

Opening Statements for the Committee on Climate Action
on
Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
(COP25)
6th November 2019

Opening Statement from Professor John Sweeney, Maynooth University

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was one of 3 conventions adopted at the 'Rio Earth Summit' in 1992. Its sister Rio Conventions are the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification. The first Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP1) was held in Berlin in 1995. Significant agreements were reached at COP3 (Kyoto Protocol), COP15 (Copenhagen Accord), COP17 (Durban Platform) and COP21 (Paris Agreement). Venues rotate to minimise delegate travel and COP25 is scheduled to take place in Madrid in early December. Attendances have generally grown with time and at the last meeting in Katowice attendance exceeded 22,000 of which 14,000 were registered delegates.

Within the UNFCCC Countries are divided into two large negotiation blocks: Annex 1 (Developed) and Non Annex 1 (Developing). The former includes the EU and an Umbrella Group comprising other developed countries (including Russia and the USA). The latter has one large grouping (G77 & China) within which sub groups operate (Less Developed Countries, Oil Exporters, Africa, Latin America & Caribbean). A separate group within the Non Annex 1 category is the Small Island Developing States. The purpose of such groupings is to enable spokespersons for each to represent the views of the group as a whole. Some countries change their groups depending on the issues involved.

The COP is intended to be guided by the science, and both receives and requests reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Following the Paris COP21 it requested a Special Report on the impacts of 1.5°C warming above pre-industrial levels. This, together with two other reports (Land, Oceans and Cryosphere), were published in the last 13 months. The COP traditionally welcomes these reports formally, though this did not happen in 2018 when the US, Saudi Arabia, Russia and Kuwait objected.

COP24 in Katowice last December heard that the IPCC identified that, based on the remaining carbon budget, emission reduction pathways to avoid 1.5°C warming entailed a *global* emission reduction of about 45% from 2010 levels by 2030, reaching net zero around 2050. The principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) is part of the UNFCCC and acknowledges that, while all states have a shared obligation to address the climate problem, developed states should take the lion's share of responsibility for tackling it. Some recent work by Irish scientists based on equity and the remaining carbon budget suggest that Ireland will have used up its fair share of the remaining global carbon budget

within 5 years and will enter into ‘carbon debt’ to the rest of the world within the next 5-10 years.

The Paris Agreement reached in 2015, which comes into force on January 1st 2020, requires countries to communicate their first NDC, or update their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, by 2020. After 2020, the Paris Agreement’s five-yearly stocktaking cycle will provide a regular cycle for increasing ambition. The first stocktaking cycle will start in 2023. Every five years the NDCs must be updated, with each successive NDC representing a progression in ambition beyond the previous one. This means for Ireland that 2 stocktaking cycles will occur before 2030 on which current climate mitigation actions are focussed. In what amounts to an anticipation of increased mitigation requirements, Vice-President Designate of the EU Commission, Frans Timmermans, has stated in the EU Parliament that he would be “extremely surprised” if the new Commission does not decide emissions need to be cut “by at least 55% by 2030”.

At COP24 last year 27 countries resolved to step up their ambition by 2020. These included: Argentina, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Germany, Grenada, Italy, Jamaica, Luxemburg, Macedonia, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, St. Lucia, Spain, Sweden. United Kingdom and the EU Commission. Ireland refused to sign. More recently, 8 member states of the EU wrote to the Commission last week urging an increase in the EU’s 2030 target from 40% to 55%. The signatories did not include Ireland.

Issues of climate finance will be addressed by my colleagues, but suffice to say Ireland has not distinguished itself as generous to the Green Climate Fund which was established at COP16.

Some countries to the COP register civil society groups and NGOs as members of their Party delegation. Ireland has traditionally registered a small number of individuals and NGOs as ‘Party Overflow’. While this does enable such individuals to gain access to plenary halls and side events, they are excluded from observing any actual negotiations. In the absence of national transparency, information is transmitted through informal contact with delegates from a variety of countries and occasionally with EU officials. Traditionally, a short meeting with the Minister and Irish officials is held in the second week of the conference. Prior to receiving accreditation, an undertaking is required of civil society groups and individual scientists that they do not engage at any event in a manner contrary to Irish Government policy. This has been interpreted as including critical questioning at side events and has resulted in the withdrawal of accreditation. Civil society accreditation is only received very late (none has yet been received for COP25 in four weeks) resulting in difficulties for travel and accommodation. All NGOs and individual scientists travel at their own expense.

