

DÁIL ÉIREANN

AN COMHCHOISTE UM GHNÍOMHÚ AR SON NA HAERÁIDE

JOINT COMMITTEE ON CLIMATE ACTION

Dé Céadaoin, 6 Samhain 2019

Wednesday, 6 November 2019

The Joint Committee met at 2 p.m.

Comhaltaí a bhí i láthair / Members present:

Teachtaí Dála / Deputies

Seanadóirí / Senators

Jack Chambers,	Paul Daly,
Marcella Corcoran Kennedy,	Máire Devine,
David Cullinane,	Alice-Mary Higgins,
Timmy Dooley,	Michelle Mulherin.
Tom Neville,	
Thomas Pringle,	
Sean Sherlock.	

I láthair / In attendance: Deputies Michael Collins and Danny Healy-Rae.

Teachta / Deputy Hildegarde Naughton sa Chathaoir / in the Chair.

Conference of the Parties, COP, 25: Discussion

Chairman: Apologies have been received from Deputy Bríd Smith and Senator Ian Marshall.

We will have two separate sessions, while a private session will follow our engagement with today's delegates. I extend a warm welcome to Professor John Sweeney; Ms Jennifer Higgins from Christian Aid; Ms Cliona Sharkey from Trócaire; and Mr. Oisín Coghlan from Friends of the Earth.

By virtue of section 17(2)(l) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of their evidence to the joint committee. However, if they are directed by it to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and continue to do so, they are entitled thereafter only to qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. They are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and they are asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise nor make charges against any person, persons, or entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable.

Members are reminded of the long-standing ruling of the Chair to the effect that Members should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the House or an official by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable.

The witnesses have five minutes. I will start with Professor John Sweeney.

Dr. John Sweeney: Thank you very much, Chairperson. I would like to thank the members for giving us the opportunity to talk to them today about the Conference of the Parties' process. I have attended eight of the last ten Conference of the Parties, COPs, so I am probably a bit of a veteran or maybe a bit of a nerd when it comes to attending COPs. I find them a very worthwhile experience. For those who may not be too familiar with the COP, it emerged from the United Nations Convention on Climate Change as part of the Rio Convention, which was signed in 1992. There were two other sister conventions at the same time. The Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification have not really attained the same level of status in the public consciousness as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNFCCC, itself.

The first Conference of the Parties took place in Berlin in 1995. It was chaired by a relatively youthful Minister for the Environment for Germany, called Angela Merkel. It decided at that meeting to progress matters in terms of climate change on the basis of the now first Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC, assessment report, which had been published in 1990. It emerged then that the Kyoto Protocol would come out of the UNFCCC, and other significant agreements were made in Copenhagen, in Durban and of course the most important one for us, the Paris Agreement itself.

The venues rotate around the continents to minimise travel for the participants. Over time, the COP has become a very largely well attended meeting. The peak attendance was in Paris, but even last year in Katowice attendance exceeded 22,000 people. Obviously, one cannot have 198 countries all saying their piece in a meeting like this, so countries tend to break up into negotiating blocks. The big division is between the developed and the developing countries, and within the developed countries, the European Union is a separate entity, with an umbrella group comprising many other developed countries. Within the developing block, which is led

traditionally by China, there are also blocks for the less developed countries and the oil exporters: Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. An important component of the developing countries of course is the small-island developing states, which are particularly vulnerable to the problems of climate change.

The COP is supposed to be led by the science and especially from the science of the IPCC, to which it pays great adherence normally. Following the Paris Agreement, when the 1.5°C figure emerged as a key component of the Paris Agreement, the COP requested a special report from the IPCC on the impacts of 1.5°C warming above pre-industrial levels. Within the last 13 months, the IPCC has published three special reports. These are interim reports between the big bang reports of the assessment reports themselves. The COP usually starts its meetings by welcoming the IPCC reports, and this has been a tradition since 1995. It was broken this year when the conference did not welcome the IPCC reports. Saudi Arabia, the United States, Russia and Kuwait objected to this. It left a pretty bad taste in the mouth of many delegates and many participants for the remainder of that period.

The COP in Katowice had heard from the IPCC that the pathway for avoiding a 1.5°C warming entailed a global reduction of about 45% from 2010 levels within the next 11 years and reaching net zero at a global scale by 2050. The COP has also adopted a principle called the Common But Differentiated Responsibility principle, which means that countries which have historically contributed more to the problem should bear the brunt of actually tackling the problem. This of course means that the developed countries are envisaged as taking the lion's share of the burden in terms of solving this problem. In terms of the last COP, it was also quite clear that there was a finite carbon budget, which once burned would condemn the world for the next century or more to 1.5°C and even 2°C warming. That finite carbon budget has become a key component of the negotiations in recent years. It is estimated by some Irish scientists, for example, that Ireland will have used up its fair share of that remaining carbon budget within the next five to ten years.

The other aspect of the Paris Agreement was the concept of nationally determined contributions, where the UNFCCC changed its tack from a top-down approach to a bottom-up approach around about the time of Durban. This meant that countries were obliged under Paris to come back every five years with a more strict pledge in terms of their mitigation responsibilities. For Ireland, this means that before 2030, for example, there will most likely be two if not three further ratcheting up of the European Union's requirements for mitigation. Stock-taking cycles are also built in, the first of which will be in 2023.

It is not surprising that in anticipation of that, the Vice-President Designate of the European Commission, Frans Timmermans, recently stated in the European Parliament that he would be extremely surprised if the new Commission does not decide on an emissions cut of least 55% by 2030 in the next 11 years. That represents a considerable increase in where we are at the moment.

Many countries have recognised the need for this, and in Katowice about 27 countries signed up to increasing their ambition quite radically. The list the committee has will show that they are not just developed countries, but there are underdeveloped countries. There are countries like Ethiopia and the Marshall Islands, which would be expected to bear the brunt of climate change but have really limited means to cope with it. They were quite happy to sign up to it. Countries like Spain, the United Kingdom and France, of course, were very much climate leaders in this area.

Eight member states wrote to the Commission in the course of the last week to urge an increase in the European Union's 2030 target from 40% to 55%. In both of those cases, in the case of the 27 countries and in the case of the signatories to the European Commissioner, sadly, from my point of view, Ireland was not included and did not sign up to that increased ambition. For a country which aspires to climate leadership, this is something that the committee might seek to flesh out a little with the Department when it comes in.

Climate finance will be dealt with by my colleagues. In the budget, there was a doubling of Ireland's contribution to the Green Climate Fund, which is one of the funds that is not in any way tied to other activities but is solely for helping countries to cope with climate change. While a doubling of that fund was desirable, it takes Ireland's contribution up to just over \$8 million per year or a *per capita* contribution of \$1.73. Now that compares with a *per capita* contribution of \$86 from Luxembourg, \$62 from Monaco and \$60 from Sweden. We are about a tenth really of where we would be expected to be on the basis of our GDP for our contribution to the Green Climate Fund. That is something that is not doing Ireland's international reputation particularly well abroad.

In terms of what civil society does, some countries register their civil society groups and individual scientists as members of their party delegation. Ireland traditionally has registered a small number of individuals and NGOs as party overflow. This enables such people to be observers. It does not enable them even to observe the negotiations that go on. When one attends the COP, one gets the story of what Ireland was up to second-hand from other delegations, such as from European Union officials, who are often very helpful in telling us what has transpired.

The Minister meets the small Irish delegation usually for about an hour at each meeting, which is very welcome. It is usually in the second week of the conference. For party overflow, the accreditation is given on the basis of an undertaking by the individuals that they will not engage in any event contrary to Irish Government policy. Sometimes it is not quite clear to the delegates or the observers what Irish Government policy actually is, but it has been interpreted in recent COPs as being, for example, critical of oil-producing countries at side events, and accreditation has been withdrawn in some cases. Civil society is only informed of its accreditation quite late in the process. The next COP is in four weeks. Nobody has received any indication of accreditation yet, and as one can appreciate, that makes for great difficulties, especially as people were trying to get accommodation in Santiago, fly to South America and so on. All of the NGO sector travels at its own expense. It is not funded in any way.

It is fair to say that the five years since the Paris Agreement have been wasted. The increased efforts which were intended to occur in 2015 have not really taken place. There have been a lot of obviously global political changes since then, but there has been a lot of hedging going on for individual country pledges.

I will highlight three countries at which I have been looking in some detail to give an indication of the kind of problems they have in meeting the nationally determined contributions, NDCs. I looked at Jordan first, which has offered an NDC of a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of 14% by 2030. However, this is conditional in receiving finance, and without the finance the commitment is 1.5%. Another Middle East country, the Palestine state, has made a very positive offer of 24.4% by 2040, but it will be only 12.8% unless the political problems are resolved in the meantime. Israel offers another seemingly quite attractive NDC at first sight to reduce its *per capita* production by 26%, but when one looks at the population increases envisaged over that same time period, it is quite clear that an increase rather than a reduction is the most likely outcome.

One has economic, political and accounting methods whereby the NDCs are really often not going to be realised, and this is a problem which bedevils the current negotiations and different baselines as well.

The European Union NDC drives the effort sharing regulation at member state level, and the European Union has recently confirmed that its overall NDC will be achieved. It will achieve a 20% reduction for 2020, because it is currently about 23% below the target level, with only a small number of countries - Malta, Germany, Ireland and Austria - unlikely to meet their obligations, which they signed up to over a decade ago. Now as we all know, Ireland is currently on target maybe to achieve a 5% or so reduction but has now exceeded its binding on its limits for emissions for the past three years. At the next COP in Madrid, it is quite likely, I am afraid, that Ireland will be identified once again as a climate laggard.

Chairman: I would like to ask Ms Jennifer Higgins to speak next.

Ms Jennifer Higgins: I thank the committee very much for the opportunity to present to it today. While there are many aspects to the COP process, as my colleague identified, what I would like to look at today, especially from a development agency perspective, is the role of climate finance and its importance for developing countries in delivering on the goals set out in Paris.

The past 18 months have seen a flurry of new scientific information on the state of climate, geosphere, hydrosphere, cryosphere and biosphere through the three interlinked reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC, and the publication from the Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. That severe climate effects are already being experienced, and by the poorest and most vulnerable, indicates how far off track on ambition the world is, both on mitigation action and on the provision of the means of implementation to allow poorer countries to prepare for increasing climate impacts and to follow a clean, climate-friendly development pathway. The science calls for rapid acceleration and deepening of climate action, including for nationally determined contributions increases to keep faith in the Paris Agreement. To date, unfortunately, the climate talks have been minimally effective because with the exceptions of some of the most highly vulnerable countries, each country tries to emphasise its own particular circumstances for why it should not take strong and rapid actions to cut its own emissions. The increasing scientific evidence should be used as a springboard for increasing ambition at the upcoming COP, and wealthier countries need to turn up prepared to show a greater commitment on the themes of ambition, climate finance and loss and damage.

What is climate finance? Article 4.3 of the 1992 UNFCCC commits developed countries to provide climate finance to developing countries to address climate change due to their greater responsibility for emissions to date and their greater financial capacity. According to the UNFCCC, finance should be provided to assist with both adaptation and mitigation. Finance for mitigation is focused on activities that reduce or limit greenhouse gas emissions, and adaptation funding refers to the activities that reduce the vulnerability of human or natural systems to the impact of climate change and climate-related risks. By maintaining or increasing adaptive capacity and resilience, these can be large-scale, top-down infrastructure projects such as seawalls or community-based knowledge intensive activities such as livelihood diversification and local disaster preparedness planning.

Over the last decade, a new concept has been especially important to developing countries, namely, loss and damage, and there has been increasing calls for the creation of a new interna-

tional mechanism at the UNFCCC to deal with the increasing and serious gap in funding. Loss and damage refers to the impact of both extreme events, such as floods, storm surges and heat-waves, as well as slow-onset events such as sea level rise and desertification. It includes both economic loss and damage such as damage to income and assets, and non-economic damage such as loss of life, territory and identity.

