

COP27: THE MITIGATION WORK PROGRAMME & THE MINISTERIAL ROUNDTABLE



Kaveh Guilanpour, C2ES

Catalina Cecchi Hucke, C2ES

SUMMARY

To be most effective, the Mitigation Work Programme (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 in support of national processes and be of practical use to 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 Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and identify scope for enhanced action, including by:
 - hosting thematic workshops
 - sharing best practices and lessons learned, including in relation to overcoming challenges to scaling and implementing enhanced mitigation action, also encompassing a focus on non-cost barriers
 - considering sectoral approaches
 - effectively involving non-Party stakeholders (NPS) and the High Level Climate Champions (HLCs) and drawing on their work (e.g., Climate Action Pathways and 2030 Breakthroughs)
 - considering a regional approach
 - developing a menu of exemplar best practices and approaches
- track progress against commitments made by Parties and NPS outside of 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 and be based on the latest science
- involve external expertise, as appropriate

Possible elements of the CMA decision to be adopted on the MWP:

- recall the MWP objective and mandate as set out in 1/CMA.3
- clarify that the MWP is not intended to renegotiate or amend the Paris Agreement, including the nationally determined nature of NDCs and the five-year global stocktake (GST) process
- duration of the MWP (e.g., until 2030, with a mid-term review)
- frequency/number of meetings
- organization, including:
 - governance (e.g., co-Chairs)
 - under the Subsidiary Bodies, reporting to a contact group
- request submissions from Parties and NPS ahead of meetings on specific issues
- terms of reference:
 - identify opportunities for enhanced ambition and implementation
 - identify barriers to enhanced ambition and implementation, including non-cost barriers
 - examine enhanced ambition and implementation opportunities and challenges by key sectors, including consideration of sectoral benchmarks
 - share best practice in relation to both implementation and enhancement of ambition, including an exchange of views on policy measures
 - recognize the role of NPS and provide for their participation, including the work of the HLCs (e.g., pathways and 2030 breakthroughs)
 - request the HLCs to facilitate the participation of NPS in the MWP
 - track 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
 - issues of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities in light of different national circumstances
 - the latest science, including IPCC mitigation pathways
 - commission further work in specific areas as needed, e.g., a study of mitigation potential by regions, countries or sectors with a view to making specific policy recommendations.
- discussions to be captured in non-negotiated outputs, such as Chairs' summaries
- the MWP to submit an annual report to the annual high-level ministerial roundtable on pre-2030 ambition (MRT)
- the MWP to report to an agenda item under the CMA, to inform decisions of the CMA as appropriate
- the MWP will input into the GST process, including via the technical dialogues

The annual high-level MRT could usefully:

- be informed by the work of the MWP
- provide guidance to the MWP for further work
- consider barriers and opportunities for enhanced ambition and implementation, including non-cost barriers
- 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 long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies (LTS) with the 1.5 degree C limit and putting in place domestic implementation measures
- consider issues related to just transition
- consider the latest science
- encourage and facilitate political statements of intent, including commitments by Parties or groups of Parties that could subsequently be harvested in the formal process to update or submit new NDCs as part of the Paris Agreement's five-year ambition cycle

The MWP could operate on an annual basis to identify opportunities for enhanced ambition and implementation, and encourage commitments by Parties, groups of Parties or NPS that could subsequently be harvested in the formal process to update or submit new NDCs as part of the Paris Agreement's five-year ambition cycle.

The MWP could submit an annual report to the MRT, and in turn could receive guidance from the MRT on further work. This will hold the MWP accountable towards fulfilling its mandate and ensure that it is more than a talk-shop.

The MWP could provide formal inputs into the GST process, including through the GST technical dialogues.

The mandate for the MWP at COP27 is essentially to adopt a process decision—not to carry out the substantive discussions that the MWP will be tasked to undertake. The process decision could usefully be concise and leave operational details to be elaborated subsequently (for example following the model of the co-facilitators of the technical dialogue process under the GST). Past UNFCCC experience should be drawn upon.

