



**UN CLIMATE
CHANGE
CONFERENCE
UK 2021**

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ITALY

**The Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP
COP President Designate**
9 Downing Street
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To: all Parties to the UNFCCC

12 April 2021

Dear Colleagues,

UN climate change negotiations and making effective progress at the June session

2021 is a crucial year for people and planet. We face the interrelated challenges of a global health pandemic, accelerating biodiversity loss and escalating global warming and associated impacts. Rising to the occasion requires urgent action now, including in upcoming negotiations, recognising time is not on our side.

We know we must halve global emissions by 2030 if we are to keep the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C within reach. We must enhance the adaptive capacity of our societies and economies to reduce the impacts of climate change experienced, particularly by those most vulnerable. We must protect, restore and sustainably manage nature. And we must channel enhanced climate finance and align broader financial flows to accelerate climate action. Doing so will enable us to realise the immense benefits of a global transformation towards a net zero, climate-resilient future. Not doing so would be nothing short of catastrophic.

In recent months, I have had the opportunity to speak to many countries and stakeholders and I have reached out to all negotiating groups. These conversations have reinforced for me the necessity of arriving in Glasgow in person having done our homework. Ready to agree a negotiated package that is commensurate with the scale of the climate crisis and the opportunities that tackling it with urgency would unlock.

I am heartened by the commitment you have expressed and I encourage us all to find ways to accelerate progress in these challenging times. It is on all of our shoulders to make COP26 a success and ensure negotiations in Glasgow, and the action they facilitate, put the world back on track at the end of two challenging years. We need to do what is necessary to keep 1.5°C within reach, at our last best chance of doing so.

I write to you today to set out some of the expectations I have heard for the negotiations at COP26, and the UK's plans for accelerating progress over the coming 7 months.

The Negotiated Outcome

I have spoken with ministers and negotiators from over 80 countries, and briefed all Parties through the UN on a number of occasions. Whilst learning of a diversity of

national circumstances I have heard a clear unity of purpose, with some specific priorities for the negotiated outcome coming up repeatedly. There are many important elements for Glasgow but those most commonly referenced include:

- **Paris Rulebook:** including taking substantive decisions on Article 6 and common time frames and adopting required transparency tables and formats this year to enable enhanced implementation and increased ambition. Recognising that it is time to resolve these issues to support the full implementation of the Paris Agreement.
- **Adaptation:** including demonstrating tangible progress towards the Global Goal on Adaptation with sufficient political attention focused on the GGA at COP26, alongside facilitating a significant increase in the scale of adaptation finance.
- **Loss & Damage:** including advancing activities to avert, minimise and address loss and damage in light of the upcoming report of the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism.
- **Finance:** including delivering on the \$100 billion mobilisation goal and starting talks on the post-2025 goal in earnest.
- **Mitigation:** including ensuring Glasgow responds to any gap between the collective impact of NDCs submitted by COP26 and what the latest science says is required to keep 1.5°C within reach, whilst also demonstrating our collective commitment to achieving net zero emissions.
- **Inclusive action:** including agreeing the next programme of work on Action for Climate Empowerment and an improved Marrakesh Partnership to enhance collaboration between governments and non-state actors and to enable and accelerate action by all. Ambitious implementation of the Gender Action Plan is also critical.

I appreciate the importance of addressing every mandate given to us and responding to the clear political will of Parties to take forward work on all issues and achieve an ambitious outcome. I am personally committed to facilitating agreement of a balanced negotiated package that leaves no issue and no one behind.

Plan for Getting There

This is no easy task. UNFCCC Executive Secretary Patricia Espinosa has said we face an unprecedented negotiations agenda, incorporating unresolved issues from COP25 as well as the critical mass of mandates set to be addressed in both 2020 and 2021.

An unprecedented agenda calls for unprecedented measures to ensure success at COP26. As does the situation we face as a result of the ongoing pandemic. A sentiment reinforced by many ministers at both the 5th Ministerial on Climate Action and at the Climate and Development Ministerial we held last month.

Success will require technical and political progress. As incoming presidency, the UK will coordinate experts to advance technical work underpinning the range of outcomes

expected of COP26. We have instigated new monthly meetings of all Heads of Delegation which will continue to enable shared understanding and push for outcomes. Building on discussions at the UK-Germany co-hosted Petersberg Climate Dialogue in May, I hope to welcome ministers in-person over the summer to shape the outcome in Glasgow, and to find solutions to those key issues that can only be resolved at the political level. This is a conversation I will continue through the year in a variety of formats under the auspices of the incoming presidency, building on precedent set in previous years and ensuring no interested party is excluded. As all Parties would expect, I also look forward to ministerial engagement at COP26, ensuring we leave Glasgow with a successful outcome.

As the UK and our fellow presiding officers have set out on the UNFCCC website, there is a significant amount of work taking place and already planned. In April alone the Subsidiary Body Chairs will review submissions on Article 6 and Transparency; they will convene parties/experts to discuss matters related to Least Developed Countries, the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture, the Adaptation Fund, Action on Climate Empowerment, Article 6, the Periodic Review of the long-term goal, research and systematic observation. The Constituted Bodies will continue their important work. The UK and Chilean presidencies will convene discussions on finance, transparency, common time frames and loss and damage.

In all of the above, we will continue to work extremely closely with Chile, the Chairs of the Subsidiary Bodies and the UNFCCC Secretariat. Importantly, this includes ensuring we lead the process in a transparent and inclusive manner and proactively address the challenges many Parties have raised regarding internet connectivity, working across time zones, and enabling group coordination. I am also committed to working closely with observers, and particularly recognise the leadership and knowledge that youth, women and indigenous peoples bring to climate action.

Implications for the June session of the Subsidiary Bodies

The approach set out in the 'Plan for Getting There' section of this letter is intended to accelerate progress. However, frankly, they are no substitute for formal sessions. Whilst I am the foremost advocate for in-person negotiations given the very human nature of this process and the subject matter it addresses, it is clear to me that we cannot afford to put formal work on hold.

Having engaged extensively, there are valid concerns about virtual work that need to be taken into account. The UNFCCC Secretariat are taking the necessary steps to accommodate those challenges, including connectivity, working across time zones, and group coordination, as already communicated by Executive Secretary Patricia Espinosa, and included in a note to the upcoming COP Bureau meeting.

With those safeguards for inclusivity, it is my view that a formal session of the Subsidiary Bodies should go ahead in June. This session should be guided by an integrated agenda spanning all mandates that should have been addressed in 2020-21, with an associated mode of work to be set out by the Subsidiary Body Chairs. We should consider an extended sessional period to allow for group coordination and accommodate working across time zones. And we should capture progress in written

form for transparency and to inform subsequent discussions. It is also my view that, if it is needed, we should hold an additional sessional period to advance our work ahead of COP26 in November. This should take place in person, should it be feasible to arrange to meet safely and allowing all Parties to participate on an equal footing.

Such an approach to formal sessions and capturing progress is, in my view, the only way we will make sufficient progress ahead of meeting in person in Glasgow to ensure COP26 delivers on its mandates and what the world expects of us. I ask for your flexibility and support for proceeding on this basis.

I look forward to discussing this approach with the COP Bureau on Thursday 15th April, where I hope members will provide definitive guidance on the June session.

Thank you again for your commitment to a successful outcome at COP26 and to driving forward this vital work.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alok Sharma', written in a cursive style.

The Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP
COP President Designate