The convention also stresses that funds for climate finance should be new and additional, adequate and predictable, meaning they should be proportionate with mitigation and adaptation needs in developing countries and enable those countries to have a clear and reliable medium and long-term confidence in the availability of climate finance. Further, the source of this funding should not constitute repackaged existing financial flows, which would represent no added support in practice despite the extra burden that climate change presents for developing countries as they seek to extricate poverty. However, these definitions are something which donor countries have largely failed to adhere to, and it is important that the need for increased climate finance does not come at the expense of other key areas receiving support from overseas development assistance, ODA, programmes such as health or education. Progress towards existing ODA commitments and towards the fulfilment of climate finance commitments must take place in parallel.

In his report on climate change and poverty in 2019, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty, Philip Alston, highlighted the profound inequality in which developing countries would bear an estimated 75% of the cost of the climate crisis, and since 2000, people in poorer countries have died from disasters at a rate seven times higher than in wealthy countries. Developing countries have an immediate need not only to reduce their own emission levels to achieve their targets set out in the Paris Agreement, but also to increase their ability to adapt to an increasingly unstable climate. They can only do this if they have a confidence that they will have the finance to do so. Clarity and certainty around the provision of climate finance for action in adaptation in developing countries is essential and fundamental for the delivery of the goals set out in the Paris Agreement and also for the delivery of the sustainable development goals.

For Ireland, doing its fair share on the global fight on climate change means deep cuts in emissions, but also contributing its fair share to the finance needed to ensure that the Paris Agreement is achieved globally in developing as well as developed countries. Among donor countries, Ireland has a positive story to tell on climate finance in terms of quality but not necessarily on quantity. Irish Aid has ensured a prioritisation of grants over loans and a focus on the lesser funded adaptation projects. While this is at times over-shadowed by Ireland's poor performance on domestic climate action, it is important to recognise the positive contribution Ireland's overseas development policy and programme makes and the strength that it can and should be built on.

The most recent Irish Aid policy paper, *A Better World*, also committed to a scaling up of our funding on climate action and to exploring innovative approaches to climate finance. This is the good news story in Ireland's otherwise persistently poor climate history. Recent increases in Irish climate finance over the years are welcome, and the €175 million which was committed to in the programme for Government in 2016 has already been met. However, even at these levels, it falls far short of the fair share on global climate effort, and we are giving far less yearly than many similarly sized European neighbours.

It is difficult to specifically estimate any country's fair share of global climate finance, since there is a wide range of possible variables that can alter a figure significantly. However, a

widely accepted analysis based on a combination of historical responsibility and present capabilities, known as the greenhouse development rights approach, would see Ireland make a contribution of €260 million to the overall €100 billion per year pledge. Despite disputes on how to calculate exactly what Ireland's fair share ought to be, what is clear is that what is currently being committed to is not enough to meet the targets set out in the Paris Agreement, especially considering Ireland remains significantly off-target for meeting its current mitigation targets under the European Union targets, which are also far off the European Union and Ireland's fair share of global mitigation efforts required to deliver on 1.5°C.

The Government needs to oversee a drastic increase in ambition and urgency in domestic mitigation, a commitment to much more effective policy coherence and a commitment to a practical plan to increase its contributions to global climate finance. An increase in climate finance must also come with an increase in the quality of finance given and a commitment to it being new and additional rather than repackaged, which would come at the expense of poverty or gender-driven programmes.

A closer look at the nature of finance being provided globally demonstrates how current approaches to climate finance are not delivering for the world's poorest people, and it risks compounding existing structural injustices. I would like to pass over to my colleague, Ms Sharkey, who will discuss some of these key issues within the climate finance system that go beyond the amount given.

Chairman: Thank you. I call Ms Sharkey.

Ms Cliona Sharkey: I would like to thank the committee, the Chairperson and the secretariat for the invitation to join the examination by the committee of the State's preparation and input to COP 25. The UNFCCC annual Conference of the Parties is far from perfect, but it is an absolutely essential forum. It is the forum where the IPCC science is commissioned, where global policy is debated, agreed and monitored. It is also the most inclusive global forum for dialogue, where the largest emitters and the most vulnerable countries interact directly. It serves as a critical annual temperature check on the state of multilateral climate co-operation. That temperature check at COP 24 in 2018 was deeply concerning. Efforts from the most vulnerable countries together with a number of European Union member states to bolster global ambition following the publication of the IPCC report on 1.5°C were met with silence from others, including Ireland.

Ahead of COP 25, I would like to set out where we believe Ireland performs well at the UNFCCC level, as Ms Higgins set out, and where Ireland can build on this, and finally to ask the question, on what side of the critical ambition debate Ireland will place itself over the next weeks, when we are only weeks ahead of the coming into force of the Paris Agreement.

Ireland is well respected within UNFCCC circles for its technical, policy and financial support to least developed countries. Irish Aid representatives within the Irish delegation to the UNFCCC negotiate on behalf of the European Union in relation to least developed country issues. Ireland is also recognised in the UNFCCC, as it is in the OECD, for the quality of its climate finance, which, building on the work of Irish Aid, is focused on least developed countries, adaptation, and gender and importantly is 100% grant-based. In this policy approach, Ireland is playing an important role, bucking a number of international trends.

According to the most recent report of the OECD, between 2013 and 2017, 60% of bilateral and nearly 90% of multilateral climate finance was in the form of loans. Anyone who has been

looking at international development co-operation for a number of years will remember the debt crisis. Indeed, in a number of fora, the risk of a renewed debt crisis is something that is of significant concern, with the focus on loans for climate finance.

Annual total figures of global climate finance also include significant levels of self-serving instruments from donor countries, such as export credits and blended finance mechanisms where public money is used to leverage private investment in developing countries. While private finance of course has a role to play, loans and private sector investment require a return. They are neither attracted to nor appropriate for many of the interventions required to support the most vulnerable communities, and it is for this reason that both adaptation in general, and least developed countries in particular, are losing out in current global finance flows.

A sufficient balance between public and private finance is needed to ensure that adaptation interventions that target the most vulnerable people and that are transformative - necessary but not necessarily profitable - are adequately funded. Despite a commitment in the Paris Agreement to balancing financing between mitigation and adaptation, the amount of climate finance going to adaptation activities is only 19% of total climate finance flows and has climbed only 2% from 17% in 2013. We believe strongly that Ireland should continue within the European Union and the UNFCCC to champion a climate finance policy approach that is based on quality and equity and build on the headline commitment in the new international development policy, A Better World, to reach the furthest behind first.

Ireland has the potential to carve out a niche in this area, which is critical to the overall political success of the Paris Agreement as well as to the practical delivery of its goals. Doing so, however, will require addressing a number of important gaps in Ireland's current UNFCCC engagement. I will highlight one or two of the key ones here. Number one is increasing the quantity and predictability of climate finance. The IPCC report highlighted in 2018 that pathways to deliver on limiting warming to 1.5°C required increased co-operation and support to developing countries. Next year, discussions will begin within the UNFCCC on a new global finance goal to be adopted in 2025. Much like the ambition ratchet mechanism under the UNFCCC, climate finance needs are only going to become greater if increased mitigation ambition to deliver on 1.5°C is to be delivered, and greater because the delay in mitigation to date means that even in the best case scenario of limiting warming to 1.5°C, adaptation and loss and damage finance needs are set to increase. To be able to plan to increase mitigation and adaptation in developing countries, they need to know what kind of levels of funding are going to be available.

It is likely that any reasonable selection, as Ms Higgins said, of variables to quantify Ireland's fair share of climate finance - as a rich country with high levels of emissions per person - will show that Ireland's current contributions need to increase significantly in the years to come. Ireland needs to put in place a plan for how it is going to not only finance its own transition, but how it is going to fulfil in a predictable way its growing responsibility on the international climate finance side, as well as meet its commitment to deliver 0.7% of GNI to ODA. In the Government's statement at COP 25, we would like to see the Minister acknowledge this and commit to the development of a strategy to this end.

Number two is to acknowledge and engage with the issue of loss and damage, including finance needs. Developing countries and civil society have been advocating for the inclusion of loss and damage as a core concept and funding need within the UNFCCC. This is necessary because global mitigation has not been taking place at the scale and pace needed, meaning that climate change impacts are already happening that are beyond the adaptive capacity of many

poorer countries. I have set some examples on my statement on the types of impacts and the level of the human and economic costs being borne by the poorest countries.

Beyond estimated mitigation and adaptation finance needs, loss and damage costs alone are estimated to be around €50 billion a year currently, reaching €300 billion a year by 2030 as impacts increase. While the mechanism for formal dialogue and policy development on loss and damage has existed within the UNFCCC since 2013, developed countries have refused to allow discussion on the need for a collective pool of funding within the UNFCCC for loss and damage. This funding need not come from existing finance streams, but could be generated from innovative new global sources that have been long talked about but never delivered, such as levies on climate damaging activities like international shipping, aviation and fossil fuel extraction.

Denying discussions on global loss and damage finance does not get rid of the problem. It simply leaves already vulnerable countries faced with the prospect of repeated enormous disaster response costs repeatedly eroding the capacity of those states to reduce poverty and indeed to pursue climate change mitigation and adaptation. Ireland aspires to be a champion of the least developed countries and indeed the small island developing states. Its silence therefore to date on the issue of loss and damage is very notable. A critical component to a coherent approach within the European Union and the UNFCCC requires Ireland to engage with this issue and to champion a constructive approach to loss and damage, including the generation of new funding streams dedicated to providing this finance.

Number three is increasing ambition and being aligned with 1.5°C. There is simply no getting away from it. Ireland's short-term domestic ambition will have to increase. Ireland's current targets and plans fall far-short of being in line with the pathway to deliver on the 1.5°C limit. Next year, parties to the Paris Agreement will submit new or updated targets, and debates on increasing the European Union's 2030 target are already well underway. Ireland is currently among the member states within the European Union that are posing proposals, supported by the Commission and eight member states so far, to increase the European Union 2030 target to 55% without delay. It is important to note in this context that 55% is the compromise proposal that is being put forward between the institutions at European Union level. Civil society is actually calling for a reduction by the European Union of 65% based on, as Professor Sweeney said, the European Union's historical responsibility for climate change and its capacity. Opposition to an increase in European Union targets saw Ireland absent at COP 24 last year from the joint statement from the coalition for greater ambition. The role of the European Union in sustaining and growing ambition and aligning politically with the science cannot be overstated, and particularly with the number of notable large states currently seeking to undermine both.

In the context of a highly political debate at COP 24 last year, as Professor Sweeney said, on the findings of the IPCC special report and its implications, it was disappointing that the Minister, Deputy Bruton, did not take the opportunity in his statement to the conference to welcome the IPCC report and its importance in informing both global and national action. We cannot underestimate the implications of Ireland's position within the European Union and the UNFCCC at this critical point, when we will either be part of the balance of forces that tips political momentum in the right direction, or be part of the balance of forces that is holding it back.

In its statement at COP 25, the Government should clearly signal that it welcomes the IPCC special report on 1.5°C, the role of that report in guiding domestic and global ambition and its intention to enhance short-term domestic ambition and support an increase in the European Union's NDC. I thank the committee.

Chairman: Thank you.

I have been very lenient and have let you all go way over the five minutes. I did not want to stop Professor Sweeney at the beginning. We have your opening statements. Mr. Coghlan, you are the last on the list. Will you try to summarise your statement, because all the members have read it? It is quite long. Could you try to keep it-----

Mr. Oisín Coghlan: I will not read it all.

Chairman: Great. You are well able to summarise the main points for us. We have all read the statement.

Mr. Oisín Coghlan: I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to speak to it today in advance of the 25th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Climate Change Convention. Before addressing the issues that flow from COP 25 for Ireland, I would like to put on record my appreciation and that of my colleagues for the work the committee has done over the last year and a bit since we were last before it. The Stop Climate Chaos coalition, which Christian Aid, Trócaire and Friends of the Earth are all a part of, campaigned for the outcomes of the Citizens' Assembly to be treated with the same seriousness as the political system treated the outcomes of the Citizens' Assembly on the eighth amendment. We were delighted, therefore, when this committee was set up with the powers and the mandate it had, and we found the commitment and collaboration of the members of the committee, the advisers and the secretariat to be a real source of hope over the last year, as it produced its report.