The 5 years since the Paris Agreement was reached in 2015 have largely been wasted and not delivered on the intentions for increased efforts prior to 2020. This has been partly as a result of political regime changes in key large emitting countries. It has also become apparent that

NDCs have been less than forthright concerning their intentions for absolute reductions in emissions. Pledges based on per capita emissions, different baselines, political and economic conditionality, accounting rules for forestry and land use change - these have not enabled finalisation of the Paris Rule Book on which future accounting must be based. To maintain the Paris targets will thus entail more stringent reduction requirements than before.

The EU NDC drives the Effort Sharing Regulation at Member State level. In a progress report issued on 31st October the European Environment Agency projected that the EU as a whole would achieve its 20% reduction target for 2020 with total emission reductions by last year of 23.2% below 1990 levels. Malta, Germany, Ireland and Austria are unlikely to meet their emission targets. Ireland is currently projected to achieve 5-6% reduction and has exceeded its annual binding limits since 2016. It is likely to be identified again as a climate laggard at COP25.

Opening Statement from Oisín Coghlan, Friends of the Earth

Introduction

I'd like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to speak with you today, in advance of the 25th Conference of the Parties to the UN Climate Change Convention.

Before addressing the issues that flow from COP 25 for Ireland, I'd like to put on the record my and my colleagues appreciation for the work the Committee has done over the last year. The Stop Climate Chaos Coalition, which Christian Aid, Trócaire and Friends of the Earth are all members of, campaigned for the outcomes of the Citizens' Assembly to be treated with the same seriousness by the political system as the same Assembly's outcomes on the 8th Amendment. And so we very much welcomed the establishment with this special all-party committee, and we found the commitment and collaboration of the Members, your advisers and the Secretariat in producing your report in March a real source of hope. As you know we regard that report "Climate Change: A Cross-Party Consensus for Action" as a pivotal landmark in Irish climate policy. I described it the time as the "Good Friday Agreement for Climate Action". I mean that comparison in two ways beyond being an historic breakthrough on a seemingly intractable problem. Firstly, just as the GFA was "Sunningdale for slow learners", Consensus for Action is "Kyoto for slow learners", while no less an achievement for that. More importantly, for today's discussion, of course the Good Friday Agreement was not the end of the process and we are still working 20 years later to bring the promise of 10 April 1998 to fruition. Equally, your first report is simply the "end of the beginning" or Ireland's climate challenge. And one our key messages today is that we look forward to this Committee and its successor, the proposed Standing Committee on Climate Action, continuing to play a strategic and proactive role in shaping and overseeing Ireland's climate policy.

Turning to the UN climate talks themselves. My colleagues have outlined and the issues are at play in this year's Conference. They relate to the operationalization to the Paris

Agreement, the global governance regime for climate action and the most significant output from these annual UN climate conferences. The successful implementation of the Paris Agreement is fundamental to containing climate breakdown. Ireland's participation in the implementation of Paris Agreement takes place as much at EU level and indeed national level as much as it does at UN level proper.

I want to touch on four governance mechanisms that are key to Ireland's implementation of the UN Paris Agreement, all of which this Committee should have a key role in.

The four governance mechanisms to deliver Paris are:

- A. The 10-year National Energy and Climate Plan
- B. The 2050 Long-Term Strategy
- C. The Climate Action (Amendment) Bill
- D. The Standing Committee on Climate Action

A. The 10-year National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP)

The NECP is Ireland's 10 year climate and energy plan from 2020 to 2030, required under EU law and considered as part of a pair with the LTS required under Paris itself. The Government has to submit Ireland's final NECP by the end of December. As you know this Committee was specifically asked in the resolution setting it up to consider for the recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly could inform the development of the NECP.

We understand from the Department of Climate Action that they plan to run a short 3-week public consultation before Christmas on a new draft NECP to be published this month. This short window is a crucial opportunity for this Committee to continue playing the role outlined in the Dáil and Seanad resolutions and to perform crucial parliamentary oversight of the process.

We would urge you to invite the Minister and his officials to appear before the Committee and present the draft NECP during the public consultation period.

