



Foreign Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: Environmental diplomacy, HC 202

Tuesday 16 March 2021

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Members present: Tom Tugendhat (Chair); Stewart Malcolm McDonald; Henry Smith; Royston Smith; Graham Stringer; Bob Seely; Neil Coyle.

Questions 65-99

Witnesses

I: Dr Katharine Rietig, Senior Lecturer in International Politics at Newcastle University, and Professor Robert Falkner, Associate Professor of International Relations at London School of Economics and Research Director at Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment.

II: Laurence Tubiana, Chief Executive Officer at European Climate Foundation and Former Climate Change Ambassador and Special Representative for the 2015 COP21 Climate Change Conference.

Written evidence from witnesses:

– Dr Katharine Rietig

<https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/11151/html/>



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Dr Katharine Rietig and Professor Robert Falkner.

Chair: Welcome to this afternoon's session of the Foreign Affairs Committee. We are looking at environmental diplomacy, which of course is a huge challenge not just for the UK in the run-up to COP26 in Glasgow at the end of this year, but for the whole world. In the light of that, we are very, very lucky to have two fantastic witnesses. I will ask them to introduce themselves very briefly and, only for the reason of where they are sitting on my screen, I am going to ask Dr Katharine Rietig to go first and then Dr Robert Falkner.

Dr Rietig: I am Dr Katharine Rietig, a senior lecturer in international politics at Newcastle University.

Professor Falkner: I am the research director at the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment at the London School of Economics.

Q65 **Chair:** Fantastic. Thank you very much indeed for joining us this afternoon. I just mentioned that of course this is all shaping towards the event in Glasgow, COP26. How important is it that we deliver an improvement in the global ambitions to tackle climate change? Dr Rietig, perhaps you would like to start.

Dr Rietig: COP26 is one of the next big key conferences. It's similar to the standing that Copenhagen had and Paris had, and now we are moving up to Glasgow. In terms of raising ambitions, we have the Paris agreement, which was a major achievement of international diplomacy, but now it is about implementing the Paris agreement. Countries have been coming forward with their nationally determined contributions—their domestic climate change policies, essentially—but there is still a big gap in terms of moving their ambitions towards what we need to achieve to maintain global warming below 2° C. So this is really a chance for COP26 to get countries to make stronger commitments, but also, looking into the 2020s, to focus on implementing them, and to help countries to become able to implement their ambitious objectives.

Chair: Dr Falkner?

Professor Falkner: I entirely agree. The nature of the COP process is such that you need to have a regular schedule of conferences and negotiations to keep up the pressure on the various countries that are perhaps more reluctant to engage with implementation and that are more reluctant to raise their emission reduction ambition. It is really important that we stick to this process and keep going at it. It is only through the regular meetings that we draw certain powers, major emitters, into this regime and keep working at them. From that perspective, COP26 is critical.



- Q66 **Chair:** It is interesting that you both put such emphasis on it. I wonder whether you agree with the words of Christiana Figueres, who recently spoke to the Environmental Audit Committee. There, she said that COP26 has “more of the characteristics of a check-up than of a multilateral negotiation.” Would you agree with that? You have both talked about COP26 as being part of a process, as a retuning of Paris and implementation and things like that. Dr Falkner, would you agree?

Professor Falkner: Yes, I agree in the sense that the Paris agreement is a process regime in the sense that it never really settled the distribution—how much emission reduction should be done by which country. It leaves it to the countries themselves to determine how far they want to go in moving towards the net zero target that is internationally agreed. Naturally, with that target being some 30 years off—it will be met by around 2050 or so; that’s what we’re hoping for—it is important to keep managing that process. It is absolutely right that this is not a one-off game where we settle on what we are going to do; we need to keep working at this. So I agree with that entirely.

- Q67 **Chair:** Dr Rietig, you spoke about really effectively making Paris work; that was, I think, the implication you were making. Would you—well, let me ask this in a different way. Based on the nationally determined contributions that countries have already made, do you expect the commitments to keep climate change below, or well below, the 2° C above the pre-industrial times average?

Dr Rietig: It really depends on where we get with COP26 and everything that follows after it. At the moment, depending on the different estimates, we are already looking at 1° C warming, so time is definitely running out. What COP26 needs to do is to make Paris work in the sense that we start to close the ambition and emission gap and move towards actually achieving net zero by 2050.

