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Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) representation at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 63rd Plenary Session.

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Lima, Peru

Background:

The IPCC was created in 1988 with the responsibility to collage peer-reviewed climate science worldwide, and to inform governments of the latest climate science findings. Over 600 scientists work voluntarily to synthesise findings in IPCC Reports. Governments. Each Report includes a Summary for Policy Makers which Governments discuss and adopt, thus establishing a line of accountability.

The IPCC produces Assessment Reports and Special Reports. The IPCC is currently working on its 7th Assessment Report. The IPCC mandate is to provide ‘policy relevant but not policy prescriptive’ information. Nevertheless, people are increasingly using IPCC’s reports to hold their governments accountable for insufficient action, for example at national courts.

The Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO), under the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC), became an accredited observer of the IPCC in 2017. This has been invaluable to our overall climate change work. As expert reviewers of IPCC report drafts, we track language changes on scientific findings, preparing us to protect the science and scientists from political efforts by some Parties to weaken the scientific findings. Our advocacy focuses on protecting language on scientific findings for healthy and equitable transformations of root causes driving human induced and existential global warming. We also seek to protect IPCC risk language from being weakened by States promoting harmful, unproven-to-scale and ineffective geo-engineering reliance, otherwise known as ‘techno-fixes’ or ‘false solutions’.

QUNO has been called the ethical voice in the room and is often one of the few observers to give interventions during the Plenary. We remain, to our knowledge, the only active independent faith-based organization at the IPCC.

IPCC 63rd Session in Lima Peru – summary of major issues discussed.

The 63rd Session of the IPCC did not focus on the adoption of text or reports, but rather on the unsolved issues of 1) the timeline delivery of the 7th Assessment Report (AR7), 2) the Volume 7

of the Methodology Report, and 3) gaps in the IPCC budget. QUNO engaged in the two most difficult negotiating issues: the timeline of AR7 and the Methodology Report. QUNO made interventions under our accredited role for FWCC, but our main work was in ‘contact rooms’ with Party delegates, where we engaged off-the-record to build support for caution in marine geo-engineering from the Methodology Report, and in identify an effective timeline delivery for the AR7.

What happened:

On the Methodology Report: In the last IPCC session (62nd), approval on the outline of this report was delayed due to serious concerns on the inclusion of metrics of high-risk, harmful and in some cases illegal (London Protocol) use of marine geo-engineering. In this session (63rd) a wide range of countries came together again to question the inclusion of direct removal of carbon dioxide from waterbodies in the report. At the beginning of the session, waterbodies were presented as ‘closed systems’. The IPCC authors confirmed that they did not have an agreed definition of closed systems, and that inclusion of these technologies could be in conflict with international agreements banning harmful geo-engineering. QUNO was involved in a series of contact group sessions with a diverse group of Parties increasingly raising a shared alarm. In the end, only one wealthy fossil fuel extraction developing country sought inclusion; being isolated, it redefined its needs limiting it for industrial processes (especially desalinisation plants) and agreed to insert this language into Vol 6 and drop it from Vol 7. The final compromise was to agree to an ‘expert workshop’ in the near future on marine geo-engineering, to better understand the concerns.

For the AR7 Timeline: This was the fourth failed attempt to agree to a timeline on the delivery of the IPCC’s 7th Assessment Report (AR7). The main political challenge is whether to align the delivery of the AR7 (including all of its three Working Group Summaries for Policy Makers) before the 2nd Global Stocktake. The 1st Global Stocktake was stronger due to already agreed language in the IPCC 6th Assessment Report, and this may feel threatening to a range of Parties.

In this opportunity, a minority group of countries pressed for a different timeline presented by the IPCC co-chairs. These countries included Saudi Arabia, Kenya, South Africa, India, Zimbabwe, Venezuela, Tunisia, China, Morocco, Jordan, Turkmenistan, Algeria, Libya and Russian. The reasons behind their request included calls for more time between negotiation sessions to rest/take holiday, sufficient input of developing country scientific literature, and ensure sufficient government bodies could coordinate input.

This extended timeline proposal was considered as an unusual practice of ‘micro-managing’ by many parties. Those countries calling for the traditional timeline included Small Island States, most Least Developed Countries, developed countries (excluding the USA, which did not show up), most Latin American countries, some African countries, European countries and other developed countries, and some Asian countries.