In reviewing the NECP we would ask you consider four key questions:

- 1. Does it incorporate all the policies and measures in the Government's Climate Action Plan?**

It is important to remember that as of now the Action Plan is only a political initiative – it is not yet on a statutory footing. There is no guarantee it outlives the Minister and Government that initiated and adopted it. The only statutory policies are the NECP and the National Mitigation Plan. It is essential therefore that the policy gains in the Action Plan are reflected in the NECP. There is no good reason why the Government would not do this but it is an obvious role for this Committee to ensure that it does.

- 2. Does it close that gap between your own JOCCA report and the Climate Action Plan?**

The conventional wisdom is that while the Action Plan mirrors the JOCCA report on

governance it is significantly weaker than that this Committee was sectoral policies and measures to cut emissions. We appreciate that the Action Plan was finalized under time pressure shortly after the completion of the JOCCA report. Five months later it should be possible for more of the JOCCA's recommendations to be incorporated into the NECP. If the JOCCA has completed a comparison of your own report and the Action Plan then that gap analysis would be an essential contribution to the public consultation on the new draft NECP and the obvious basis for a discussion with the Minister and his officials as part of your oversight role.

3. How has the new draft NECP addressed the [European Commission's feedback on the first draft submitted last December?](#)

In the Commission's feedback ([Read it here](#)), published shortly the Climate Action Plan was launched in June, the areas they highlighted for improvement include:

- "The projected use of peat and biomass would make air impacts important to consider".
- "Ireland has set a very low contribution for energy efficiency in 2030 for final energy consumption", with the planned energy efficiency measures (which warrant more detail it says) being offset by increasing energy consumption "which goes in the opposite direction of what is needed collectively by the EU".

Presumably, this is due to the fact that new and existing data centres are forecast to account for 25% of our electricity use by 2030, something that merits more public and political debate.

- The Commission concludes that Ireland's renewable energy plans (as opposed to just electricity) with a target range of 16 to 28% lack adequate specificity and in any case fall below the indicative target of 31% for Ireland, derived from the Governance Regulation.
- "A list of actions undertaken and planned to phase-out energy subsidies, in particular for fossil fuels, needs to be included in the final plan".
- "The issue of a socially just transition to a climate neutral economy could be better integrated throughout by considering social and employment impacts".
- "Ireland has a comprehensive energy poverty national plan, which should be accompanied in the final plan with concrete objectives, as required by the Governance Regulation".

I know Committee members were much exercised recently by the failure of finance officials to carry out the energy poverty review of the carbon tax requested by this Committee. Your review of the draft NECP is another opportunity to check on progress.

4. It is clear in the NECP that the Climate Action Plan 2019 is the floor for Irish ambition and action from now to 2030, not the ceiling

We appreciate that while the Climate Action Plan 2019 is a plan for how to meet our existing 2030 targets, it is the first in a series of annual plans and can't be reasonably expected to capture every policy that will be adopted and implemented between now and 2030. Therefore it is equally important that the NECP explicitly states that Irish ambition and actions between now and 2030 are not limited to what this Government has currently committed to in the 2019 Action Plan.

B. The 2050 Long-Term Strategy (LTS)

It makes little sense to consider the 10-year NECP without also considering the 30-year Long Term Strategy, which Ireland has to submit to the EU by the end of January 2020. For the European Union they are the twin drivers of implementation of the Paris Agreement. The Commission has asked each member state to develop them together, each taking the other into account.

While the NECP is part of the EU's governance of Paris implementation, the LTS flows directly from the Paris Agreement itself, adopted at COP21: "All Parties to the Paris Agreement are invited to submit mid-century strategies by 2020".

Long Term Strategies need to be consistent with the temperature goals of the Paris Agreement which is to limit global warming to well below 2C and to pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5C. We know from the landmark IPCC 1.5C report a year ago that that means *global* emissions must be cut by 45% by 2030 and net zero emissions by 2050.

As a starting point, the EU has asked member states to make their Long Term Strategies consistent with an EU vision of net-zero emissions by 2050. It is worth noting however that, as a bloc of the richest, most polluting countries in history, the EU will in fact undoubtedly have to get to net-zero before 2050 to do its fair share of the effort to hit the global target.

Therefore Ireland's Long-Term Strategy adopted in the next few months must formally adopt net-zero as our national target to be achieved *at the very latest* by 2050.