We have seen some major progress over the last months—almost a year—with the UK proposing that 2050 ambition and a lot of countries and also the European Union following that. We have a much more favourable environment with the United States. China has made a similar pledge towards 2060. We see Japan and other major economies now moving in this direction. Looking at the actual submitted NDCs, though, there is still a lot of work to be done. There are also those, by now more public, commitments to be put into writing in the UNFCCC, so there is still a lot of work to be done.

- Q68 **Graham Stringer:** There are two points that I think undermine the credibility of the conference. How can the conference be taken seriously when China is still treated as a developing country, and it puts out an increase in carbon dioxide bigger than the UK’s total emissions every year? Secondly, while they are ambitious, we do not see quoted, with the exception of New Zealand, the costs of the changes that are proposed. Only New Zealand and the Ardern Government have put figures on this. That is to Robert Falkner.



Professor Falkner: Thank you for that. I agree with you that there is a sort of inherited structure. Because this is a UN regime, we are dealing with the UN classifications of countries. China, India and all the rising emitters from the emerging economies are still clinging on to that categorisation. It benefits them—there is no doubt about that—but I would not underestimate the extent to which China has moved away from that position.

That happened way back in 2009, at the Copenhagen conference, when China, India, Brazil and South Africa formed the so-called BASIC group, and they signalled at that time that they recognised that they have to take more responsibility than all the other developing countries. They came on board with the Paris agreement, where not just developed nations but all emitters have to take action, so they have made some progress in softening that north-south divide.

China is now talking about its own climate responsibility. It is actually much further ahead of the game than, say, India, which is much more strongly focused on retaining that developing country status. That sense of movement is very strong in China, and of course it ties in with their own self-perception as a rising economy. They may notionally claim to be a developing country, but they have much bigger ambition. They have struggled over the years to come to terms with that, but I think that they are on the right track and we need to support them. We need to bring them into the fold of those major emitters—they are the largest emitter, of course—that take action, so I am less pessimistic about that.

Q69 **Graham Stringer:** Even though China is building one new coal power station every 10 days or so and is funding coal-fuelled power stations around the world? If you look at what they are actually doing, it does not really tie in with the statements that you rightly quote.

Professor Falkner: No, I agree. We treat countries as monolithic blocks. As we all know, China, like the US, is in some sense at least a federal structure. You have regions and local governments that go in different directions to where the national Government want to go. When we look at Xi Jinping and China's stated climate ambition, they made a big step last September aiming for net zero by 2060. Most Chinese experts point out that China would have never made that statement public if they were not at least serious about finding a path to meet that target.

With the covid crisis, and the aim now to recover from covid and reboot the economy, I think China has taken a step back again and has slowed down the decarbonisation process. I see this again as a process where China is taking one step forward, but then is being pulled back, often by local and regional governments that are much keener to promote growth, employment and often those sectors that rely on fossil fuels. Again, it is not a one-shop story. We have to work on that. China is moving in the right direction but, as you say, not fast enough.

Q70 **Graham Stringer:** On the second part of the question, do you not think that countries should be asked to put the costs on the proposals to reach



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net zero by 2050? It would give more credibility to any conference, wouldn't it?

Professor Falkner: I agree with you. Of course, having a clear vision of what the costs will be would give credibility to the pledges, but there is a complication here. First of all, we should not only look at the costs of reaching net zero; we should also look at the benefits that come with it. Both need to be balanced.

The real difficulty is with knowing what the costs will be over the 30-year period. As we have seen with solar and wind energy costs, when you look at the old International Energy Agency estimates of how fast we would be moving, for the past 15 years the IEA forecasts for the rise of renewable energy have, year after year, understated the growth of renewable energy and overstated the cost of the transition. Even though from a contemporary perspective the decarbonisation process would be very costly, most experts in the field predict that as we get going and make the transition, the costs will come down because of various technological breakthroughs.

I think we need to look at the costs, but we also need to look at the uncertainty around long-term forecasts. In the long run, all climate economists tell us that the benefits will outweigh the costs.

Graham Stringer: Thank you.