As the committee knows, we regarded the first report of this special committee in March as a pivotal landmark in the history of Irish climate change policy. I described it at the time as the Good Friday Agreement for climate action, and I meant that comparison two ways beyond simply being an historic breakthrough and a seemingly intractable problem. First, if, as Seamus Mallon famously said, the Good Friday Agreement was in part Kyoto for slow learners, this consensus among the committee here was Kyoto for slow learners, as in it was getting where we needed to be, but late in the day. It was no less an achievement for that.

More importantly for today's discussion, the Good Friday Agreement was part of a process, and the committee's report was only the end of the beginning for our challenge on climate change. We look forward to this committee being really central to what happens next, and its successor, the standing committee on climate action, needs to have as strategic and as proactive a role in what happens next in Irish climate policy as it did in getting to this point.

My colleagues have looked at the COP itself and what will be happening there. I want to look more at what flows from the COP to what Ireland does here, and I want to touch particularly on four key governance mechanisms that flow from the COP and its decisions through the European Union that this committee can have a key role in. They are the ten-year national energy and climate plan, the 2050 long-term strategy, the climate action (amendment) Bill and the standing committee on climate action itself. To cut to the chase, in case I run out of time, I will put forward the three key asks we have on those four governance mechanisms.

The first two, the national energy and climate plan, NECP, and the long-term strategy, LTS, are due to be finished by Government in the next few months and there will be a public consultation. We would urge this committee to invite the Minister and his officials in to discuss those drafts with it before they are finalised and sent to the European Commission. On the climate action (amendment) Bill, our ask is simply that this committee does everything in its power to

ensure that the Bill is progressed as far as possible before the election and at the very least goes through Second Stage, which involves it doing pre-legislative scrutiny before the Easter recess on 9 April 2020.

Finally, equally with the standing committee, we do not want to wait for the Government or the next Parliament to set it up. We would like the standing orders to be done in this Parliament, while this political consensus reigns, and that we establish the standing committee so that we are not waiting for the programme for Government, new Ministers and a new Government to get around to doing it some time before the end of next year.

In addition, to flesh out those issues, this committee was given a specific mandate on the NECP. Its report was to feed into not just new Irish domestic policy but into the NECP itself. Now, we understand from the Department that it plans to publish its second draft NECP - its first draft was last December - in the next few weeks and hold a three-week public consultation. It would be very timely for the committee to invite the Minister and his officials in to examine that, and there are some key questions we think it could be looking at when it does that. Has the new draft incorporated all the policy gains in the action plan? The action plan was a step forward in June and is a political initiative, however good. The NECP is on a statutory footing. If this Minister went and if a new Government came in, and it had not captured the NECP, there is no guarantee that the action plan would translate into the next Government's commitments, whereas if it is in the NECP, it is locked in.

More importantly, though, for the committee, does this new draft of the NECP close the gap between the committee's landmark report and the action plan? Good and all as the action plan was, it was not as good as the committee's report, and if the committee has done a gap analysis, well then this is the moment to apply that gap analysis to the new NECP draft and see if the Government has moved things forward since June.

Crucially, the European Commission has given feedback on the draft NECP, so again - there is detail in my statement on this - has the Government responded to that in its new draft NECP? That is a role that this committee could have. They are the main things around the NECP.

On the long-term strategy, which flows directly from the Paris Agreement, the main question there is: what is our target for 2050? The Government gave positive indications in the action plan that it was minded to adopt a net zero target for 2050. This is the moment with the LTS to do that formally and to update our national policy position from 2014 and use this new LTS to adopt formally net zero as the national position. Does it set out sectoral pathways that contribute to that, which is expected of it? Does it make clear how the long-term vision in the LTS would be operationalised on a year-by-year basis? How does it relate to what are going to be the annual action plans?

On the Bill itself, it is the part of the Joint Committee on Climate Action report that was most successfully translated into the action plan. The Government more or less accepted wholesale European recommendations, but the committee asked for the Bill to be passed into law before the end of 2019. As far as we can see, nothing at all has happened - at least not publicly - on that.

In the Government's action plan, it said it would publish the full Bill in the first quarter of 2020, which is obviously different from the committee's timeline. We have clarified that with it, and it means the full Bill, agreed with us. That means the heads of the Bill have to go to committee for pre-legislative scrutiny in time for a report from the committee to be incorporated in

the full Bill before the end of March. The officials we spoke to - it was the Taoiseach and the Minister, Deputy Bruton - said that meant it coming into the Parliament well before Christmas, whether it is this committee or the other committee, to look at it and do pre-legislative scrutiny and to report by the end of January to allow reasonable changes the committee proposes to be incorporated.

We did not expect that before the budget but we expected it now, so has this committee or the other committee been in touch with the Minister and his officials? Is it coming and where is it at? Is it going to Government next week? Has the committee programmed time to deal with that between now and the end of January? It really is fundamental. Obviously, it is not going to be passed before the end of the year. Much as I would like it to be passed before the election - because it has to go through two House, obviously - at the very least, if we can get it through Second Stage before an election, it means there is an inevitable cross-party consensus if that is achieved and that it will be passed by whoever is in government next. That means it must get through Second Stage before the Easter recess, 9 April next year. That is a tight timeline, and our main message is that it will require the same sort of focus and purpose that this committee had to deliver the report applied by it just to drive the process. I know it is both a Government and a parliamentary process wider than this committee, but the committee members were the people who championed that governance structure. Committee members are the ones who will most notice if it is not achieved. We think it is up to the committee to drive that.

On the committee itself, we very much welcome that the action plan wholeheartedly endorsed the committee's proposal of a standing committee, but again, one cannot afford to leave it to others to make sure that happens. One has to take charge of that and drive it forward. If the opportunities in respect of the NECP, the LTS, the Bill and the committee are missed, we think the committee's really fundamentally positive legacy could be jeopardised. If the committee could get those four things over the line before the election, it would secure its legacy and move from the blueprint it produced in March to really strong foundations for future climate action with those four cornerstones. We wish the committee well in doing that. We offer any support we can from outside. I look forward to discussing that more with the committee. I thank the committee.

Chairman: Thank you very much. I appreciate the brevity. On a number of the issues you mentioned, Mr. Coghlan, we have invited the Minister, Deputy Bruton, to come before our committee in December in relation to the NECP. That is a matter of priority for the committee. We can write for an update on the timeline for the climate action (amendment) Bill. We do not schedule committee meetings here until we get notification from the Department but the scheduling will not be an issue. On dealing with the legislation, it will be the sectoral committee, the Oireachtas joint committee, that will be dealing with it but one can be assured that it is a priority for us. Once we hear about it, we will schedule for it.

I call Deputy Sherlock, who is sharing time with Deputy Jack Chambers.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: I thank Deputy Jack Chambers for sharing time with me.

I will set out a preamble before asking some very specific questions. Very few of us think about climate action in the context of the global north and the global south. My experience as a former Minister of State in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade made me conscious that the actions in the global north have a massive effect on the global south.

I am taken by what Professor Sweeney said about Ireland's contribution to the Green Cli-

mate Fund. I contend, however, that Irish Aid, through its partnership with the key partner countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, has been instrumental and a key driver in negotiating the financing round in Addis Ababa, leading to New York. Ethiopia has been a key international player in driving programmes such as the Productive Safety Net Programme, which offsets against the worst ravages of climate change. My point is that while we may be deemed to be climate laggards on the one hand, we seem to be leaders on the other in ensuring there are protective programmes for the global south, with which we have key relationships. I would like Professor Sweeney's perspective on this. Perhaps there is in the Irish position a dichotomy between being very proactive in ensuring the global south has some protections and being way behind when it comes to our own actions. I wish to defend Ireland's position on the global south and seek Professor Sweeney's perspective on that. I seek that perspective before asking further specific questions.

Professor John Sweeney: I share the Deputy's admiration for the work of Irish Aid in the global south. It has been excellent and is extremely well respected. Funds that go to Irish Aid are spent very carefully and effectively indeed to alleviate some of the worst problems of underdevelopment in the Irish Aid designated countries. The point I was really trying to make is that we cannot say much of the funding is strictly climate related. Much of it is tied to phenomena that have loose associations with climate change. The Green Climate Fund, which the country signed up to in Paris, had a target of €100 billion per year to be given to countries to use at their discretion for strictly climate-related objectives. Essentially, that is where we have fallen down thus far.

Let us consider some of the contributions to the Green Climate Fund. In addition to the overseas aid budget of the United Kingdom, €1.2 billion was given to the Green Climate Fund. The Germans gave just over €1 billion. That is a separate stream from what the Deputy is talking about in the sense of Irish Aid. I completely share his views on the role Ireland has played, however. It has a tremendous reputation for applying funds diligently and carefully, but those funds may well be in the areas of rural development and housing. The climate fund is really designed for enabling countries not to make the same mistakes we have made in the developed world in terms of their energy future and how they use solar energy and hydropower. That is a much more specific task. I agree completely, however, with the Deputy's comments on Irish Aid.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: I seek to be educated on the Article 6 rules, which are the focus of the suspended COP in Chile. I do not understand the so-called accounting mechanisms and modalities for a new form of international integration of carbon markets and offsetting to ensure carbon markets can support countries in enhancing the ambitions of their stated climate actions. Could somebody please distil that for me and the people I represent? Instinctively, I believe it is a key driver but I would like to hear from the witnesses what it means in layman's terms. What does it mean for Ireland in terms of its obligation to adhere to the Article 6 rules?

Professor John Sweeney: The Deputy will remember that I mentioned the large attendance at COP meetings. It is fair to say that perhaps 30% of attendees are trying to gain the system. There is a large market emerging in respect of how we handle sequestration and credits. The reason the rulebook was not finalised in Katowice and now has to go to COP25 is that Brazil, in particular, wanted to double-count some of its forest resources. There is an attempt to carry over the clean development mechanism credits that countries earned under Kyoto and have that basket of hot air put in the bank so they can then access them at a later stage as a way of getting around the system for further mitigation.

Article 6 is a labyrinth of legislation and regulation. One would need a degree solely in Article 6 to fully understand it. Ireland should support the Commission completely in the sense that it should not enable countries to have a carryover of credits that will later compromise our ability to achieve the necessary mitigation reductions. That is an important point because the creative accountants are multiplying furiously with a view to determining how to count sequestration and carry over credits from previous periods. All of that is to the detriment of tackling the problem at source, which is mitigation. We will see another wrangle in Madrid in four weeks over Article 6. It would be nice to say it will be settled but I have a feeling it will continue to run.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: Has anybody written a paper in layman's terms, for digestion by those who are not well versed in Article 6, on the very dynamic Professor Sweeney is talking about? It would be useful for this committee to have sight of views and interpretations such as those of Professor Sweeney. I acknowledge what Ms Higgins, Ms Sharkey and Mr. Coghlan, but particularly Mr. Coghlan, are saying about engaging with the Minister on the points raised here. We will have an opportunity to do that in December.

Professor John Sweeney: I am not aware of any paper as such, but Ms Higgins might have some information.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: Could Professor Sweeney write one himself?

Professor John Sweeney: I would not even dream of it. It is partly because scientists do not see the process. We do not have transparency in the negotiation process. We do not know what is going on behind closed doors in Ireland and, therefore, we do not have the insight to know who is saying what. Were it to be more out in the open, it would be possible to carry out an academic exercise on it.

Chairman: I will bring in Ms Higgins because I am conscious we are eating into Deputy Jack Chambers's time.

Ms Jennifer Higgins: In advance of the COP, I work with my Christian Aid colleagues in the United Kingdom, who would be much more up to date on this. They have a paper on expectations for the COP. It has a page on Article 6. When that is finalised, I will be very happy to share it with the committee.