We understand the Department of Climate Action now plans to publish Ireland's draft Long-Term Strategy in the coming weeks and hold a short 3-week public consultation. While we welcome the fact that it is being done in tandem with the consultation on the NECP, it is however very late in the day to be *starting* the public consultation on a 30-year strategy that has to be completed in less than 3 months.

It is all the more important therefore that this Committee exercise parliamentary oversight on the draft LTS, on behalf of the public who won't have adequate time to really get to grips with it.

As with the NECP, we urge the Committee to invite the Minister and his officials to appear before the Committee to discuss both the LTS and the NECP.

In reviewing the LTS we would ask you consider three key questions:

1. **Does the draft LTS formally adopt net zero emissions by 2050 as Ireland's national policy position**, building on the indications to that effect in the 2019 Action Plan and formally superseding the net 80% reduction target in the 2014 National Policy Position on Climate Action?
2. **Within a whole economy and society net-zero target does it set out sectoral emissions reduction pathways to 2050?**
3. **Does it make clear how the Long-Term Strategy will be operationalized in near-term policy processes and measures?**

It is the consensus expert view that the purpose of long-term targets in law and long term strategies is in fact to drive the adoption of the near term policies and measures that make the long term target attainable. They start from what is required in the long term and “back cast” to what action is therefore needed now, rather than the more common practice, especially in Irish climate policy making, of forecasting based on current trends and adopting only those policies that survive the inevitably bruising contest with vested interests, leaving Ireland repeatedly well short of the targets we have agreed to.

It is essential therefore that the Government make clear how the LTS will inform the next iteration of the Climate Action Plan, due in 2020.

The Government has indicated that the LTS will supersede the National Mitigation Plan as the statutory expression of Irish climate policy. This may well make sense as the LTS, like the NMP, is required to be reviewed at least every 5 years.

Supplementary questions for the Minister and officials therefore include:

- *Is this LTS is being prepared in accordance with the provisions around the NMP in the 2015 Climate Act?*
- *Has the Climate Change Advisory Council been asked for its input. Is the public consultation in accordance with the Act?*
- *Will this LTS constitute a formal revision of the NMP?*

More information on best practice in member state long term strategies can be found at the website of [CLIMATE RECON 2050](#), the Intra-EU exchange on long-term climate strategies and decarbonisation scenarios. Their recent [Summary of Insights](#) would be very useful in informing a Committee session with the Minister and his officials on the LTS.

C. The Climate Action (Amendment) Bill

The part of the JOCCA report that got the most universal welcome from long-time climate policy observers was Chapter One on governance. Equally, the part of the Climate Action Plan that most closely mirrored the JOCCA report was the Government's commitments on governance reform.

These reforms are essential to closing Ireland's long-time “implementation gap” on climate policy between plans and actions. And to driving the adoption of additional policies that close that gap between current plans and what is required to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement adopted at COP21 in 2015.

We are very concerned however that the timeline set out by this Committee is being ignored by Government and the Government's own timeline appears to be slipping.

This Committee recommended that the new climate law be *passed into law* by the end of 2019. That is only 6 weeks away in parliamentary time and nothing has happened yet.

For their part, in the Action Plan the Government stated that the Climate Action (Amendment) Bill would be published in Q1 2020.

In a meeting Stop Climate Chaos had with the Taoiseach and Minister Bruton before they travelled to the UN Climate Summit in New York in September we sought clarifications on this and had the following confirmed:

- The Government intends to publish the *full Bill* in Q1 of 2020.
- That means that the Heads of Bill (General Scheme) has to through Cabinet and to Oireachtas Committee for pre-legislative scrutiny with enough time for that Committee to carry out that scrutiny and report in time for the report to feed into the drafting of the full Bill for publication before the end of March.
- That we could therefore expect the Heads of Bill to be approved in time for the Committee to start its deliberations after the Budget (as realistically the Committee will need to report no later than the end of January).

This raises the following questions for this Committee:

1. Has this Committee written to the Minister on the foot of the timetable in the JOCCA report to ask where the Bill is?
2. Has the Chair of this Committee or the Secretariat been in touch with the Minister or his officials, formally or informally, about when they can expect the Heads of Bill?
3. Has the Committee planned time in its work schedule to allow for detailed scrutiny of the Heads of Bill between now and Christmas and/or early in the New Year, in line with the Government's timetable?
4. Indeed, who decides whether it is this Committee or the Joint Committee on Communications, Climate Action and Environment that carries out the pre-legislative scrutiny of this Bill?
5. Can the Chairperson of this Committee, who also Chairs the JOCCCAE, tell us whether this is on the radar of the other Committee?