CONTEXT**THE COP26 OUTCOME**

One of the stated aims of the Presidency of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 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 the average global temperature increase within the 1.5 degree C limit of the Paris Agreement. Coming out of Glasgow, commentators were generally of the view that the COP26 outcome had achieved that—but barely.

The 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 NDCs and a significant enhancement of climate action beyond the ambition they currently represent, staying within the 1.5 degree C limit will not be possible.

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

- 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 to deliver a clear signal of progress on mitigation ambition and implementation. There will also be expectations that the MRT and MWP will accelerate enhanced mitigation action, including on the basis of the global picture presented by the UNFCCC synthesis reports on NDCs and LTS.

Delivering on these mitigation expectations will likely be an important measure of success at COP27. At the time of this writing, fewer than 20 countries have come forward with new or updated NDCs since Glasgow, some of which may not effectively increase ambition.³ Moreover, should any further new NDC or LTS updates materialize before COP27, they will not be reflected in the UNFCCC Synthesis Report as the deadline for Parties’ submissions was 23 September 2022. All of this will put even more pressure on successful operationalization of the MWP as a key outcome of COP27.

To deliver an acceptable outcome, COP27 will also need to show progress in adaptation and finance, including those workstreams coming out of Glasgow that are not mandated to deliver in Sharm-el-Sheikh.

THE UNFCCC 56TH SESSION OF THE SUBSIDIARY BODIES

The UNFCCC 56th Session of the Subsidiary Bodies (SB56), held in Bonn from 6 to 16 June 2022, was an important step toward adopting a decision on the MWP in Sharm el-Sheikh.

Under the guidance of the co-facilitators Parties prepared the following conclusions:⁴

1. *The Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) convened informal consultations jointly to consider matters relating to the work programme for urgently scaling up mitigation ambition and implementation referred to in paragraph 27 of decision 1/CMA.3.*
2. *The SBI and the SBSTA took note of the constructive discussions held under this joint agenda item during this session, fostering enhanced understanding on the work programme referred to in paragraph 1 above.*
3. *The SBI and the SBSTA agreed to continue work on matters relating to the work programme for urgently scaling up mitigation ambition and implementation in this critical decade referred to in paragraph 27 of decision 1/CMA.3 at SB 57 (November 2022), with a view to recommending a draft decision thereon for consideration and adoption by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA) at its fourth session (November 2022), in a manner that complements the global stocktake.*
4. *The SBI and the SBSTA invited Parties to submit their views on the work programme via the submission portal by 30 September 2022.⁵*
5. *The SBI and the SBSTA requested the secretariat to organize, under the guidance of their Chairs, a pre-session workshop on the work programme referred to in paragraph 1 above open to all Parties prior to CMA 4.*
6. *The SBI and the SBSTA took note of the estimated budgetary implications of the activities to be undertaken by the secretariat referred to in paragraph 5 above.*

Although Parties at SB56 did not agree to take forward an informal note prepared under the authority co-facilitators, discussions on the MWP were generally constructive

and generated a number of ideas on how to operationalize the MWP.⁶

PAST UNFCCC EXPERIENCE

As the Glasgow mandates are taken forward, it will be important to look to past experience and avoid reinventing the wheel. In particular, 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 content of the MWP.

Similarly, the UNFCCC is accustomed to hosting MRTs.

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. 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 SBI, the 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 HLCs.

An additional stocktake on pre-2020 implementation and ambition was held at COP25.

In 2020, the UN Climate Dialogues included a virtual roundtable on pre-2020 implementation and ambition.⁷ The roundtable was set up to start with short ice-breaker presentations.⁸ Participants provided updates on the status of pre-2020 implementation and ambition, addressing aspects relating to mitigation, adaptation, and means of implementation. Following these presentations, participants engaged in focused discussions that, based on pre-2020 experience, addressed good practice 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 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?”⁹
- 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.¹⁰ The adaptation work was co-led by the United Kingdom and Egypt, now COP26 Presidency and incoming COP27 Presidency, respectively, both of whom have valuable experience to share.

THE MITIGATION WORK PROGRAMME

CONTEXT OF THE MWP

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.