Deputy Jack Chambers: I thank everyone for their presentations. I will be brief. We know from the EPA report that emissions are not reducing heading into COP25. What key changes in domestic and foreign policy would the witnesses like to see in the coming weeks and around the time of COP25 in terms of that interface we will see at the summit?

Chairman: Who would like to come in on that?

Mr. Oisín Coghlan: If I understand Deputy Chambers correctly, he is asking what would make the most difference to our emissions in that context. It is clear from recent figures from the EPA that the thing that is making the most difference is when Moneypoint power station is offline. We and Friends of the Earth and Stop Climate Chaos have been talking to the trade unions much more than we have before and engaging with them around this concept of just transition, given the need for our rapid exit from coal and peat burning and the fact that when Moneypoint is fully online, that method of generation provides 25% of our electricity but 50% of the pollution from our electricity. Rather than us saying we know when we think that method of generation should finish, because we know that peat burning should not go beyond the end of

next year at the latest, given that the subsidies end this year, and coal should end before 2025, what needs to happen and our ask now is that there be negotiations between the Government, trade unions, the local community and other stakeholders, including environmental groups, on that just transition package and what it will look like to help those communities move to a flourishing future that is not dependent on fossil fuel-based work.

We welcomed the announcement in the budget by the Minister, Deputy Bruton, that he was going to appoint a just transition commissioner, and that may be faster than the recommendation of a task force or the unions' preference, or the language they used, of a commission based on the Scottish model. What we need to see start happening now is a single person commissioned to bring people into a room to chair negotiations. There are models of deals around this transition in Spain, Germany and other countries. It would be great to see the Minister appoint that commissioner before he goes to Madrid, where in fact they have a very good just transition deal around coal, and for that to start happening on the ground, for those meetings and negotiations to begin to get us off coal and peat as soon as possible.

Deputy Jack Chambers: I will bank my next three questions because I know I am tight for time. Ireland, as the witnesses know, is leading a campaign to get a seat on the United Nations Security Council, and part of security and defence globally is very much interlinked with climate change. We are seeing displaced communities across the world. How do the witnesses think Ireland is aligning its role around climate action with its attempt to secure a seat on the United Nations Security Council? What has been the witnesses' interaction on that or do they have a comment to make on it? In terms of the role of the summit that is upcoming and on the voice of impacted communities and individuals, how do the witnesses think Ireland is doing in representing those voices that are impacted and reflecting their viewpoint at the summit? I have a question that relates to the ridiculous and outrageous comments by the Taoiseach around weighing up climate benefits versus the serious harm from climate change affecting local and global communities. How do the witnesses feel those comments are projected from a global context looking at Ireland, and how does that affect our global interface when it comes to matters around climate change and our discussions at summits like COP25?

Chairman: I will start with Ms Cliona Sharkey.

Ms Cliona Sharkey: I thank the Chairman and I thank Deputy Chambers for the important questions. The Deputy is correct that Ireland has indeed been integrating its support to least developed countries and small island developing states in the context of its bid for the United Nations Security Council. On the one hand, we would not dispute this. Ireland for many years has been a champion of these issues, both within UNFCCC circles but also elsewhere in multilateral fora. As I said, within the UNFCCC itself, Ireland provides consistent technical and policy support to the least developed countries and small island developing states. There is a disconnect and Deputy Sherlock asked that question about disconnect or dichotomy, because on the one hand that support is there, while on the other hand, Ireland is not coming out clearly in support of key issues for the small island developing states and the least developed countries in the negotiations on an increase in ambition. We urgently need an increase in ambition or this is going nowhere. As I said, Ireland did not form part of the coalition for a greater ambition at the COP last year. We are yet to see Ireland commit to the compromise proposals on the table for an increase in the ambition.

Ireland has not come forward with a plan for increasing its climate finance contributions alongside overseas development aid, ODA, which is critical for developing countries. There are the issues of loss and damage. Loss and damage are absolutely essential for the likes of

the small island developing states and least developed countries, which are already faced with incredibly high human and economic costs from incidents that they have not created. The only thing that has been put forward by developed countries to date on loss and damage financing is the issue of insurance. To date this is the only area we have seen Ireland say anything about. We would have concerns about that, because in terms of adequacy, insurance just will not meet the needs of loss and damage. From a moral perspective, it is really problematic to be promoting the idea of insurance as the response to loss and damage. We are asking poorer countries and poorer people with constrained budgets that we cannot even begin to fathom here to pay premiums to insure themselves against dramatic impacts that they have not caused and that have been caused by the lack of mitigation here.

Ireland needs to close that gap between its important, long-standing technical support and political support in many circles to the least developed countries and small island developing states and come out very strongly and clearly on those key issues that would be in solidarity with those states in the UNFCCC and that would be critical to building the trust that is needed to get other key items on the negotiating agenda across the line. We cannot underestimate the importance of those high-level political statements that Ireland and the European Union make at the UNFCCC. Aligning with the science and with the need to increase ambition and coming out in support of loss and damage is really critical.

Chairman: I ask Professor Sweeney to answer very briefly.

Dr. John Sweeney: It is right to say that there are policy priorities that we are not aware of, such as whether the policy priority of getting a seat at the United Nations Security Council trumps the policy priority of tackling, for example, the emissions from some of the leading emitters in the world. We have experienced some of that in the COP arena.

Turning to the question of coldness and winter deaths, I have completed a study on mortality and the relationship between temperature and winter deaths in Ireland. Among European countries we do have some of the highest rates of winter deaths, even higher than many of the colder Scandinavian countries, largely because of the nature of our housing stock. Certainly, while it is true to say that there would be, albeit narrowly defined and not in the short term, a reduction in winter deaths from coldness, it cannot be said without also balancing that with the fact that we would experience considerable increases in summer mortality from extra heat that we anticipate having. Also, it has to be balanced with other forms of mortality arising from climate change, such as increases in water-borne diseases. To pick out winter cold on its own and the changes that might occur is not doing justice to the full spectrum of the impacts of climate change in this case. I would certainly have liked the Taoiseach to have expressed that much better.

Loss and damage, which Ms Sharkey mentioned, are key components scientifically because the science is moving towards a situation now where we will be able to attribute the percentage contribution of human induced climate change to individual extreme events. The ability to run climate models multiple times with and without CO₂ enables this to be done. We are getting to the point where there will be an accounting exercise possible for loss and damage, and we should not omit that.

Chairman: Mr Coghlan might reply later. I am sure some of the questions will be similar. I am going to bring in Senator Devine now.

Senator Máire Devine: I thank everyone for their presentations. The finance for funding

climate change is talked about a lot, but there is very little discourse on divestment from fossil fuels and exploitative industries. For example, the savings, insurance policies and pensions of millions of people throughout the world amount to trillions of euro. Let us concentrate on Ireland, however. How can we collectively make arrangements so that ordinary people can compel companies not to use their money for planetary destruction and unethical practices? People who have pay-related social insurance, PRSI, should have an option but only one company in Ireland operates on ethical standards. Some years ago, it was possible, through the unions, to request that payments not go to the armaments industry, etc. Something like that has to happen on a collective level, because leaving such decisions to individuals will ensure nothing will happen. We need to roll out such options so that it becomes popular policy to divest from these types of sectors. I would like to hear any reflections or thoughts on that issue.

Exceptional weather events as a result of climate change are forcing the evacuation and migration of thousands of people from the global south towards the global north. That phenomenon is colliding with immigration policies in developed countries, including what has been happening recently in Ireland. People who seek to restrict immigration may, or may be perceived to be, also deniers of climate change. Such a cohort exists. How can we best provide education about those colliding forces and bring people along with us? People educated about climate action will be able to recognise that action on climate change will also ensure a diminution of enforced migration.

Gender equality is one of the cross-cutting topics of COP. I am interested in hearing more about the gender action plan and any contribution Ireland has made or plans to make to that theme. I also wonder about the role played by OPEC and the whole universe of the oil industry. Will Professor Sweeney outline the role of OPEC as a member of COP and will he clarify for us how many of the 15 members of OPEC have signed climate pledges? My next question concerns health and the overseas development assistance programmes we fund in health and education. Health is especially going to be impacted, with many resulting premature deaths. We are experiencing that here already, as was mentioned, and figure of 1,100 was the last statistic published in 2016. The impact of health effects is seven times greater in developing countries.

What is the genuine involvement of governments and agencies? They seem to direct all their efforts, energy and finance towards trying to find loopholes and redefining all of the articles set out. That seems to be the prime focus, instead of holding their hands up and taking an honest approach. It is like the emperor's new clothes. Perhaps honesty may be a bit too much to expect from politicians all of the time. I refer to facile interpretations of how to get out of doing something as opposed to being heartily involved in efforts to do something about climate change. I do not know if Professor Sweeney agrees with my perspective, but it seems that we are always looking for loopholes. We are buying more carbon credits, losing the run of ourselves and not tackling the problem.

Chairman: I invite Professor Sweeney to respond.

Professor John Sweeney: That is quite a menu to tackle, but I will do my best for some of those questions. Starting with divestment, this is a good success story for Ireland. The NGO sector was, by and large, behind this success, with the help of Deputy Pringle, which was instrumental. There is a favourable view of Ireland in many of the COPs meetings we attend, because it was the first country in the world to divest its sovereign wealth fund. That is a great achievement. There also needs to be similar action at individual level and down the scale. Universities are now actively divesting, as are faith groups and foundations. All in all, this is a great story and credit is due to Ireland for achieving it.

As Senator Devine mentioned, there are limited opportunities for individuals to go through their unit trusts, find out what percentage is invested in fossil fuel companies and then withdraw that. There is a limited market for that, but I think such a market will emerge from the demands of the public. Even now, some companies are moving toward impact investment rather than simply stating that they will not allow investment in fossil fuel companies. They are deciding to be more positive and to invest in Kenya or Malawi, where funds can do more good in the combined areas of climate and development. We will see market forces moving that way as well.

Turning to the extreme weather events and premature deaths, we have covered that already but in the developing world we expect those premature deaths to increase substantially in the years ahead. That will be caused by a combination of individual events, but also by the spread of diseases as new forms become viable in warming climates. Some of those diseases will affect us in Ireland, in a limited way, in the years ahead. On OPEC, that organisation is looking for a just transition as well. This is where negotiations will probably hit the rocks in some ways. I do not see the rest of the world agreeing to-----

Senator Máire Devine: Take on.

Professor John Sweeney: -----that in particular. It is certainly something that will come down to-----

Senator Máire Devine: How many of the current 15 members of OPEC have signed up?

Professor John Sweeney: I am not aware of any that have signed up to the increased activity group. I attended a side event in Katowice chaired by a representative from Saudi Aramco, and there were also representatives from the Bahrain Petroleum Company, Bapco, and other similar entities on the platform.

Senator Máire Devine: Right.

Professor John Sweeney: They were telling us how they were going to deliver more oil and gas more efficiently for us in the West to consume. They are certainly not moving towards reducing their production activities in any way, shape or form. In fact, Irish taxpayers pay some €2.5 billion a year to subsidise fossil fuels in this country. That might be a place to start looking at where we can use some of that money for a just transition for our own people as well.

Chairman: Would anyone else like to come in now?

Ms Jennifer Higgins: Concerning exceptional weather events, migration, climate and how we bring people on that journey and increase empathy, there is much work to be done in development education and better understanding the interconnectedness of climate change, conflict and poverty. That is also why for us as a development organisation, climate finance is a key theme. There is a direct connection in that climate change is only going to increase levels of conflict and poverty, which in turn drive people to migrate. We are concerned that, increasingly, funding will go to deal with climate change and projects in that area, particularly in developing countries. If that finance is not new and additional, however, our worry is that it will come at the expense of funding for health, education and gender projects. It is the same pool of money.

Development NGOs, small or large, will have to shift their focus of work according to where funding is directed. They will have to move to deal with the immediate impact of climate change and away from the structural root causes of inequality, to the detriment of programme work on human rights, governance etc. Some worrying language started to emerge in the COP

process during negotiations on the rule book in Katowice. There was a push to block the inclusion of a sentence from the preamble to the Paris Agreement. That sentence focused on the protection of human rights, gender rights and indigenous rights and was not included in the end.