We supported the timeline for legislation recommended in the report of this Committee. We acknowledge that that year-end deadline cannot now be met while allowing for proper scrutiny of the Bill. But we would urge this Committee to do all in its power to ensure the delay is as short as possible. It remains possible and deeply desirable that the Climate Action (Amendment) Bill is passed into law before the General Election.

The first, fundamental, step is ensure that the Second Stage debate is had before the Dáil rises for the Easter recess on Thursday 9th April 2020. That will require the same sense of focus and purpose that this Committee, its advisers and Secretariat showed to get

their report over the line by 29th March last. We would argue that would be as great a contribution, if not a greater contribution, to climate action that the report itself was.

D. The Standing Committee on Climate Action

We welcomed the following commitment in the Climate Action Plan:

"The report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action recommended the establishment of a Standing Committee of both Houses of the Oireachtas on Climate Action, to hold Ministers and public bodies accountable for their actions to deliver our climate targets. The Government will support this recommendation. "

It is our understanding that Standing Committees are established by the Standing Orders of the Oireachtas.

We would urge this Committee to ensure that the Standing Committee is established before the General Election and to proactively take all the necessary steps to ensure that is the case, for example perhaps drafting terms of reference or whatever else is required to enable the Committee's establishment.

If the Standing Committee is not established before the General Election we risk a significant hiatus as the next Government and new Ministers find their feet. Indeed there is no guarantee that the next Government will prioritize, or even support, the establishment of a Standing Committee. The only guarantee is for the political consensus in this Oireachtas that produced the recommendation for a Standing Committee to be translated in this Oireachtas into a decision, by way of an amendment to Standing Orders, to establish a Standing Committee on Climate Action.

Conclusion

If the opportunities to ensure the NECP and the LTS are as strong as possible were to be missed, and the climate law and the standing committee are not progressed before the Election then the legacy of this Committee's ground-breaking work will be put at risk.

If, on the other hand, this Committee oversees the adoption of a strong 10-year National Energy and Climate Plan and 30-year Long Term Strategy by the end of January and a vote to pass a Climate Action (Amendment) Bill before Easter and the establishment of a Standing Committee on Climate Action before the General Election it will have successfully translated its blueprint for adequate climate action into the actual laying of foundations with four strong cornerstones.

I look forward to the discussion with the Committee.

Trócaire Opening Statement

I'd like to thank the Committee, the Chair and the Secretariat for the invitation to join this examination by the Committee of the State's preparation and input to COP 25. The UNFCCC and the annual Conference of the Parties is far from perfect, but it is an absolutely essential forum. It is the forum where IPCC science is commissioned, and where global policy is debated, agreed and monitored. It is also the most inclusive global forum for dialogue where the largest emitters and the most vulnerable countries interact directly. It serves as a critical annual 'temperature check' on the state of multilateral climate cooperation. That temperature check at COP 24 was deeply concerning. Efforts from the most vulnerable countries together with a number of EU Members States to bolster ambition following the publication of the IPCC Report on 1.5 were met with silence from others, including Ireland. Ahead of COP25 I'd like to set out where we believe Ireland performs well at the UNFCCC level and where it can build on this, and finally to ask the question, on what side of the ambition debate Ireland will place itself this year, weeks ahead of the coming into force of the Paris Agreement.

Ireland is well respected within UNFCCC circles for its technical, policy and financial support to Least Developed Countries. Irish Aid representatives within the Irish delegation to the UNFCCC negotiate on behalf of the EU in relation to Least Developed Country issues. Ireland is also recognised in the UNFCCC, as it is in the OECD, for the quality of its climate finance, which, building on the work of Irish Aid, is focused on the Least Developed Countries, adaptation and gender, and is 100% grant based. In this policy approach Ireland is playing an important role, bucking a number of international trends.

According to the most recent report of the OECD, between 2013 and 2017 60% of bilateral and nearly 90% of multilateral climate finance was in the form of loans. Annual and total figures also include significant levels of self-serving instruments such as export credits, and 'blended' finance mechanisms where public money is used to 'leverage' private investment in developing countries. While private finance has an important role to play, loans and private sector investment require a return. They are therefore neither attracted to nor appropriate for many of the interventions required to support the most vulnerable communities.