As such, 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. The MWP will therefore not achieve immediate results.

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 dedication and 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 so not add value toward 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 levels:

- the strategic, which engages global political governance and sets goals at the national level
- domestic policymaking
- technology and solutions development.

The middle level—domestic policymaking—is critical to implementation, and arguably poses the greatest challenges to scaling known solutions. Such challenges 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.

See the summary above for a description of possible functions of the MWP.

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 thematic 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.¹¹ The report also ties together the cross-cutting aspects of sectors, including the assessment of cost and potential, demand-side aspects, and carbon dioxide removal.

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 issues related to means of implementation—countries have not taken up identified opportunities. Such a consideration should not be limited to issues of means of implementation but also, crucially, consider non-cost barriers to implementation of enhanced climate action.

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

One of the perennial challenges in UNFCCC processes 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 have prioritized bringing negotiators to UNFCCC sessions, including COPs.

But to effectively speak to domestic policymaking processes, the MWP will need to:

- attract domestic policymakers and practitioners to participate (perhaps by hosting some events intersessionally and/or virtually)
- 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 marked the start of an important transition from negotiations to implementation—and so presents an opportunity in the wider context to consider the purpose and design of, and participation in, UNFCCC sessions. At the very least, the trend as a result of the COVID19 pandemic to open UNFCCC sessions to virtual participation of Parties and NPS should continue and be further encouraged. All meetings that are open to observers should be webcast by default.

It will also be important for the MWP to be action-oriented and be more than a talk shop. The challenge is 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 programs, such as the Technical Expert Meeting on Mitigation (TEM-M) process under ‘workstream II’ prior to 2020.

LINK TO THE GLOBAL STOCKTAKE

It will be important to respect the respective mandates of the MRT, MWP, and the GST—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.

The GST has a wider mandate than just mitigation, covering adaptation, means of implementation, and cross cutting issues, such as equity and loss & damage. 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 explicit 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 (and subsequent technical dialogues under future GSTs), including with a focus on identifying actionable mitigation opportunities that could be immediately implemented.

Overall, the MWP could operate on an annual basis to identify opportunities for enhanced ambition and implementation, and encourage commitments by Parties, groups of Parties or NPS that could then be harvested in the formal process to update or come forward with new NDCs as part of the Paris Agreement's five-year ambition cycle.

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.

See the summary above for possible elements of the CMA decision to be adopted on the MWP.

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 they should focus on, or what the outputs should be or in what form. At the time of writing, 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 pre/intersessional discussions at the technical and political level and a role for the in-coming COP27 Presidency to facilitate preparations.

See the summary above for a description of possible terms of reference for the MRT.

Other C2ES Resources:

[What Does the COP26 Outcome on Article 6 Mean for Non-Party Stakeholders?](#), April 2022.

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

[Loss and Damage: Issues and Options for COP27](#), June 2022.

[Advancing Mitigation Outcomes for COP27: The Mitigation Work Programme and the Ministerial Roundtable](#), June 2022.

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

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 Climate Action Tracker, Climate Targets 2022 NDC updates, <https://climateactiontracker.org/climate-target-update-tracker-2022/>.
- 4 Matters relating to the work programme for urgently scaling up mitigation ambition and implementation referred to in paragraph 27 of decision 1/CMA.3, Draft conclusions proposed by the Chairs, 16 June 2022, https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/sb2022_L06E.pdf.
- 5 UNFCCC Submission Portal <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/submissionsstaging/Pages/Home.aspx>.
- 6 Co-facilitator's informal note https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/MWP_inf_note_SB56.pdf
- 7 UNFCCC, Pre-2020 Ambition and Implementation, webpage, <https://unfccc.int/topics/pre-2020>.
- 8 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.
- 9 UNFCCC, 2018 Talanoa Dialogue, webpage, <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement/2018-talanoa-dialogue-platform>.
<https://www.c2es.org/2018/02/talanoa-dialogue-building-trust-and-informing-climate-action/>.
- 10 UNFCCC, 2019 Climate Action Summit, webpage, <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/2019-climate-action-summit>.
- 11 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.

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