While we are talking about increasing ambition to reduce emissions, it is important to remember these are interconnected processes and scientific reports clearly highlight that aspect.

Deputy Thomas Pringle: I thank all the delegates for their contributions. Unfortunately, I had to step out for some of them. Does Professor Sweeney think that Ireland's negotiating position regarding strengthening the EU ambition for the 2030 targets is sufficiently strong? Why is Ireland reluctant to support stronger more ambitious targets for the EU in line with the Fourth Assessment Report, AR4, of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2007? Is there a good reason to cap the amount of domestic mitigation that Ireland can do by way of purchasing offset credits under Article 6? Sweden, for example, is pushing the limit on the amount of non-domestic mitigation.

What is Mr. Coghlan's opinion of the need for a balance of expertise on the Climate Change Advisory Council given its very recent regrettable statements regarding the need to continue offshore gas exploration in Ireland?

What do the witnesses think of the proposal by some academics for a global fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty?

Professor John Sweeney: Briefly, I would love to know what the negotiating position going into COP25 will be. The committee should certainly ask that of the Department in the next round. There is a perception that Ireland in the past has sheltered behind intransigent countries such as Poland and some of the other east European countries. In the early days of COP when I used to go to the meetings EU spoke with one voice. There were breakfast meetings to sort out where the EU would go with a particular platform and position. It was quite encouraging to see the EU taking leadership of the climate issues at those meetings. In the last few COPs I have been to the EU has been paralysed by cattle and cars. I have seen Commissioner Cañete cutting a rather sad figure because he went into that meeting looking for increased ambition. He has not got it from the EU members and he does not seem to have got it from Ireland. That would be something to flesh out, just where Ireland's position is on this because we will suffer reputational damage if we do not come out and say we want to be leaders, this is what we are going to do and we will support increased ambition. If we are going to hide behind other countries that would be very detrimental.

In terms of capping domestic mitigation the UK has already scrapped some of the credits that it had, the hot air it had stored. That would be a good signal to the rest of the world that Ireland is serious about this. Ireland has already bought carbon credits many years ago. They are still in the bank. They could be scrapped at this stage. We spent €70 million buying hot air at the time of the Celtic tiger. I hope we are not going to use those down the road. It is time to do our own thing on mitigation and not seek the back door out of buying carbon credits. That is the wrong way to go.

Deputy Thomas Pringle: I think we are too late on that already.

Professor John Sweeney: We probably are.

Mr. Oisín Coghlan: Specifically, on Deputy Pringle's question, we did welcome the Climate Change Advisory Council and called in advance for it not to be a stakeholder body. It is

important that it be an expert body. We were not looking to be on it or having other members of the social partnership on it. It is correct that it is an expert body. Even the current members of the Climate Change Advisory Council would probably say there are too many economists on it. They are almost all economists. It is bonkers that there is no climate scientist on it. There are several to choose from, one is in this room, but no climate scientist was put on the advisory council. That was not an oversight, it was done deliberately for some reason. Beyond that, there is a need for a broader set of expertise, including sociology and social science, and possibly even psychology and communications as in a broader package of expertise.

Deputy Thomas Pringle: A climate scientist would be a help.

Mr. Oisín Coghlan: As I said, yes absolutely a climate scientist on the climate issue. I hope that the next council would have a broader balance of expertise.

I know the Senator has left the room but I do not have a perfect answer to the question of migration. It does bring to mind, however, a debate we are having inside the climate movement now about how we dovetail our demands for drastic reductions in emissions with people's concerns about jobs, welfare, livelihood etc. The more we have looked into this the more we have found the answer is some sort of green new deal framing. It was great to see *The Irish Times* choose climate change as an issue to poll on recently. After the headline figure, however, it juxtaposed climate action with living standards and costs whereas we all know that failing to act on climate change is the much greater risk to livelihoods, incomes and future welfare than not acting on it. The framing of the green new deal that we think is so attractive and positive is that it aims to improve public services as opposed to trading them off with climate action. Improving public services, reducing inequality and fighting discrimination as part of how we go about reducing emissions, whether that is warmer homes for everybody or cheaper more accessible public transport, there are lots of places where there are real benefits to climate action as well as reducing emissions. We need to use that framing. That does not directly address the issue of migration because we know that in all of these populist – to use the polite phrase – outpourings, whether around Brexit, Trump or migration, there are other issues of alienation and feelings of being left behind at their heart. Climate action does give us an opportunity, while addressing an existential threat, to address other burning issues for people and not make it another thing that is being done to them, climate action, that is, as opposed to climate change. We can use something that we are collectively struggling to overcome in a way that actually improves society and has flourishing communities in a zero carbon future.

Ms Cliona Sharkey: The fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty is a very interesting proposal. We would be strongly in support of that idea. A few weeks ago we had a visitor, the founder and director of the carbon tracker initiative who coined the concept of the carbon bubble and did the numbers that led to the emergence of the fossil fuel divestment movement globally and the keep it in the ground movement. He has talked about the idea of a non-proliferation treaty. He travels the world talking about this issue. When he was here he said that he had recently been in Brazil, Argentina and Canada and in each country he met the Head of State or Ministers who said yes this is the most important issue humanity faces but that as responsible countries they had to exploit their fossil fuel reserves. He hears the same thing in every country without fail. It has to stop somewhere. It is a recipe for disaster. The idea of a non-proliferation treaty, where there is agreement on all sides not to take advantage of indigenous reserves in order to really advance the solutions, would be really important. However, we do not have the time it would take to negotiate such a treaty. We could however advance that idea to build understanding and buy-in for the idea of not investing in new reserves but at the same time to advance

the end of those regimes and the idea. We need countries to step forward and say they will not exploit their reserves. Ireland being the first country to divest from fossil fuel and having taken the step to end new licences for oil exploration should step up and be one of those countries to end all fossil fuel exploration and extraction for new and existing licences.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: I thank all those who gave presentations and wish those travelling to the COP well. I had the opportunity to go with Trócaire to the 2007-8 COPs and I know the huge amount of work that civil society puts into shaping and trying to make these debates as constructive as possible. I commend it on that.

I want to focus on some of the cross-cutting themes that are emerging, starting with finance. Professor John FitzGerald of the Climate Change Advisory Council appeared before the committee a couple of weeks ago and was asked about the logic behind the carbon tax and an increase in carbon pricing in Ireland. While there is much discussion of lifestyle, the economic logic is that of externalities and the idea that there are significant costs to fossil fuels which are being absorbed by society and the environment and are not reflected in their price. I and other members of the committee have made the case that, surely, on that basis, every penny gathered in carbon tax should be addressed towards mitigation or adaptation rather than simply ring-fencing the increase. It is a small issue but it is tied to the wider principle that the polluter pays.

Irish Aid has some very good practices in respect of grants, empowerment and the quality of what is done on a wider scale as well as in regard to climate. It is clear that the scale is very low and that aid is not the right frame for much of this. Professor Sweeney referred to the Green Climate Fund. Loss and damage finance could also be of particular assistance to the small island nations which Ireland has spoken about championing. They have significant concerns because in some cases they are looking at the end of entire cities, towns or communities which they know will be flooded. The impacts are already being felt. In some cases, this is about re-planning rather than taking preventative or adaptive measures. I refer to new additional finance and the Green Climate Fund. The block of developed countries and the European Union need to support technology transfer in the talks as well as the issues of public-public partnership and co-operation. We need action to be scaled up quite quickly, but I am concerned that in many cases we are waiting for the private sector which may bring forward patents, intellectual property and other solution. Ireland could champion the use of technology transfer.

The testimony of the witnesses has shown that this is a collective challenge and that our collective energy security depends on action. One of the features of the climate change conference is that issues can be examined, particularly offsetting. Ireland seems to be very confident that it has offsetting credits, but creative accounting may be an issue. On offsetting and the ethics of offsetting, reference was made to forestry, which has been the subject of several meetings of the committee. We have looked at issues such as how to avoid causing ecological damage in the process of capturing carbon with regard to the offsetting mechanisms of the REDD scheme.

How will upstream costs and the issue which will become more pressing of major actors such as the United States potentially pulling out of the climate agreement affect the debate? What position should Ireland take on the issue of upstream costs? We know there are proposals for carbon tax on imports within the European Union. It is linked to the idea of non-territorial costs.

On trade agreements, the Paris targets were incorporated in the EU-Japan trade agreement but Japan is pursuing coal exploration in Bangladesh. I ask the witnesses to address such extra-territorial issues and how we can ensure that the various elements can be linked and monitored,

as well as the other aspects of our international relations. Does the conference offer a chance to put brakes on such actions?

Does Professor Sweeney see the potential for increased ambition regarding non-carbon greenhouse gases, specifically methane which has been the subject of debate and has a shorter-term impact. Is there potential for additional or further collective action in that regard?

Mr. Oisín Coghlan: On ring fencing, we strongly called for all carbon tax revenue, not just the increased revenue, to be ring-fenced. That was our message in the run-up to the budget. Interestingly, on the “Today with Sean O’Rourke” radio programme, the Minister for Finance, Deputy Donohoe, acknowledged that that should be the direction of travel. He committed to ring-fencing the new revenue but also acknowledged that we will or should be spending all sums gathered from the carbon tax on climate actions. We are already spending more than the extra €100 million. There is scope for pushing for all of the revenue to be ring-fenced. It may not be an open door, but there was a crack or an acknowledgement that there is logic to it. Ring-fencing the entire carbon tax revenue, possibly over several years, should be pursued in the context of negotiations on the programme for Government and the budget next year.

Professor John Sweeney: On bringing this to a larger scale, we will not solve the climate problem until it is elevated to the World Trade Organization, WTO, arena. Some years ago, the then President of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, suggested border adjustments whereby countries which were not appropriately mitigating the greenhouse gas component of their products would face a tax or tariff at the border. That suggestion may have to be revisited because I do not see how one can have a level playing field if countries are effectively subsidising their exports and distorting the market through pollution which is not counted. There may be a role for Ireland in terms of its involvement in WTO processes. Neither the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement nor the Japan agreement cover this area in any form I would like to see.

On short-lived non-carbon greenhouse gases, mitigating 1 tonne of methane is equivalent to mitigating 32 tonnes of CO₂ over the next 100 years. There is a role for looking at short-lived pollutants as a means of getting a quick fix to this problem. Countries that have very high proportions of such emissions, particularly methane emissions, should give serious consideration to whether they should play a more significant role in mitigating those emissions in the short term as a way of addressing some of the more severe problems that may arise in the future.

Ms Jennifer Higgins: On the Green Climate Fund and the good practices of Irish Aid, we think Irish Aid is a beacon of hope for Ireland. It is not spoken about enough. I attended the sustainable development goals high-level political forum in July. There were plenary sessions specifically on goal 13 but Ireland did not contribute to them. That is a shame because all of the developing states turned up to the forum talking about the need for adaptation and greater availability of grants. Ireland could have outlined the measures we are taking and encouraged the rest of the European Union to take similar measures. Ireland is providing nearly 100% in grants for adaptation but at EU level it is only approximately 30%.

There is a perspective that private finance will fill the gap. However, private finance will always prioritise a return on its investment and mitigation - investing in solar farms, etc. - will always be where it sees that return. Unfortunately, a solar field farm will not be any use when a typhoon hits. That will increasingly push developing countries to take out more loans and they will be unable to reduce their emissions and adapt to increasing climate change. Loss and damage is being sought because those countries are saying they cannot cope with severe weather events with current funding and the way it is structured. The Green Climate Fund is a particu-

larly good fit for Ireland because it is focused on adaptation. We would like to see far more of an increase in that regard. With any increase in multilateral funding, there must be an acknowledgement of funding for NGOs such as ours which are working directly with partners on the ground because it is quite difficult to monitor multilateral agencies. It is very easy to increase funding and give it straight to a UN body. We would seek some level of parity in that regard.

