDCs.

Moreover, the MWP should be flexible and capable of adapting over time to address emerging priorities.

The challenges (and opportunities) posed by delivering on the mitigation mandates coming out of COP26,

including in relation to the MWP, could be conceptually arranged in three tiers: (i) the strategic, which engages global political governance and sets goals at the national level; (ii) domestic policymaking; and (iii) technology and solutions development.

The middle tier—domestic policymaking—is critical to implementation, and arguably poses the greatest challenges, which are greatest in developing countries seeking to transition to low-carbon economies. As such, this tier should be a key focus—arguably the main focus—of the MWP, given the urgency of using this decisive decade effectively to transition to net-zero.

Aside from implementation, the MWP will also need to be effective in scaling up ambition—and as such, its work should also inform the updating of NDCs in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement.

To be most effective, the MWP could usefully aim to:

- generate discussions that are facilitative, constructive, innovative, and catalytic
- be inclusive and ensure a diversity of participation, including by policymakers and implementers
- generate clear signals that support national processes and are of practical use to the domestic policymaking
- explore, elucidate, and highlight the greatest, most cost-effective and scalable mitigation opportunities/potential, as well as enable practical pathways to help countries implement their NDCs and identify scope for enhanced action, including by:
 - hosting thematic workshops
 - sharing of best practice and lessons learned, including in relation to overcoming challenges
 - considering sectoral approaches
 - effectively involving NPS and the HLCs
 - considering a regional approach
 - drawing on the work of the HLCs (e.g., Climate Action Pathways and 2030 Breakthroughs)
 - developing a menu of best practice and approaches as examples
- track progress against commitments made by Parties and NPS outside of the formal multilateral process and explore how they might form part of NDC updates
- address issues of equity and sustainable development
- explore synergies with adaptation

- take into account the latest science
- involve external expertise, as appropriate.

The MWP could include a series of thematic workshops or similar settings to highlight cutting-edge approaches (both policies and technologies) that are proven to work. A good starting point for themes to explore would be those listed in paragraph 36 of decision 1/CMA.3, namely:

“[...] accelerate the development, deployment and dissemination of technologies, and the adoption of policies, to transition towards low-emission energy systems, including by rapidly scaling up the deployment of clean power generation and energy efficiency measures, including accelerating efforts towards the phasedown of unabated coal power and phase-out of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies, while providing targeted support to the poorest and most vulnerable in line with national circumstances and recognizing the need for support towards a just transition.”

Another possibility would be for the MWP to consider in more depth some of the suggestions made in the latest IPCC reports. In dedicated chapters, the WGIII report identifies mitigation opportunities in: the energy sector; cities; transport; buildings; industry; agriculture, forestry, and other land uses; and food systems. For instance, solar and wind energy, electrification of urban systems and green infrastructure, energy efficiency and demand-side management, improved forest and crop/grassland management, and reduced food waste and loss are becoming increasingly cost effective, and are generally supported by the public, enabling deployment in many regions.⁹ The report also ties together cross-sectoral aspects, including the assessment of cost and potential, demand-side aspects, and carbon dioxide removal.¹⁰

It would also be useful to consider how global resources could be pooled beyond national boundaries to facilitate, scale, and share the benefits of the most impactful and cost-effective mitigation action. At the same time, it will be important to be mindful of past assessments (e.g., the UN Environment Programme gap reports), and consider why—beyond only issues related to means of implementation—countries have not taken up identified opportunities.

However the MWP is organized, having a ‘forward looking’ perspective—as described above—will be vital.

One of the perennial challenges of UNFCCC processes that address issues outside of the immediate negotiations process is ‘how to get the right people around the table.’ Despite the steady rise of the importance and prominence of the action agenda, delegations (particularly those of limited resources and capacity) understandably prioritize bringing negotiators to UNFCCC sessions, including COPs, in order to engage with mandated deliverables.