Dr Rietig: To add to that, I would almost frame it as investments, not necessarily costs. Moving out of the cost to the economy versus saving the climate dichotomy was one of the big achievements of the Paris agreement—getting away from the idea that if you address climate change, your economy suffers. We saw that thinking especially in the early 2000s. By now the narrative, the thinking and the framing has moved on worldwide, in the sense of seeing it as an opportunity and an investment in future economic growth, and especially in economic leadership in the 21st century. That is really where China's interests lie. China and its leadership have really understood that if they want to become the leading power in the 21st century, it will be through the green economy and green jobs, and also through leadership on renewable energies and other low-carbon technologies.

Q71 **Chair:** After COP25, the UN Secretary-General said that the results and the negotiations were disappointing and unsuccessful. What barriers prevented the Chilean presidency from reaching a consensus on increased climate ambition, and what lessons should we be drawing now, so many months before the meeting actually takes place?

Dr Rietig: In a way, Madrid saw a number of challenges that we already saw at COP15 in Copenhagen. We need to remember that COP25 was supposed to be in Chile, not in Spain. With the change of venue at very short notice, there were a lot of logistical challenges to start with. It was a major upheaval for the people who were planning to attend it, shifting not just countries but continents in a major fashion.

The other issue was that, similar to Copenhagen, there was a perception that developing countries, and especially the very vulnerable developing and least-developed countries, were not fully included in the process and were not given the recognition and the space to be really listened to and their concerns to be taken seriously. It was a mix of a number of issues, and the level of ambition and the expectations for the conference, that made agreement challenging.

We really need to keep in mind—this is a major challenge—that the UNFCCC is still based on a de facto veto for each of the 190-plus countries that are present. That means that when one country disagrees, we do not have consensus in the sense that it is interpreted in the UNFCCC, and we do not have an agreement. That means that the smallest and most vulnerable countries need to be included in the process and need to feel that they are being listened to and are a full party in the process. This was something where we again had a perceived challenge around those issues, and agreeing on the carbon markets remains a very difficult issue. So getting agreement on this will also be a major challenge.

Q72 **Chair:** Thank you very much. COP26 will need to finish a lot of the work that Madrid was unable to complete. What major areas do you think are outstanding, Dr Falkner?

Professor Falkner: First of all, as Katharine mentioned, it is the rules around carbon markets trading emission rights in terms of permits that need to be done. That was a leftover that should have been done but is, unfortunately, still on the agenda. We then expect the start of negotiations for a much higher climate finance target over and above the \$100 billion that was agreed in the past and should be delivered by 2025.

The developing countries are also pushing for negotiations and commitments for additional funding around loss and damage, which is one of those rather controversial issues. The fear here is that developing countries will, should neither mitigation nor adaptation work, suffer losses, and they would like help from richer countries. Then of course we have the process of collecting improved NDCs—improved pledges—that are yet to be collected. In political terms, the real objective for COP26 is to make sure that countries that are behind their long-term targets catch up with the ambition and put those targets on the table.

Also—the UK Government has pushed for this phase strongly—it is meant to be a start on negotiations to integrate nature-based services into the Paris mitigation strategy. So there are a number of areas that are important for implementation, but also for the continued north-south dialogue and for helping vulnerable countries to meet their own targets on mitigation and adaptation.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. Royston, you wanted to come in.

Q73 **Royston Smith:** Can I ask about COP15 in Copenhagen, which was considered to be a failure? What lessons can the UK learn from the Danish COP presidency ahead of our own? That question is for either of

you, or both.

Professor Falkner: I can make a start. In fact, I wish I had my former PhD student with me, because they did a wonderful thesis, published as a book, on this very topic.

There was obviously a lot of difficulty around how the Danish team was organised and how divided they were. These are the obvious lessons. You want to present a competent and united front. I am sure the British side, as we saw with the French in the Paris conference in 2015, will take away that lesson. For me the biggest lesson is the level of preparation that you put into the process before the COP even starts. That is where many analysts and observers would argue the Danish were lacking. That is the key lesson that the French learnt for the 2015 Paris agreement conference, and that is where the British side needs to do work.