Ms Cliona Sharkey: I will briefly speak to the question asked by Senators Devine and Higgins about finance flows in terms of volume. When the need to increase climate finance and create a new category of climate finance - loss and damage - is raised, we often hear the view that there is no more money. However, denying the reality of the need is not going to resolve the problem. If we examine the level of finance that is continuing to go into the problem, for example, fossil fuel subsidies of all kinds, we see that a great deal of finance could be repurposed into solutions. There has been considerable debate for many years about the establishment of new and innovative mechanisms to generate new streams of finance and tackle climate damaging activities, for example, shipping levies, aviation levies and fossil fuel extraction taxes. This could be a double win. There are sources from which the available levels of public finance could be increased.

Regarding trade, I agree with Professor Sweeney and Senator Higgins that it is key that we examine where the crunch points are where we will make structural, systematic changes in investment that will impact on climate change mitigation. That is why concerns were raised by the likes of us and many other stakeholders in the Irish debate about TTIP and CETA and the risk that the mechanisms of some such trade negotiations would impinge on states' ability to legislate for public health and public good issues such as climate change.

Chairman: I thank Ms Sharkey. We must leave it there, as the committee has another session and we are tight for time in this room. I thank all of the witnesses for appearing before us. It was appreciated.

Sitting suspended at 3.52 p.m. and resumed at 3.56 p.m.

Chairman: On behalf of the committee, I extend a warm welcome to the witnesses from the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Mr. Frank Maughan, Mr. Colin O'Hehir and Ms Emer Griffin. From the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, I welcome Mr. John Muldowney. From the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, I welcome Mr. Feilim McLaughlin and Mr. Aidan Fitzpatrick.

Before beginning, I will deal with some formalities. I advise the witnesses that, by virtue of section 17(2)(l) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of their evidence to the committee. However, if they are directed by it to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and they continue to do so, they are entitled thereafter only to a qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. They are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and are asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person, persons or entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable.

Members are reminded of the long-standing ruling of the Chair to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the Houses or an official either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable.

I call Mr. Maughan to make his opening statement.

Mr. Frank Maughan: Good afternoon. I thank the committee for the opportunity to address it on the topic of the State's preparation for and input into the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNFCCC Conference of the Parties, or COP25. In my opening statement, I propose to focus on the work of the UNFCCC and to outline the way in which Ireland participates in the convention's work and that of its subsidiary bodies and agreements.

Climate change represents the defining challenge of this generation. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC, the world's leading body for research and data on climate change, has produced a number of milestone reports, including the 2018 report on 1.5oC and the two reports this year on climate change and land and on the oceans and cryosphere, which predict a range of threats from climate change ranging from increased frequency and severity of extreme weather events, sea level rises and ocean acidification to widespread droughts, flooding and extreme heatwaves.

For nearly three decades, the international effort to reduce the extent of climate change and to adapt to its effects has been co-ordinated by the UNFCCC. Under this convention, and through the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement, parties have committed to action aimed at stabilising greenhouse gas emissions in order to avoid dangerous climate change. Ireland participates in UNFCCC negotiations in its capacity as a party to the convention, the Paris Agreement and the Kyoto Protocol, but also as a member state of the European Union, which is a party to the convention in its own right.

The Paris Agreement, adopted in 2015, represents a key milestone in global action to address climate change. Ireland is a strong supporter of the Paris Agreement and has played an active role in subsequent negotiations to operationalise it. There are two principal negotiating spaces for deliberations on the agreement and other matters under the UNFCCC, those being, the technical strand and the political strand. The two permanent subsidiary bodies of the convention - the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice, SBSTA, and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation, SBI - meet twice per year, generally around May or June and again during each annual COP. Negotiations under both bodies address a range of technical issues related to the implementation of the convention, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement.

The second negotiating space is the political element, which takes place during each COP climate conference and provides the focal point of annual climate negotiations. The COP is the overarching decision-making body of the convention. All parties to the convention are represented at the COP, at which they review the implementation of the convention and any other legal instrument that the COP adopts and take decisions necessary to promote the effective implementation of the convention. The COP also serves as the meeting of the parties to the Kyoto Protocol and the meeting of the parties to the Paris Agreement.

The most recent COP - COP24 - took place in Katowice, Poland, in December 2018 and had two main deliverables – the completion of the set of rules that would enable the full and robust implementation of the Paris Agreement and the culmination of the Talanoa Dialogue, the global participative dialogue, led by the Fijian COP presidency, which took place during the course of 2018, on the adequacy of global climate actions and ambition. The COP concluded with parties agreeing virtually all elements of the Katowice work programme, which will enable the full operationalisation of the Paris Agreement. Parties were unable to reach agreement on the discussions regarding Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. Negotiations on this topic continued at Bonn in June and will be a key focus to conclude at COP25.

As the committee will be aware, Chile, which had been due to host COP25 in Santiago in the first two weeks in December, last week announced that it was no longer in a position to do so in light of domestic political developments. The UNFCCC secretariat has since confirmed that Spain has offered to hold the COP in Madrid on the originally planned dates from 2 December to 13 December.

I will now briefly address how Ireland engages with the work of the UN in climate change. As a member state of the EU, Ireland works to develop the EU position and participates in international climate negotiations in its own right and as part of the EU delegation. Within the EU, the Council of Environment Ministers adopts political guidelines, in the form of Council conclusions, in advance of each COP meeting. These are, in turn, prepared by the Council's preparatory bodies, working parties and COREPER in the same way as other Council conclusions are prepared. The most recent Council of Environment Ministers, which took place on 4 October, adopted conclusions for COP25 and these are available on the website of the Council.

In terms of the work of COP25, these conclusions focus on: the need to conclude negotiations on the Paris Agreement rules on a co-operation mechanism under Article 6; the second review of the Warsaw international mechanism for loss and damage; the Lima work programme on gender; and advancing technical work on the arrangements under the enhanced transparency framework. In parallel with these political guidelines, the EU, through the same working party structures, also prepares a set of detailed negotiating positions in advance of each COP meeting which are used for the negotiations by the EU delegations on the ground.

Ireland's delegation at each COP meeting is generally led by the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment. Heads of State and Government may also be invited to participate in a COP meeting by the host country. The Taoiseach, for example, participated in COP21, which adopted the Paris Agreement in 2015. In the context of Ireland's strong support for the Paris Agreement, a key national priority for the most recent COP meetings has been to make progress on the Paris Agreement rule book and this has been our focus within the EU and in the UN negotiations themselves. In parallel, Ireland has also sought to highlight and promote the role of non-party actors in both addressing climate change and in having a voice in international notions. In this respect, Ireland very much welcomes indicatives such as the Talanoa dialogue and the global climate action agenda. We have also sought to provide funding support to the UN to enable the participation of colleagues from developing countries and, in 2018, provided a once-off contribution of €300,000 for those purposes over the period 2018 to 2019.

Ireland is a strong supporter of the need for the Paris Agreement to serve the climate action needs of least developed countries and small island developing states. The impacts of climate change will be felt disproportionately by poor and vulnerable people worldwide, with women often the most affected. Least developed countries and small island developing states which have contributed least to the problem are also least able to withstand these pressures. In this context, Ireland provides funding to the least developed countries fund through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, with contributions of €1 million annually over recent years as part of overall Irish Aid spending.

Another priority for Ireland is to ensure that the needs and contributions of men and women are equally reflected in the implementation of the Paris Agreement. In 2018, Ireland contributed €500,000 to the UNFCCC to support the delivery of its capacity-building programmes, with a focus on the gender-related impacts of climate change. Ireland's new policy for international development, A Better World, places gender equality and climate action as clear interlinked priorities for our international sustainable development co-operation. The policy indicates the

necessary step change to ensure that gender equality and climate action are addressed across multiple decision-making bodies and in a more coherent manner.

I have touched on a number of topics in this opening statement but there is, of course, much detail behind each of these, as well as many others which are relevant to international climate change negotiations and the COP meetings in particular. I am very happy to take any questions members may have.

Chairman: At the earlier session, Professor Sweeney stated that some countries have been registering civil society groups and NGOs as part of their delegations at COP25. I understand Ireland is not doing so. Can Mr. Maughan expand on the reasons for this? When the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was negotiated, there was a much greater participation of civil society groups, which, I understand, took part in the plenary sessions. Can Mr. Maughan comment on the delays in accreditation, even as party overflow, and indicate if there is a timeline on this?

Mr. Frank Maughan: Each year, in advance of the COP meeting, we take expressions of interest from members of civil society to participate in our national delegation within a structure known as party overflow, whereby individual civil society members travel to each COP meeting as part of the delegation and have access to negotiating spaces other than where a negotiation is specifically indicated as being for parties only. We have taken this approach in recognition of the fact that COP meetings have tended to offer limited capacity for those in civil society to participate in their own right or as members of the public. The available spaces for such participation are generally exhausted in an online registration process quite early in the year but we can register them as members of the national delegation in a party overflow capacity right up to the start of the COP, which is a much more flexible approach.

Part of the delay relates to the change of venue. It is unfortunate that the notice given by the Chilean Government to withdraw as host of the COP has caused logistical headaches for governments. Spain has helpfully stepped up to host it but there are issues that need to be ironed out in terms of re-registration of delegations who had already registered to go to Chile. We are waiting for confirmation from the UN secretariat based in Bonn of the capacity of delegations to have members of civil society as participants. It is an unfortunate consequence of the notice given by the Chilean Government and there was no intentional delay in communicating with members of civil society who have indicated their interest in participating.

Deputy Jack Chambers: I was not here for the presentation but I have read the documentation. An audit found that the monitoring of climate targets by the Department was unsatisfactory. Can Mr. Maughan respond to that?

Mr. Frank Maughan: Can the Deputy indicate the document to which he is referring?

Deputy Jack Chambers: There was a recent article in *The Irish Times* which indicated that the State system for monitoring whether Ireland is meeting key climate change targets is unsatisfactory. That was according to an internal Department audit document. Can Mr. Maughan respond to that?

Mr. Frank Maughan: I will do my best, without knowing to which document the Deputy is referring.

Deputy Jack Chambers: Surely Mr. Maughan knows.

Chairman: Allow Mr. Maughan to answer.

Mr. Frank Maughan: The issue of monitoring performance against targets can be looked at in different ways. The Environmental Protection Agency is charged with preparing national inventories of greenhouse gas emissions, which it does on an annual basis, and it published the most recent set of inventories for 2018 only a couple of weeks ago. It prepares projections of greenhouse gas emissions under its statutory independent function as part of its environment monitoring role. The Department, the Minister and the Government take the statistics on board.

Deputy Jack Chambers: Perhaps I can enlighten Mr. Maughan. He is obviously not aware of the audit so I will read what it concluded.

Chairman: This meeting relates to the COP meeting. That is our remit today.

Deputy Jack Chambers: I appreciate that.

Chairman: If the Deputy's questions are related to that, he may pose them.

Deputy Jack Chambers: They are related to climate targets, which are very important in the context of COP.

Chairman: We will see how the Deputy goes, then.

Deputy Jack Chambers: The audit concluded that the arrangements in place in respect of the monitoring and oversight of the climate change target within the Department are unsatisfactory. The audit found that the Minister is not informed on a systematic basis of performance gaps and, as a result, the Minister was unable to advise the Government of the need for corrective action. There were no procedural arrangements for reporting progress on emissions targets within the Department and the audit found that this posed a risk that the decisions may not be informed by the most recent information. It also found that there was no regular arrangement for reporting progress on renewable energy targets to the management board. What has changed in the context of the monitoring of climate targets since that audit was carried out? We are feeding the information on monitoring targets through to an international forum so the targets, and how we audit them, are important in the context of COP25. Can the Department enlighten me on this before I move on to the specific topic?

Mr. Frank Maughan: I will comment on the role of the system in assessing performance and monitoring targets. One aspect of the EPA's role, as part of its inventories, is to provide an assessment of Ireland's compliance against our European and international targets. In doing so, it also reports annually to the European Union and the United Nations. There are very detailed rules in place at both levels in terms of what parties and member states of the EU must report, the frequency of reporting and the level of detailed reporting. Over a number of years, that has been the situation and it has been put into the public domain by the agency on a very informative and systematic basis. That is used by the Government system and as part of the public debate.