A sufficient balance between public and private finance is needed to ensure adaptation and interventions targeting the most vulnerable people that are necessary but not profitable, are adequately funded. Despite a commitment in the Paris Agreement to balancing financing between mitigation and adaptation, the amount of climate finance going to adaptation activities is only 19% of total climate finance, climbing only 2% from 17% in 2013. We believe strongly that Ireland should continue within the EU and the UNFCCC to champion a climate finance policy that is based on quality and justice, building on the headline commitment in the new International Development Policy, A Better World to 'Reach the Furthest Behind First'.

Ireland has the potential to carve out a niche in this area, which is critical to the overall political success of the Paris Agreement, and the practical delivery of its goals. Doing so will require addressing a number of gaps in Ireland's UNFCCC engagement:

The IPCC highlighted in its Special Report on 1.5°C in 2018 that pathways to deliver on limiting warming to 1.5°C require increased cooperation and support to developing countries. Next year, discussions will begin within the UNFCCC on a new global finance goal to be adopted in 2025. Much like the ambition ‘ratchet’ mechanism under the UNFCCC, climate finance needs are only going to become greater. Greater if increased mitigation ambition to deliver on 1.5°C is to be delivered, and greater because the delay in mitigation to date means that even in the best case scenario of limiting warming to 1.5°C, adaptation and Loss and Damage finance needs are set to increase. To be able to plan increased mitigation and adaptation developing countries need to know what kind of levels of funding are going to be available.

1. Increase Quantity and Predictability of Climate Finance

It is likely that any reasonable selection of variables to quantify Ireland’s fair share of climate finance, as a rich country with high levels of emissions per person, will show that Ireland’s current contributions need to increase significantly in the years to come. Ireland needs to put a plan in place for how it is going to not only finance its own transition, but how it is going to fulfill in a predictable way its growing responsibility on the international climate finance side. In the Government’s Statement at COP 25, we would like to see the Minister acknowledge this and commit to the development of a strategy to this end.

2. Acknowledge and engage with Loss and Damage, including Finance Needs

Developing countries and civil society have been advocating for the inclusion of Loss and Damage as a core concept and funding need within the UNFCCC. This is necessary because global mitigation has not been taking place at the scale and pace needed, meaning that climate change impacts are already happening that are beyond the adaptive capacity of many poor countries.

In November 2013 Typhoon Haiyan devastated the Tacloban region of the Philippines. With sustained wind speeds up to 195mph (314kph) Typhoon Haiyan was the strongest tropical storm to ever make landfall and established coping mechanisms were blown away. Typhoon Haiyan forced four million people from their homes, destroyed or damaged one million homes and killed 7,354 people. The International Disaster Database quantified the damage of Typhoon Haiyan at \$10bn.

The Island of Dominica was hit by Hurricane Maria in 2017. Thirty one people died, the agricultural sector was essentially eliminated and 70% of livelihoods were wiped out. Total damages and loss were estimated at \$1.37bn, 226% of annual GDP. Despite insurance and humanitarian aid, 80% of the costs were borne by the State and the people.

Beyond estimated mitigation and adaptation finance needs, Loss and Damage costs alone are estimated to be around \$50bn a year, reaching \$300bn by 2030 as impacts increase. While a mechanism for formal dialogue and policy development on Loss and Damage within the UNFCCC exists since 2013, developed countries have refused to allow discussion on the

need for a collective pool of solidarity funding within the UNFCCC for Loss and Damage. This funding need not come from existing finance streams but could be generated from innovative new global sources that have long been talked about but never delivered, such as levies on climate damaging activities like international shipping, aviation and fossil fuel extraction. Denying discussion on global Loss and Damage finance does not get rid of the problem, it simply leaves already vulnerable countries faced with the prospect of repeated enormous disaster response costs, repeatedly eroding the capacity of those States to reduce poverty and indeed pursue climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Ireland is a champion of the Least Developed Countries and Small Island States. Its silence to date on Loss and Damage, including Loss and Damage finance is therefore notable. A critical component to a quality and coherent niche within the EU and the UNFCCC requires Ireland to engage with this issue and champion a constructive approach to generating new funding streams dedicated to providing Loss and Damage finance.