In essence, you are dealing with a large number of countries that need to be organised in some way into various blocs so that the bargaining process can be done more efficiently. You need to build these coalitions behind certain proposals on the table, and that means a lot of talking to individual countries, but also groups of countries. That is something that no presidency can do on its own, so it really requires a long-term process of engaging other intermediaries, other powers, other individuals and higher-ranking individuals that would do the outreach and create these coalitions. That is what I see as the main lesson.

Q74 **Royston Smith:** Dr Rietig, do you have anything to add?

Dr Rietig: I agree. I was at COP15 in Copenhagen. I can personally attest to the logistical challenges that the presidency and the organisers faced. In addition to that, the world has moved on tremendously in terms of action on climate change in the last 12 years or so.

But one major challenge was expectations of the conference, and it is also extremely important for the COP26 presidency to manage global expectations of the outcome. At that time, in 2009, we still had the dichotomy of the Kyoto protocol—developed countries cause damage and need to clean it up, but developing countries do not need to do anything, except voluntarily. This also meant that the all-encompassing global agreement that we got with the Paris agreement six years later was simply not possible at that time, especially since there were always countries that would not agree to that and which had a de facto veto, as we have seen in the decision-making structure of the UNFCCC.

It will be key to manage expectations to a realistic level and to avoid those unrealistically high ambitions that were there for Copenhagen. It is really about focusing on countries' visions and the resources required to achieve their NDCs, and continuing with the spirit of positive group pressure that we saw in the run-up to Paris and beyond that, highlighting leadership by countries, and their achievements, and celebrating the successes of that. I think that the UK is in a very strong position to do that. With the 2050 net zero legislation, it was one of the first countries to get the ball rolling on this, and a lot of other countries are following suit at the moment.



The other challenge, which Robert Falkner also mentioned, is the level of preparation within the presidency team. It is also about having a very high level of chair training—from the junior to the most senior level—in a broad range of facilitation and mediation techniques for the following negotiations, and thinking about pairing and mentoring, learning from previous chairs' experiences, but in a very mentoring-style way. They should also really focus on a process that is solution-oriented but at the same time outcome-focused, like the indaba sessions, which I think were started in Durban in 2011 and have continued throughout the Paris agreement negotiations and later on.

They should really focus on a goal and a common landing zone, with every country feeling included in the decision-making process, but at the same time understanding consensus as something that everyone can live with and stand, aside from minor objections, with everyone following in the same spirit of actually achieving a positive outcome. That will be absolutely crucial for the UK presidency, as will managing the expectations around it. They should define the lowest common denominator that they want to achieve and the more ambitious outcomes, and communicate that. In the end, with Copenhagen, global expectations were not met because, at that time, they were impossible to meet, if we are honest. After that, the climate change regime seemed to be on life support for a couple of years until they actually managed to move towards the Paris agreement by getting all the developing countries on board as well.

Q75 Royston Smith: So far as you are aware—I know this is quite a difficult question for both of you to answer—has the FCDO learned some of those lessons that you have highlighted?

Professor Falkner: I should make the disclaimer that I am not involved in the process on the UK side, so I do not have any inside perspective. I point out that the UK has long worked as a leader among the group of European countries, until Brexit, in terms of shaping the process. The British side was very closely involved with the French presidency in the Paris agreement, doing a lot of outreach, particularly to developing countries. At that time, the UK was instrumental in bringing many of those countries on board, so there is a lot of knowledge and a real track record.

The question now will be the extent to which, after Brexit, the British side is able to draw on these established networks, or whether the British side has been able to replace some of these networks. That is a question that I cannot answer, because I am not in those discussions. The experience of previous conferences has clearly rubbed off. There is a different level of awareness of just how complex these COP summits are. On that front, I have full confidence that the British side is on top of that challenge.

The difficulties they have faced are perhaps not of their own making. The covid crisis meant that less travel was possible, and so the intersessional COP, which always happens in June, had to be delayed. There are a number of reasons why the process is perhaps not as advanced as it should be. I have read commentary to that effect, but I would not be able to comment on that myself.



Q76 Royston Smith: Thank you. You have touched on this, but there are of course some challenges surrounding the pandemic. Dr Rietig, could you expand on those? Do you think that the challenge is due to carrying out diplomacy remotely and digitally? Will that challenge be too difficult to overcome, or do you think that we will price that in?