To try to address the Deputy's specific query on the audit report, the development I will refer to is what the Government has done in regard to the climate action plan. The governance arrangements for the climate action plan can be seen as a step change in the Government's approach to monitoring performance against our climate targets. As the Deputy will be aware, there are provisions for quarterly reporting of actions in the climate action plan and the first quarterly report was published last week. A climate action delivery board, chaired by the

Secretary General of my Department and the Secretary General to the Government, has been established and is meeting regularly. The arrangements for monitoring and reporting within Government have changed quite significantly since that audit report, which I understand is from last year.

Deputy Jack Chambers: Mr. Maughan initially stated that he was not aware what it was. I want to move on to ask about the UN climate action summit in September. Ireland signed up to a number of initiatives around mitigation strategy, an energy transition coalition and a nature-based solutions coalition. What is the precise nature of Ireland's commitment in these areas, how does it apply to domestic policies and what new legislation and investment can we expect as a result of the commitments that Ireland has made?

Mr. Frank Maughan: Again, there is a range of commitments which we have entered into and the Department has answered parliamentary questions from the Deputy on those commitments. They are varied in nature and reflect the thematic tracks of the climate action summit across a range of policy areas, be it mitigation, transport, agriculture or youth engagement - the whole range of issues. These are political statements of intent which the lead countries have invited other countries to sign up to. In terms of ambition, it is now up to those lead countries to come forward with specific proposals in terms of how the signatories should seek to implement them. That has not developed any further since the summit.

Deputy Jack Chambers: There is no new legislation or investment underpinning any of the statements.

Mr. Frank Maughan: We see these as reflections of our statement of intent on domestic policy and where we want to go domestically.

Deputy Jack Chambers: Has there been any detail on transposing those words into real policies?

Mr. Frank Maughan: I would put it the other way round. The Government has signed up to those commitments because of the domestic political policy commitments we have made, including through the climate action-----

Deputy Jack Chambers: There is no meaningful policy output from them.

Mr. Frank Maughan: That is not necessarily a fair characterisation. They are expressions of-----

Deputy Jack Chambers: Can Mr. Maughan list them?

Mr. Frank Maughan: They are expressions of our ambitions-----

Chairman: I will let Deputy Jack Chambers back in. He should allow Mr. Maughan finish his sentence.

Deputy Jack Chambers: I have limited time and a lot of questions.

Chairman: The Deputy has to let Mr. Maughan answer the questions as well. I have no problem with the back and forth the Deputy has to allow for the answer.

Deputy Jack Chambers: I asked a specific question about legislation and investment and I have not received a response.

Chairman: Can the Deputy repeat the question?

Deputy Jack Chambers: In regard to the UN climate action summit in September, there were five initiatives to which Ireland subscribed. I asked about legislation and investment underpinning those policy announcements and initiatives. I just want to know what they are.

Mr. Frank Maughan: Absolutely. My response was to confirm that there is no legislative requirement arising from those commitments. These are political statements of the State's intent at international level in the context of the climate action summit to say, "We are prepared to be ambitious on this particular agenda". These are things which will be given expression in domestic policy. The Deputy can see they are being given expression, for example, in regard to the recent budget commitments on expenditure of carbon tax revenues and the additional funding provided to the National Parks and Wildlife Service for rehabilitation of peatlands. That was an example of how one of the commitments we have entered into can be given expression through domestic policy but the expression is very much in the line of the normal budgetary processes, so the implementation of domestic policy is there already.

Deputy Jack Chambers: The Government announced in budget 2020 it would double its annual contribution to the green climate fund. Is it correct we will double it from the current commitment of €8 million to €16 million? Can the Department explain why our contribution is far lower than those of comparable EU states?

Mr. Frank Maughan: The Deputy is correct in that the budget included an announcement of a doubling of our annual commitment from €2 million to €4 million. The doubling of the commitment is in line with the positions taken by other contributors to the green climate fund. As the Deputy may be aware, the fund is going through a replenishment process at the moment to provide resources for the next four years. What we have seen is that all of the current contributors who have already made announcements have committed to doubling their contributions, so our announcement was very much in line with that. The green climate fund represents only a very small portion of our overall climate finance contribution annually, so it should not be misrepresented as being a very small amount in terms of climate finance. We are providing much larger volumes, including through Irish Aid, and the most recent figures available indicate we provided approximately €77 million in total climate finance in 2018.

Deputy Jack Chambers: Can the draft NECP, which was produced some months ago, be improved following feedback from European Commission? On a similar note, Ireland has to submit a 30-year long-term strategy to the EU by the end of January. Will that be consistent with the Paris Agreement objective to keep emissions below 1.5°C? What modelling and analysis has been undertaken to give that effect? When will this be consulted on and how will it align with the new climate (amendment) Bill? Will it include commitments in accordance with the increasing EU ambition to reach a net zero target by 2050?

Mr. Frank Maughan: The Deputy has touched on a range of different issues between the NECP, the long-term strategy and the climate legislation. I am aware that the committee has sought to invite the Minister to meet it to discuss the NECP in the coming weeks. Both the NECP and the long-term strategy are to be submitted to the European Union by the end of this year and work on both is ongoing. The Deputy has identified the issue of consultation. It is the Department's position to consult on the draft final NECP before it is submitted but also very soon on the long-term strategy. In regard to the climate action Bill, it is probably too soon to start talking about the Bill as, obviously, it has not been prepared yet and is still being worked on. To go back to the statements in the climate action plan in the context of the Bill, there is

very much a commitment there would be incorporation of a long-term target within the legislation, and that is specifically set out in the climate action plan.

The Deputy asked about consistency and coherence with regard to the Paris Agreement. It is certainly the objective of the European Union in the legislation that has been prepared, which sets out the requirement for member states to produce a long-term strategy, that those strategies should be consistent with achievement of the Paris Agreement objectives. That is the basis we are working on.

Deputy Jack Chambers: Will heads of that Bill be published before December? When does Mr. Maughan expect it to be published?

Mr. Frank Maughan: I cannot state the position on that. I am aware of the commitment in the climate action plan to publish the Bill in quarter 1 of next year but I cannot say specifically when the heads will be published.

Deputy Jack Chambers: Has there been engagement with the Climate Change Advisory Council on it?

Mr. Frank Maughan: The climate action plan specifically requests the Climate Change Advisory Council to come forward with recommendations on the carbon budgeting part of the proposed legislation. I am aware that the council is looking at those recommendations and it intends to submit them to the Minister after its November meeting at the end of this month.

Chairman: We earlier agreed to write to the Department on the timeframe for the heads of those Bills. I hope the Department will revert to the committee on that.

Does Deputy Pringle want to come in?

Deputy Thomas Pringle: I was not expecting to come in so quickly.

Chairman: You need not come in now if you do not want.

Deputy Thomas Pringle: I will definitely take the opportunity.

I know the departmental officials were here to hear the earlier contributions from the civil society representatives. Some of the comments were fairly damning of Ireland's position on the COP and how we perform. While we seem to make some commitments, it seems to be window dressing and we are not doing anything in particular. For example, in his contribution Professor Sweeney said that at COP24 last year 27 countries resolved to step up their ambition by 2020. These included the following EU nations: Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Spain and Sweden. Why did Ireland refuse to sign that?

Eight member states of the European Union wrote to the Commission last week urging an increase in the EU's 2030 target from 40% to 55%. Why did Ireland refuse to sign that?

Professor Sweeney also said that on climate finance, Ireland has not distinguished itself as generous to the Green Climate Fund which was established at COP16. The consensus from them was that we are good at saying things, but we are very poor at doing. I ask the officials to comment on that as they may have a different view.

Mr. Frank Maughan: I will try to deal with the questions in order. The Deputy mentioned ambition and the statements about COP24. There was a discussion among some parties on the

margins of the COP, not within the EU delegation as a whole, on whether a political statement needed to be made to help the negotiations over the line at the COP. We certainly did not deliberately decide not to sign up to that; it was something that emerged on the ground.

Deputy Thomas Pringle: Were we asked to sign up to it?

Mr. Frank Maughan: From memory, I do not think that we were. I think it was probably a group of countries that were in the space.

Deputy Thomas Pringle: Were we aware that it was happening?

Mr. Frank Maughan: It came at very short notice-----

Deputy Thomas Pringle: We were aware of it.

Mr. Frank Maughan: -----on the ground. It was not prepared by the EU delegation in advance.

Deputy Thomas Pringle: Do we only do what the EU prepares?

Mr. Frank Maughan: No. I suppose it would be a reflection of the ability of the Minister and the Department to sign up to things on the ground as they happen. Sometimes that is not necessarily possible. It is a function of how the COP meetings sometimes work that there are coalitions of different countries proposing different things which will come into the public domain at the COP plenary at relatively short notice. Ireland undertakes its primary networking through the EU delegation. This statement was not prepared as an EU position.

Deputy Thomas Pringle: Ten of our partners in the EU signed up to it, but we did not.

Mr. Frank Maughan: In this case it again reflects the position that some member states have been expressing for some time regarding the desire to push for higher levels of ambition.

Deputy Thomas Pringle: We do not.

Mr. Frank Maughan: I think that relates to the Deputy's second question about the group of eight member states. We have traditionally not been part of that group at EU level. As the Deputy will be aware we have not joined that group. In the context of discussions at EU level, we have signed up to higher ambition for mid-century. At the June European Council, the Taoiseach was able to sign up to a net-zero ambition for mid-century, notwithstanding that some member states were not in a position to sign up for that then.

The Deputy's final question was about climate finance. Is that correct?

Deputy Thomas Pringle: Eight member states of the EU wrote to the Commission last week urging an increase in the EU's 2030 target from 40% to 55%. The signatories did not include Ireland.

Mr. Frank Maughan: I think I have already answered that question. That is the group of eight member states that have traditionally been working-----

Deputy Thomas Pringle: No. That is a separate issue. There were more member states on that one. Is it the same answer?

Mr. Frank Maughan: It is the same answer.

Deputy Thomas Pringle: Basically, we just did not bother.

Mr. Frank Maughan: That is not what I said. Just to be clear, I do not want the Deputy to be mis-characterising me. I am saying there is a group of eight member states that have been working for some time as a coalition at EU level on this. We have not been part of that coalition.

Deputy Thomas Pringle: There were ten in the first one.

Chairman: Does the Deputy have other questions?

Deputy Thomas Pringle: The overall perception is that Ireland is talking the talk but not walking the walk. I may be characterising what was said earlier on that. Obviously, I would like to hear Mr. Maughan's view on that.

Mr. Frank Maughan: I do not know how answer that question specifically. It is a very broad question and it is a perspective of others and may depend on whether one looks at the domestic policy or the international policy. Obviously as the Deputy will be aware, we have published a climate action plan as a statement of the Government's intent for the next ten years. The committee has already had some discussion of Ireland's role in supporting developing countries - the financial support we are giving to developing countries and the work of Irish Aid. When the Deputy characterises us as talking the talk but not walking the walk, I am not sure what he is specifically talking about.

Deputy Thomas Pringle: I have listened to the Taoiseach quote our climate ambition. Embarrassingly for me it has all been quoting. I sponsored a Bill that the Government opposed right up to the point when it knew that it would pass. That has been the limit of our achievements on climate action. The Taoiseach recently spoke in the Dáil about climate change bringing benefits to Ireland. Would that be a view in the Department? That would feed into our COP responses. I believe the Taoiseach said that climate warming was reducing fuel bills. Is that a view overall within Government or is that just a politician?

Mr. Frank Maughan: I do not propose to comment on what the Taoiseach has said.

Chairman: The officials represent the Department. They will not comment on a political statement.

Does the Deputy have any other questions?

Deputy Thomas Pringle: Is it the Department's view that the climate change mitigation measures we have taken are adequate and that there are no benefits from climate change for Ireland?

Mr. Frank Maughan: What is the question?