3. Increase Ambition and Align with 1.5°C

There is simply no getting away from the fact that Ireland's short term domestic ambition will have to increase. Ireland's current targets and plans fall far short of being in line with a pathway to deliver on the 1.5°C limit. Next year Parties to the Paris Agreement will submit new or updated targets, and debates on increasing the EU's 2030 target are already well underway. Ireland is currently among those Member States within the EU that are opposing proposals, supported by the Commission and eight Member States so far, to increase the EU 2030 target to 55% without delay. Opposition to an increase in EU targets saw Ireland absent at COP 24 last year from the Joint Statement from the Coalition for Greater Ambition.

The role of the EU in sustaining and growing ambition and aligning politically with the science cannot be overstated, in particular with a number of notable, large States currently seeking to undermine both. In the context of a highly political debate at COP 24 last year on the findings of the IPCC Special Report and its implications it was disappointing that Minister Bruton did not take the opportunity in his statement to the Conference to welcome the report and its importance in informing global and national action. We cannot underestimate the implications of Ireland's positions within the EU and the UNFCCC at this critical point, when we will either be part of the balance of forces that tips political momentum in the right direction, or part of the balance of forces holding it back. In its statement at COP 25 the Government should clearly signal that it welcomes the IPCC Special Report on 1.5°C, its role in guiding global and domestic action, and its intention to enhance short term domestic ambition and support an increased the EU's NDC.

We urge the Committee on Climate Action to ensure that the reality of the need to increase Ireland's short term as well as long-term ambition, and align national policy ambition with the IPCC science is reflected in all relevant forthcoming work, including in a review of the draft National Energy and Climate Plan to be submitted to the EU, the forthcoming Long Term 2050 Strategy that must be submitted to the EU, and its discussion on the Terms of Reference for the Energy Security Policy review, all of which are pertinent items for the

coming weeks. Thank you.

Opening Statement from Jennifer Higgins, Christian Aid Ireland

Thank you for the opportunity to present to the Committee today, while there are many aspects to the COP process, what I would like to focus on in this limited time a short reflection on some emerging issues from last year's COP in Katowice, and specifically, I would like to focus on the role of climate finance and its importance for developing countries in delivering on the goals set out in Paris.

The past 18 months have seen a flurry of new scientific information on the state of the climate, geosphere, hydrosphere, cryosphere and biosphere through the three interlinked reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the publication from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

That severe climate effects already being experienced, and the worst so by the poorest and most vulnerable, indicate how far off track on ambition the world is, both on mitigation action and on provision of the means of implementation to allow poorer countries to prepare for increasing climate impacts and to follow a clean climate-friendly development pathway. The science calls for a rapid acceleration and deepening of climate action, including for Nationally Determined Contributions increases to keep faith in the Paris Agreement. To date, unfortunately the climate talks have been minimally effective because, with some exceptions of mostly highly vulnerable countries, each country tries to emphasize their own particular circumstances for why they should not take strong and rapid action to cut their emissions, rather than seeing climate change as a global existential crisis that threatens the very fabric of the planet that we all rely on to survive.

This increasing scientific evidence should be used as a springboard for increased ambition at the upcoming COP and wealthier countries need to turn up prepared to show a greater commitment on the themes of ambition, climate finance and loss and damage. Climate finance, along with other means of implementation, is an essential for the achievement of the Paris Accords in a way that is both fair and sustainable.

What is Climate Finance?

Article 4.3 of the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) commits developed countries to provide climate finance to developing countries for addressing climate change, due to their greater responsibility for emissions to date, and their greater financial capacity.

According to the UNFCCC, finance should be provided to assist with both adaptation and mitigation. Finance for mitigation is focused on activities that reduce or limit greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation funding refers to activities that reduce the vulnerability of human or natural systems to the impacts of climate change and climate-related risks, by maintaining or increasing adaptive capacity and resilience. These can be large scale, top down infrastructure projects such as sea walls, or community based, knowledge intensive activities such as livelihoods diversification and local disaster preparedness planning.

Over the last decade, a new concept has been especially important to developing countries, namely loss and damage, and there has been increasing calls for **the creation of a new international mechanism at the UNFCCC** to deal with this increasing and serious gap in funding.