But to effectively speak to domestic policymaking processes, the MWP will need to: (i) attract domestic policymakers and practitioners to participate (perhaps by hosting some events intersessionally); or (ii) it will need to generate outputs that are useful and command the interest of relevant stakeholders, even if they do not participate directly in the GST. In any event, it is widely acknowledged that Glasgow signaled the start of an important transition from negotiations to implementation—and so presents an opportunity in the wider context to consider issues of purpose, design, and participation at UNFCCC sessions.

It will also be important for the MWP to be action-oriented and be more than a talk shop. The challenge will be how to make the MWP facilitative and operate outside the negotiations dynamic, and yet link to the formal UNFCCC process such that Parties invest in the process and it leads to concrete outcomes. Lessons need to be learned from other processes in that regard. The strength of the link and accountability to the MRT process could be important, and differentiate the MWP from previous efforts, such as the Technical Expert Meeting on Mitigation (TEM-M) process under ‘workstream II’ prior to 2020.

LINK TO THE GLOBAL STOCKTAKE

On the relationship between the MWP and the GST, it will be important to respect their respective mandates—in particular that the MWP should “complement” the GST process, and so presumably not duplicate tasks. This invites consideration of how the two processes are, or should be, different, and how the MWP could add value.

On differences, the GST has a wider mandate, covering adaptation and means of implementation, as well as cross cutting issues, such as equity. The GST also operates according to the five-year heartbeat of the Paris Agreement and is explicitly linked to updating

and enhancing formal commitments under the Paris Agreement (including NDCs) in a nationally determined manner. Furthermore, the GST will likely be a more political and negotiations-orientated process than the MWP.

The MWP, on the other hand, has a mandate clearly focused on mitigation in terms of enhancement of ambition and implementation *in this decade*, and would usefully avoid duplicating political discussions and negotiating dynamics. There is also no direct link between the MWP and enhancement of formal commitments under the Paris Agreement. However, a link is established between the MWP and the GST in the Glasgow mandate.

The MWP could generate outputs that feed into the GST process and reinforce its forward-looking aspects, including through the technical dialogues. The MWP could therefore focus on areas that may not be comprehensively covered by the GST, such as a deep systemic examination of opportunities by sector, as opposed to the GST’s silos of mitigation, adaptation, and means of implementation. And while the focus of the GST will be on NDC updates in 2025, the MWP could highlight opportunities for near-term enhancement of ambition and implementation.

Additionally, the MWP could submit a report to inform the third technical dialogue under the GST, including with a focus on identifying mitigation opportunities that could be immediately implemented.

LINK TO THE MINISTERIAL ROUNDTABLE

The MRT presents an important opportunity to hold the MWP accountable—and so focus minds and efforts on making it relevant, useful, and effective. The MWP could report to the MRT on an annual basis, setting out its work, progress, and recommendations.

Thought should also be given as to how the MRT could support the GST process. Outputs from the MRT and other ministerial convenings at COPs (e.g., on finance) could feed into the GST process.

THE MINISTERIAL ROUNDTABLE

COP26 established an annual MRT on pre-2030 mitigation ambition but offered no further guidance on how these meetings should be organized or conducted, what

Box 1

Elements of the CMA decision to be adopted on the MWP could specify:

- duration of the MWP
- number of meetings to be held
- details regarding organization of meetings, including:
 - governance
 - under the CMA? SBs? Ad hoc? Under the COP Presidency?
- whether to request for submissions ahead of meetings
- terms of reference for the MWP:
 - identification of challenges and opportunities
 - sharing of best practice in relation to both implementation and enhancement of ambition; an exchange of views on policy measures
 - examination of implementation and ambition by key sectors, including through the lens of challenges and opportunities; sectoral benchmarks
 - role and participation NPS, including the work of the High-Level Champions (e.g., pathways and 2030 breakthroughs)
 - tracking progress, of multilateral commitments made by Parties as well as commitments made by NPS and transnational commitments beyond the multilateral process, including with a view to identifying and filling gaps and advancing further action
 - equity; common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDRRC) in light of different national circumstances
 - the latest science, including IPCC mitigation pathways
 - commission further work in specific areas; such as a study of mitigation potential by regions, countries or sectors with a view to making specific policy recommendations.
- outputs—negotiated? Chair(s)' summary? What audience(s) will outputs be aimed at?
- relationship to the annual ministerial roundtable (e.g., reporting on MWP status annually to the MRT, using a sectoral lens)
- relationship to the GST (e.g., inform the GST on opportunities for implementation and enhancing NDCs)