Deputy Thomas Pringle: There are no benefits from climate change. Would that be the view of departmental officials?

Mr. Frank Maughan: Again, the Deputy is asking me to comment on the Taoiseach's statement. I do not propose to get into the space of commenting on what the Taoiseach has said.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: May I make a suggestion? I do not wish to use the committee's time on it. A good point was made about the five initiatives. Perhaps a note could be

provided to the committee on how those initiatives have been reflected in domestic policy.

Chairman: Agreed. I thank the Senator.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: It might be just a follow-up note. I think it would be useful to all members.

Chairman: Would the Senator mind grouping her questions?

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: I will do so.

Chairman: I am conscious that we need to go into private session after this.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: Some of my questions will echo the questions asked earlier.

The point has been made that the rationale behind the carbon tax, with the increase in carbon pricing, has been economic externalities and the fact that the social and environmental costs of fossil fuels have not been reflected in their price. Building on this rationale, the case is clearly made that if all carbon tax is a reflection of the costs of fossil fuels and of climate change, surely all the carbon tax Ireland collects, not simply the increase, should be designated to and ring-fenced for mitigation or adaptation. I am not asking for comment on that point specifically - I know it is a domestic policy matter - but it relates to the question of climate financing and the concomitant but differentiated responsibilities. We have heard about Irish Aid and heard some very good testimony about individual Irish Aid programmes that are quite good. However, I would like the witnesses to comment on climate financing beyond simply the Irish Aid programme, which is one frame and has some good practice of which we can be proud. Deputy Pringle raised the question of scale. We know that a number of countries effectively have something like \$60 *per capita* going into the Green Climate Fund and that Ireland is contributing a fraction of that. Many countries are putting effectively ten times the amount we are putting into the Green Climate Fund. Notwithstanding our aid programmes, it is a requirement that climate financing be additional. Regarding the Green Climate Fund, which allows countries to make development choices that will contribute to action on our collective crisis, is Ireland planning to increase our very low contribution levels?

I refer specifically to the loss and damage fund, and I have heard about the Least Developed Countries Fund. The latter is an established Irish Aid programme. While there is some overlap between the two funds, the Least Developed Countries Fund relates specifically to the climate damage that has already been done to some of the most vulnerable countries and small islands on earth. Ireland is a purported champion of small islands. Will we speak out and be champions or engage on the loss and damage fund?

Another key issue is the 55% target, a question which has been answered. Looking to our long-term strategy, it will be important to know Ireland's position on this. We may have faced short notice in the past but we certainly have a long lead-in now. Will we engage with the increasing ambition regarding the 55% target - yes or no?

Another issue is that the research we have seen is escalating. We know that the previous COP did not welcome the research from the IPCC report. Will Ireland champion a welcoming of the report? Will we consider a scaling up of ambition in that regard? One of the key areas where it seems action could be taken is Ireland's carbon credits. I am quite concerned that Ireland is assuring us and members of the committee through various correspondence and telling us not to worry, that we will not have to pay fines because we have lots of credits. I think we

know that we need action in every part of the world, so there is a move to argue that overhanging credits - that is, credits that countries such as Ireland purchased a long time ago, before we knew the increase in the scale of the problem - should no longer stand because we now need to use everything we have. Will Ireland support the move to abandon overhanging credits? That is a key point.

Those are the very technical questions. We have talked about political statements, which are a crucial part of the COP. They are what makes it different from the other meetings that take place. Mr. Maughan referred to the technical stream. In the very important political debates that will take place, what position will Ireland take? Will we champion anti-fracking measures? Will we champion divestment and not simply boast that we have done it? Will we press other countries on that? Regarding the narrative, which I know OPEC and other countries will push, of gas as a transition fuel, which is counter to our divestment and fracking message, will Ireland speak up? Will Ireland contribute to a narrative of gas as a transition fuel? Will we stay silent or will we raise the many concerns expressed?

My final question concerns the other key topic we know will be raised, namely the United States. I imagine that that will dominate some of the discussion at the forthcoming COP meeting. The witnesses might comment on that. As the United States pull away from the Paris Accord, will an increase in our other collective ambitions be required? What position will Ireland take on, for example, the proposals to look at imports or other measures in order to ensure we do not reward or engage with countries with upstream, outside costs?

Chairman: We are out of time.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: Again-----

Chairman: The Senator has been very clear, and I thank her for putting her questions together. It is much appreciated as we are short of time.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: It was a little awkward to put them together.

Chairman: I think the witnesses have all taken note of them. Does Mr. Maughan wish to start, or does anyone else wish to contribute? They should feel free to indicate.

Mr. Frank Maughan: I will do my best and might invite colleagues to contribute as well. There was a lot to respond to in the Senator's contribution.

Starting with climate finance, I have already answered a question from another committee member about the Green Climate Fund by referring to our increased contributions and the level of increase we want. As I mentioned, the fund is only one of a number of channels through which we contribute climate finance. There are other international funds, some under the UN-FCCC, including the Adaptation Fund, for example, to which we also contribute annually, in most recent years €300,000 per annum. Senator Higgins mentioned the Least Developed Countries Fund, to which we contribute quite a sizeable amount through Irish Aid. I know the Senator asked us not to focus on Irish Aid, but that is worth pointing out. The question of the additionality is that there are very robust rules agreed at OECD level, as I understand it, that assess the way in which countries spend their aid contributions to ensure that that money is directed specifically into climate change activities and can be identified as such. My colleagues from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade may wish to contribute on that in a little more detail.

On the loss and damage question, again, I suggest that this is more of a developing agenda

at the UN level. The Warsaw mechanism to which I referred in my opening statement was put in place, from memory, only in 2013. It has been tasked very much with trying to put some shape on the analysis of what countries will face in terms of loss and damage over the coming years and decades as a result of climate impacts. The question of funding is not necessarily a closed one or one to which we object. The EU has a very open and proactive position to get the Warsaw mechanism operational. I will ask a colleague to provide a little more detail on this point specifically if possible.

Mr. Colin O’Hehir: I will talk just very briefly about loss and damage then. The Warsaw international mechanism was agreed in 2013 to try to draw together a wide range of issues which can come up under loss and damage, from immediate impacts of flooding and sea level rise to slower, more gradual-onset climate change and climate-induced migration. A lot of issues are not as directly linked to the core climate negotiations. The Warsaw mechanism seeks to bring all this together. It will carry out a review of its work at COP25 in December. That will look at where it has been successful and what other issues it needs to look at. The EU is a strong supporter of the Warsaw international mechanism, WIM, and Ireland will do our bit to try to support it. It is an area where the climate negotiations need to be widened to include issues such as climate-induced migration. An understanding of the climate impact is needed in a separate space where there is also an expertise on these kinds of issues. The WIM enables the UN to function by having a specific negotiation room for this and allowing for other negotiations on the likes of Article 6, etc. Therefore, to add to what Mr. Maughan said, we support the review and will support that mechanism as the best way to try to bring these issues together.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: I asked specific questions on fracking, divestment, gas as a transition fuel and the United States and extra-territorial emissions and how countries within the agreement will engage and their relationship with extra-territorial emissions.

Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Frank Maughan: I was going to come to those questions.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: Perfect. I thank Mr. Maughan.

Mr. Frank Maughan: The next one on my list was our position in relation to the IPCC and its role in supporting the United Nations process and negotiations. Ireland is a very strong supporter of the work of the IPCC. We contribute financially each year to the IPCC. Many of our scientists actively participate in the IPCC, and we work very hard through our colleagues in the EPA to make sure that that is promoted within our academic community as a way of highlighting the importance of climate science. It was of course disappointing that the COP in Katowice could not provide a stronger endorsement of the 1.5°C. Of course, members will be aware of the background and the parties who were involved in preventing that. We very much welcome each report as it has been published. I know the committee recently had interactions with a number of experts, for example, in relation to the IPCC’s land report. That is something we are very committed to continuing to support into the future. It is currently preparing the next assessment report, which I think is the sixth report. It will come out very soon. That will help to provide even more clarity and definition to the negotiations, which have to come.

The Senator asked about credits and the use of credits. Here we touch again on the Article 6 issues and the complexity of Article 6. This was something that was discussed by some of the earlier witnesses.

It is certainly the case that Ireland secured a number of credits from transactions a number of years ago as part of our Kyoto Protocol compliance. We intend to use those for compliance with our effort-sharing decision requirements for the period up to 2020. That is the position we have signed up to as an EU member state. I refer to the EU compliance framework for the period after 2020. Up to 2030, the effort-sharing regulation framework does not allow international credits to be used, and that is the position for the European Union. That reflects the European Union's position also in relation to the ongoing negotiations on Article 6. There is no desire within the European Union, albeit some other parties have a different perspective, to allow Kyoto Protocol credits to be used as part of the Article 6 framework. That is one of a number of open issues for discussion around Article 6, but we are very much of the position, alongside European Union colleagues, that that framework has to be as environmentally robust as possible, because the entire regime of Paris and the philosophy of the Paris Agreement is very different from the philosophy of the Kyoto Protocol. It requires ambition in all countries, not just in the developed countries. How the Article 6 rules are constructed to reflect that and to avoid issues like double-counting and to ensure integrity is absolutely essential and crucial.

On the question of political statements, the Senator asked me to pre-empt what the Minister may wish to say at the COP, and I cannot do that right now in terms of what the Minister will say in the national statement. It is too soon to tell. I would also note that the Minister's views on the role of gas as a transition fuel are on the record, and the Taoiseach made an announcement in relation to exploration at the United Nations Climate Action Summit in New York, and there have been subsequent announcements by the Minister in terms of how the Government plans to take that forward into a new exploration regime.

On the position of the United States, clearly it is disappointing it has taken the position it has taken. That is obviously an internal domestic matter for the United States. There is a view among other parties to the Paris Agreement that the level of ambition that has been shown by people at the state level of the United States, reflects very much the objective of what is known as the global climate action agenda to involve non-party stakeholders both in the negotiation process and in the process of stepping up and making commitments. There is a view that the ambition we are seeing at the state level and even at the city level is going to make quite a significant contribution on the part of the United States to the objectives of the Paris Agreement, notwithstanding that at the federal level it has withdrawn from the agreement.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: We certainly will not be able to calculate that, in that we have to work within the parties to the agreement. While we would hope that there are certain positives, in terms of the calculations for those countries which remain as parties to the agreement, how does Mr. Maughan think the issue of external emissions, upstream emissions, imports or trade agreements, for example, need to be impacted? Again, while there may be very good intentions at a civic level, and I know many actors in the United States, it is a conference of parties in terms of states. Could Mr. Maughan comment on that?

Mr. Frank Maughan: There are a couple of different issues in what the Senator is talking about there. There is the calculation issue, which I would suggest is a bit more amenable to identification than perhaps she might suggest. The United States is not withdrawing from the UNFCCC. It is still a party to the UNFCCC. It is still reporting its emissions each year, so the activities of people below the federal level are still being recorded in terms of the United States' emissions inventory. Do we understand what the United States is doing in terms of reducing its emissions? Yes, we do. We will still see that. It will still report.

Chairman: I am very sorry but I am going to have to cut you off there. We are very tight on

time. We have to go into private session and we have to be out of this committee room within a couple of minutes.

I thank you, Mr. Maughan, for coming before us this afternoon. We are going to go into private session.

Deputy Jack Chambers: Could I ask a couple more questions?

Chairman: No, sorry. We are under a time pressure. We have to be out of this committee room.

Deputy Jack Chambers: Is there someone in here after us?

Chairman: We are going into private session because we have to discuss this meeting, as discussed at the previous meeting.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: Is there a possibility for a note on forestry?

Chairman: Could Mr. Maughan write to us?

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: Forestry and technology transfer were my two other issues, so I may follow up with correspondence.

Chairman: We are going into private session. Thank you.

Deputy Jack Chambers: Is there someone in here after this meeting?

Chairman: We are now in private session.

The joint committee went into private session at 4.27 p.m. and adjourned at 4.55 p.m. until 2 p.m. on Wednesday, 13 November 2019.