There is a range of anger expressed. For some countries, there is an obvious attempt to weaken the role of the IPCC science in the UNFCCC process and weaken reference to fossil fuels and the need for rapid reduction to enable 'net zero'. For others, it is a genuine concern over capacity, though some of the smallest countries in the Plenary did not share this concern. For some, it was a concern of not seeing change / heard, not being taken seriously despite various efforts to explain needs.

In all, the room is painful and despite efforts behind the scenes to hear and bridge, the Plenary and contact rooms were not witness to a solution, and the IPCC Chair ended the 4 day meeting on time. That in itself was a shock, as it was not usual practice and not expected, and some felt a conclusion could have happened were more time given. But there was a sense of resignation in this Plenary, the IPCC tired of facing ongoing criticism from a few countries seeking to be critical across all agenda items.

QUNO/FWCC Interventions:

In this IPCC Plenary, only three observers gave interventions during the Plenary sessions – QUNO/FWCC, the European Union, and Climate Action Network International (CAN). QUNO/FWCC Plenary interventions are presented below:

Concerning WORKING GROUP III (Mitigation):

As this is the first time that we, Quakers are taking the floor, we wish to thank the Government of Peru for hosting us in their beautiful country, the IPCC for its essential work to humanity and the health of planet Earth, and the many hundreds of scientists offering their expertise voluntarily in this work.

Concerning author selection, we wish to echo our colleagues from Brazil and Australia on the need to ensure sufficient inclusion of authors from both the Indigenous Peoples and local communities. The 6th Assessment Working Group 2 and 3 both recognised the critical role of rights-based approaches for effective, equitable, just and therefore successful adaptation and mitigation. Ensuring these voices strengthens the role of community based solutions, which are critical to empowering people and building resilience in all our countries.

Thank you.

Intervention Prepared but not called to speak by Chair

Chair, we trust the IPCC to provide the most authoritative climate science, and to maintain the integrity of the science. We rely on you to help us identify healthy and equitable options to transform our activities driving existential rates of global warming and related planetary crises. We also rely on you to warn us of options that would not only fail to transform root causes, but would actually result in greater harm to a healthy Earth.

In turn, we in this room have a responsibility to ensure scientists can continue their research without fear of reprisal. This week, we raise concern for Antarctica scientist Leonid Pshenichnov, that he can continue his research on conservation of marine protected areas, without fear of imprisonment.

Thank you Chair.

Concerning the AR7 Timeline

Thank you Chair. As an observer, what I am hearing are many of the most vulnerable countries in this room, often the poorest with restricted capacity, are supporting the IPCC timeline. Those who express stress on capacity need our support. Yet we are here in this room to support humanity, and I remind this room of the conclusion from the AR6 that we have a rapidly closing window of time to ensure a sustainable and livable future for all.

For the Closing session – last intervention:

Thank you Chair, thank you IPCC, co-chairs and TSUs, and thank you Peru, for your dedicated work and generous hosting. We are grateful that faith-based and Indigenous Peoples voices can support the critical work of our scientists, protect the integrity of the science, and bear witness to the wellbeing of nature and all humanity.

Chair, we have heard the AR6 warning on a brief and rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all. Thankfully this week we were able to establish some boundaries to protect oceans and seas from harmful marine geo-engineering.

Yet as a category 5 hurricane ripped unprecedentedly through Jamaica, Cuba, and Haiti, we sit here without a timeline with the ambition our children's lives and futures deserve.

We regret that, despite IPCC clarity that net zero is impossible without rapid reduction of fossil fuels and rapid increase in renewable energies - nearly every fossil fuel wealthy extraction country in this room is actually increasing fossil fuel extraction.

Except Colombia which announced a cap, and the UK which committed to no new extraction licences. We thank them for their leadership.

So as horrific storms rip through the lives of our brothers and sisters, let us ask ourselves, what really stops us from doing everything we can to act while we still have this brief window of time? Embrace our responsibility, historical and current.

As we all return home, may we find courage to lead, even if others around us fail. To protect scientists from intimidation and even wrongful imprisonment for speaking truth to power. To hold all children as precious. To never give up. Thank you Chair.