Loss and Damage refers to the impacts of both extreme events such as floods, storm surges and heatwaves, as well as slow onset events such as sea level rise and desertification. It includes both economic loss and damage such as damage to income and assets, and non-economic loss and damage such as loss of life, territory and identity.

The Convention also stresses that funds for climate finance should be **“new and additional”**, **“adequate and predictable”**. Meaning they should be proportionate with mitigation and adaptation needs in developing countries, enable those countries to have a clear and reliable medium and long-term confidence in the availability of climate finance. Further, the source of this funding should not constitute ‘repackaged’ existing finance flows, which would represent no added support in practice despite the extra burden that climate change represented for developing countries as they seek to eradicate poverty.

However, these definitions are something which donor countries have largely failed to adhere to and it is important that the need for increased climate finance does not come at the expense of other key areas receiving support from ODA programmes, such as health or and education. Progress towards existing ODA commitments and towards fulfilment of climate finance commitment must take place in parallel.

Why does climate finance matters?

In his report on Climate Change and Poverty in 2019, the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Philip Alston, highlighted the profound inequality in which developing countries would bear an estimated 75% of the cost of the climate crisis and since 2000, people in poor countries have died from disasters at rates seven times higher than in wealthy countries.

For rich countries, delivering on the Paris Agreement, and ensuring it results in a just and viable future for the world’s poorest people, demands not only a dramatic increase in their domestic mitigation action, but also a swift and steady increase in the financial support to those countries who will bear the brunt of the inevitable increase in impacts even at these limits, having contributed least to the problem, and having least capacity to cope.

Developing countries have an immediate need not only to reduce their own emission levels to achieve their targets set out in the Paris Agreement, but also to increase their ability to adapt to an increasingly unstable climate - but they can only do this if they have confidence that they will have finance to do so. Clarity and certainty around the provision of climate finance for action in developing countries is essential and fundamental for the delivery of the goals set out in the Paris Agreement - and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

For Ireland, doing its fair for the global fight on climate change, means deep cuts in emissions, but also contributing its fair share to the finance needed to ensure that the Paris Agreement is achieved globally, in developing as well as developed countries.

Ireland and Climate Finance

Among donor countries, Ireland has a particularly positive story to tell on climate finance - Irish Aid have ensured a prioritisation of grants over loans and a focus on lesser funded adaptation projects. While this is at times overshadowed by Ireland's poor performance on domestic climate action, it is important to recognise the positive contribution Ireland's overseas development policy and programming makes, and the strengths that can and should be built on. The most recent Irish Aid Policy Paper 'A Better World' also committed to a scaling up our funding on climate action and explore innovative approaches to climate finance.¹ **This is the good news story in Ireland's otherwise persistently poor climate history.**

Recent increases in Irish climate finance over the years are welcome, and the 175 million which was committed to for climate finance in the 2016 programme for government has already been met. However, even at these levels it falls well short of its "fair share" of the global effort and we are giving far less yearly than many similar sized European neighbours.

It is difficult to specifically estimate any country's fair share of global climate finance, since there are a wide range of possible variables that can alter the figure significantly. However, a widely accepted analysis based on a combination of historical responsibility and present capabilities- known as Greenhouse Development Rights approach would see Ireland make a contribution of 260 million to the overall 100billion per year pledge

Despite disputes in how to calculate exactly what Ireland's fair share ought to be, what is clear is that what is currently being committed is not enough to meet the targets set out in the Paris Agreement, especially considering Ireland remains significantly off target for meeting its current mitigation targets under the EU, targets which are also a far way off the EU and Ireland's fair share of the global mitigation effort required to deliver on the 1.5 limit to warming.

The government needs to oversee a drastic increase in ambition and urgency in domestic mitigation, a commitment to much more effective policy coherence and a commitment and practical plan to increase its contributions to global climate finance. An increase in climate finance must also come with an increase in the quality of the finance given. A closer look at the nature of the finance being provided globally demonstrates how current approaches to climate finance are not delivering for the poorest people and risk compounding existing structural injustices. I would like to pass to my colleague Cliona now who will discuss some of these key issues within the climate finance system beyond the amount give

¹ <https://www.irishaid.ie/media/irishaid/aboutus/abetterworldirelandspolicyforinternationaldevelopment/A-Better-World-Irelands-Policy-for-International-Development.pdf>