

Meeting minutes • 15 October 2024

Parliamentary roundtable with Minister Kerry McCarthy: COP29 and International Climate

Date: Tuesday 15 October 2024

Time: 4:30-5:30pm

Location: Room Q, Portcullis House, Westminster

Attendees:

- APPG Secretariat: Alice Watson, Gwen Peters, Zoe Avison
- Parliamentarians: Luke Murphy MP (Chair), Afzal Khan MP, Pippa Heylings MP, Bill Esterson MP, Abtissam Mohamed MP, Barry Gardiner MP, Deirdre Costigan MP, Uma Kumaran MP, Johanna Baxter MP, Lord McConnell, Richard Baker MP, Manuela Perteghella MP, Anna Gelderd MP, Melanie Onn MP

Minister Kerry McCarthy's remarks:

- The government is taking COP29 very seriously, indicated by the fact that the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero will be the UK's chief negotiator in Baku.
- At this COP, the government wants to demonstrate that the UK is back in the driving seat, stepping up on climate action both internationally and domestically.
 - The minister recently attended a pre-COP meeting and delegates strongly welcomed the UK's closure of its last coal fired power station as an example of how the energy transition can be done fairly, with a just transition for workers.
 - All countries must submit a new carbon target, known as a nationally determined contribution (NDC) for 2035. The deadline is in February but the UK is hoping to announce its new NDC at COP29, along with other like-minded countries.
 - The UK has appointed Rachel Kyte as its new climate envoy, previously a special representative for the UN and a vice-president at the World Bank.
- The UK will also launch the Clean Power Alliance, a group of likeminded countries that want to ramp up political ambition to meet commitments

made at COP28 to triple renewable capacity and double energy efficiency by 2030.

- This year's COP will be focused on finance, with countries agreeing a target for the amount of money developed countries will contribute to help developing countries with their climate actions post-2025, known as the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG).
 - The NCQG quantifies public money, which will be measured in the billions. Private finance, measured in the trillions, will be critical to funding climate action at the scale needed. David Lammy, FCDO SoS has spoken about the need to reform multilateral development banks to unlock more lending and crowd in private finance.
 - Discussions on the NCQG are about: how big it should be; which countries should contribute, and how it should be split between adaptation and mitigation financing.

Q&A:

- Barry Gardiner MP welcomed the UK returning to ambition on climate action and asked if there is a problem of too many global initiatives launching at COPs.
 - The Minister said that initiative fatigue is real, which is why the Clean Power Alliance will be time-bound. She reflected that many of the initiatives launched at COP26 in Glasgow, such as the Green Grids Initiative and the Breakthrough Agenda are still going and are even expanding.
 - Luke Murphy MP added that initiatives and side deals are useful for driving action which can't be agreed by every single signatory to the Paris Agreement.
- Barry Gardiner MP also asked what size the NCQG will be and which bodies will actually receive and administer the funds.
 - The Minister said there is no number agreed yet and there is still discussion to define what counts as climate finance, as different countries have different definitions. The distribution of funds will depend on the outcome of this.
- Pippa Heylings MP also welcomed the UK's renewed ambition and said that COPs struggle to link with local climate action, saying that mayors are looking for leadership.

- The Minister confirmed she had announced the UK's signing of the Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships (CHAMP) at the UN General Assembly in September.
- Pippa Heylings MP also asked about bringing adaptation into the NDC as some countries are doing, because there can be significant overlap between mitigation and adaptation measures.
 - The Minister agreed that there is significant overlap and said that failure to mitigate this year is next year's adaptation challenge.
 - However, she said that current thinking is not to bring adaptation into the NDC and it is covered in national adaptation plans instead.
- Uma Kumaran MP welcomed the UK's signing of CHAMP, noting the need for all levels of government to be involved in climate action. She asked how we can stop climate and nature issues being siloed between government departments.
 - The Minister said that lots of departments are now involved in climate and nature and joining up work requires them to talk to each other a lot more than previously.
 - She also said some people believe that the climate COP and the biodiversity COP should be brought together into one event, though noted this would be a logistical challenge.
 - [A recent report](#) found that trees and land have absorbed almost no carbon dioxide in the last year. The Minister noted her interest in voluntary carbon markets and their use to channel funding into nature.
- Luke Murphy MP asked whether the UK's NDC will include a phase out of oil and gas production.
 - The Minister said the government was awaiting advice from the CCC on its NDC but it will be aligned with the Paris Agreement goal of 1.5 degrees.
 - She noted that, at last calculation, the UK was not on track to meet its 2030 NDC but the government hopes recent changes, such as the commitment to end oil and gas licences, and unblocking onshore wind, will help it get back on track.
- Bill Esterson MP asked about the commitment to end oil and gas licensing, stating that oil and gas companies have said they will take investment out of the UK.



- The Minister said the government wants the oil and gas industry to be part of the transition, whether that is through hydrogen, CCUS, offshore wind or other green activities.
- She noted that she had been at recent events themed around the North Sea and experienced less pushback than expected. In Norway, there was lots of excitement about floating offshore wind.
- She also noted that there is a lot of focus on language at COPs, such as the words agreed on transitioning away from fossil fuels at COP28. However, these words act as a line in the sand and set the bar for other negotiations, such as at the G20 Energy Ministerial in Brazil recently.
- Luke Murphy MP noted that many oil and gas majors' investments in renewables are dwarfed by their investment in fossil fuels.

Closing remark:

- Communicating about COP is difficult but it is important to get the public engaged and excited about the transition. Examples like Costa Rica, which has improved its environment.
- The Minister invited members to submit questions about COP to the upcoming DESNZ orals.