they should focus on, and what the outputs should be or in what form. There has also been no process established to make decisions in that regard.

Consideration will need to be given to answering these open questions and for how best to prepare for the first MRT at COP27. This could involve:

- intersessional discussions at the technical and political level
- discussions at the pre-COP
- a role for the current and in-coming Presidencies to facilitate preparations.

The MRT could, among other things:

- be informed by the work of the MWP, and provide guidance to the MWP for further work

- consider barriers and opportunities for enhanced ambition and implementation
- look at ambition systemically, including in the context of different sectors and follow up on previously announced initiatives and pledges
- consider ambition of NPS and the work of the HLCs
- evidence progress, including against relevant mandates coming out of COP26, such as alignment of NDCs and LTS with 1.5 degrees C and putting in place domestic implementation measures
- consider issues related to just transition
- consider the latest science
- set out political statements of intent.

ENDNOTES

- 1 IPCC, Climate Change 2022, Mitigation of Climate Change, Summary for Policymakers, Working Group III contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (Apr. 4, 2022), https://report.ipcc.ch/ar6wg3/pdf/IPCC_AR6_WGIII_SummaryForPolicymakers.pdf.
- 2 UNFCCC, Decision 1/CMA.3, https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2021_10_add1_adv.pdf.
- 3 UNFCCC, Pre-2020 Ambition and Implementation, webpage, <https://unfccc.int/topics/pre-2020>.
- 4 UNFCCC, Climate Dialogues, Roundtable on pre-2020 implementation and ambition, Concept Note (Nov. 2020), https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/External%20concept%20note_pre2020RT.pdf.
- 5 UNFCCC, 2018 Talanoa Dialogue, webpage, <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement/2018-talanoa-dialogue-platform>; Jennifer Huang, “Talanoa Dialogue: Building Trust and Informing Climate Action,” *Center for Climate and Energy Solutions (blog)*, February 8, 2018, <https://www.c2es.org/2018/02/talanoa-dialogue-building-trust-and-informing-climate-action/>.
- 6 UNFCCC, 2019 Climate Action Summit, webpage, <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/2019-climate-action-summit>.
- 7 UNFCCC, Bonn Climate Change Conference – June 2022, SBSTA 56 Provisional Agenda and Annotation (Mar. 28, 2022), https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/sbsta2022_01_adv.pdf; UNFCCC, Bonn Climate Change Conference – June 2022, SBSTA 56 Provisional Agenda and Annotation (Mar. 28, 2022), https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/sbi2022_1_adv.pdf.
- 8 UNFCCC, Bonn Climate Change Conference – June 2022, SBSTA and SBI 56 by SBSTA and SBI, <https://unfccc.int/documents/477020>; <https://unfccc.int/documents/477021>.
- 9 IPCC, Climate Change 2022, Mitigation of Climate Change, Summary for Policymakers, Working Group III contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (Apr. 4, 2022), https://report.ipcc.ch/ar6wg3/pdf/IPCC_AR6_WGIII_SummaryForPolicymakers.pdf.

Other C2ES Resources:

[Designing a Meaningful Global Stocktake](#), January 2022.

[Outcomes of the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow](#), November 2021.

[The Global Goal on Adaptation: Issues for COP26](#), October 2021.

[Article 6: Issues for COP26](#), October 2021.

[Transparency of Action: Issues for COP26](#), June 2021.



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