

Time for governments to do their climate homework

ACT Alliance

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The first online session with UN climate talks ended on June 17. Parties had, for three weeks, tried to make progress in the talks, leading towards the upcoming summit (COP26) in Glasgow in November. And they failed.

I must admit that conditions for a breakthrough were bad from the start. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, negotiations had to take place online, with difficulties because of internet access, time zones and technique. It was also agreed that talks this time would not deliver any decisions, so what could we expect?

I may be naïve, but reading recent climate science reports, and looking at ongoing climate related disasters around the world, I had hoped parties would have taken the opportunity to scale up ambition, to search for diplomatic solutions, and to ensure that the climate emergency would be taken seriously. Unfortunately the talks, to a large extent, instead became a space for presenting existing positions.

But lack of progress in online negotiations should not be an excuse for climate inaction. Each party should now do their homework, and make sure that their country is moving forward with scaled up ambition.

Concretely that means revision of national climate plans. Recent research reminds us that we are rapidly moving towards a 1.5 degree temperature increase, and all parties, including those who have already submitted their national plans, should consider what more can be done in the coming five years, to reduce global warming.

Their homework also includes an increased focus on adaptation, and climate change induced loss and damage. As a broad alliance of developing countries stressed during the online talks, loss and damage is not getting enough attention on the UN agenda. At the same time more and more people face climate related disasters each year, which, with lack of adaptation, may lead to loss and damage.

But neither mitigation, nor adaptation or loss and damage related activities in developing countries, can happen unless the required support is made available. Developed countries are lagging behind with their existing commitments to mobilise climate finance, and this is a big concern for developing countries, and poor and vulnerable communities, urgently lacking support. Developed countries must mobilise the support which has been promised, and they must do so now.

The next climate summit will take place in November, in Glasgow, in Scotland. That meeting will be important, and it must deliver a success. Parties have already presented their positions, and it is now time to search for solutions, which can promote international cooperation and a scaled up climate ambition. I hope all parties will do their homework, before the summit November.

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