

EIG opening statement for SB/SBSTA 52-55

31 May 2021

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Environmental Integrity Group comprising Georgia, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Monaco, the Republic of Korea and Switzerland.

Madam and Mister Co-Chairs,

The EIG expresses its full solidarity with all those that have been personally hit by the COVID-19 epidemic.

Since COP25, the world seems to have been brought to a standstill. But climate change shows no sign of weakening. There is now a 40% likelihood that we temporarily reach 1.5 degrees in at least one of the next five years¹. We are measurably closer to failing our Paris Agreement objectives. Following the postponement of the conference, expectations from our citizens towards COP26 have only increased. The world is looking to COP26 to deliver concrete results that accelerate the Paris Agreement implementation. Given the amount of technical work still needed to secure a successful outcome, we are relieved and eager to finally engage in this session of the Subsidiary Bodies.

¹ See: <https://unfccc.int/news/new-climate-predictions-increase-likelihood-of-temporarily-reaching-15-degc-in-next-5-years>

The process we design has to enable us to deliver on our mandates including finalization of Paris Rulebook in Glasgow.

The pandemic requires us to adapt our ways of working. Given the limited amount of time available, we agree with the proposed prioritization of work, with conducting work in informal contact groups, and we are pleased to see us accommodate different time zones. The EIG is also pleased to see the EIG's requests for an integrated agenda reflected in the provisional SBI and SBSTA agendas to make up for lost time.

At the same time, we are passed the time of broad exchanges of views. We need a certain level of formality and to recover normality in our deliberations to carry the process forward. Namely, we need to start synthesizing our views in writing, to be able to confront and tackle areas where we do not yet find agreement. This is especially required in those areas that require much technical work, like Transparency, where we hope to see full sets of draft examples of reporting tables coming out of the SBs and recorded in an appropriate manner. We note that some delegations are not yet fully comfortable to take substantive decisions in virtual format. So, we are ready to give assurance that no decisions and conclusions on substance are to be taken during this June session. But let us not forget: the process is here to serve the Parties. It is up to us, Parties, to request those decisions that can bring our work forward towards COP26. The

EIG thinks that, for example, the following decisions might be useful for the process: adopting the agenda, agreeing to work in contact groups, launching intersessional work, mandating specific tasks to the Secretariat, or taking note of the Chairs and facilitators' notes, taking stock of work and progress. The EIG will not hesitate to make use of such procedural requests to advance our work efficiently until Glasgow.

We note that other UN processes have successfully featured virtual decision making in their mode of work. This includes the ongoing negotiations under the Convention on Biological Diversity. The world will not understand why we, the same countries, are ready to adopt the agenda and take decisions in the Subsidiary Bodies of the CBD, but not in the SBs of UNFCCC.

Finally, we need highly intensive and interactive dialogues during the SBs. We should step-by-step upgrade our working modality and utilize all possible text-based inputs or materials, so that we can make the most of the coming months.

The EIG also expects the agenda to be presented for adoption as soon as agreement can be achieved, as is common practice. Working under a set agenda allows us to have the assurance that all items, reflecting all priorities, will be considered. It will also make our work at subsequent meetings much easier. Prolonged discussions at the plenary are not needed. If the agenda cannot

be adopted at the beginning of the session, it would be deferred into informal consultations and pending the outcome of these consultations, the work should begin, with the proposed agenda being provisionally applied. This is in line with our standard practice, and would make our work much more efficient.

Finally, despite our best efforts to predict the months to come, the evolution of the pandemic remains highly uncertain. Yet we will be judged by our ability to deliver at COP26. We therefore disagree with the approach that there will be no decision-making until in-person meetings are possible. In doing so, we could be limiting our ability to work effectively, even as the world still grapples with the pandemic. This decision is to be taken by Parties themselves. It is the right of Parties to take decisions if they so decide. Let us preserve the option of virtual decision-making for the months to come.

Colleagues, friends, let me repeat some of the concrete proposals to advance our work:

- We are ready to give assurance that in this June SB session, we do not strive for substantive decisions and conclusions, but for substantial progress in our work,
- This requires certain level of normality and formality:
 - o adopting an agenda as soon as possible gives us assurance;

- keeping the option to take decisions to advance the process gives us perspective;
- presenting, discussing and working on concrete text, including on screen, helps us to be specific and to advance;
- and capturing progress in a robust manner is a prerequisite for success in Glasgow.

And I am convinced that we all share this objective.

Excellencies, colleagues, we look forward to engaging with all of you actively over the coming weeks. It is high time. The EIG remains fully dedicated to fulfill our mandates at COP26.

Thank you, Madam and Mister Chairs