Dr Rietig: I wouldn't say it's too difficult to overcome; I would be more on the "pricing it in" side of things. I have, like Robert Falkner, full confidence in the ability of the FCO and the team to pull this off, in a similar way to the highly skilled team of diplomats who helped to facilitate the Paris agreement.

But there are a number of additional challenges. I will describe one challenge to be aware of. Like Robert, I am not fully included in decision-making processes within the FCO. But I do hope that they have close mentoring processes, especially with people leaving the team and new people coming in. I'm talking about people who have never been to a UNFCCC conference, let alone a COP—or perhaps not one of the major COPs, in Paris or in Copenhagen—and have not had first-hand experience of what it actually means, on the logistical and the diplomatic side, to organise such a conference. So there is still, there is always, a need to have the best mentoring possible—to be closely working with people who have actually done that in the past and to have close mentoring pairings.

On digital diplomacy and negotiations, we are in uncharted territory, really. There have been some previous steps, under the COP26 presidency and the UNFCCC, to have virtual conferences, to continue talking throughout 2020. And the platforms are increasingly looking better and more sophisticated. So I think there is also very good progress here. There are some advantages in the process, in the sense of being more time-efficient and having some health benefits—people are not potentially exposed to covid or other health risks. It can be more inclusive and transparent, especially towards non-state actors, who can more easily access the debates, discussions and negotiations.

But the challenges are there. I think we are moving towards a hybrid form of negotiation where we have some small-group elements, where the negotiators know each other very well and where it's really a matter of having additional time to discuss some very technical issues. Those things can be done via Zoom or similar platforms, but when we get to the more difficult parts, and especially around larger rounds, where we really need to have in-person trust-building, especially with people who are new to the process, it becomes very difficult, because, if we are honest, a major element of international diplomacy is knowing each other and building some trust in each other.

Those diplomats usually spend several weeks every year together in these negotiations, and personal relationships are built there. This is very difficult to achieve with the current challenges. There is also more room for misunderstandings, non-verbal communication being a big issue. Another issue is the ability of chairs to read the room to get an idea of where we could find a common landing zone. Those things are quite



challenging. We can have certain progress towards that with digital diplomacy, but in the end there will be a need for the physical meetings.

Professor Falkner: I agree entirely. I would just add one particular concern we need to think about, which is the level of access that individual countries will then have to the negotiations. There is huge concern, especially among poorer developing countries, which may struggle on the infrastructure side and not have stable and powerful connections, that they will therefore be disadvantaged. So there is an issue about the marginalisation of certain voices. We also know from Zoom-type discussions that the power of the chair is often much bigger, and that creates issues around how you get in. I am not looking at any particular chairs, of course. This is a very abstract comment that I am making.

Having chaired LSE public events, you know how to handle disruptive forces. The negotiations require these spaces where often marginal players—be it small developing countries, but also civil society groups—can sometimes find their way into the discussions and can influence things. That would be very difficult to achieve. It is a much more formulaic process, and there are some issues around the dynamics that we need to consider. But I would still stress that it is important to keep up the momentum, because we have lost one year already, and I don't think we have the luxury of losing too much more time.

Dr Rietig: May I add another point? In a way, the UK got an additional year by postponing the summit, so there is more time for preparation on the one hand, but very much as Robert has said, it also increases the pressure. One thing that we have seen over the last decades of climate change, and also other negotiations, is the deadline pressure of people physically having to work one or two nights to get to an agreement, often not on the Friday but on a Saturday, a Sunday or a Monday, where there is this general exhaustion and also willingness to finally compromise. This is something that is very difficult to reconstruct on Zoom and other online platforms, as is the ability of negotiators to spontaneously approach each other to explore compromise solutions that are really crucial to the process and to actually find that solution that could be agreed on in a side venue and to then go back to the main group. Also, the ability of skilled facilitators to help this agreement and compromise is an issue.

Chair: I think we all agree with the power of the chair, but, sadly, in this Committee, it doesn't always seem to be quite as successful. I think I have too many rebellious Members. However, I certainly hear your point about side meetings and those elements. Certainly, in Parliament, we notice the fact that you don't have the same side meetings. You don't get to talk to Ministers or to each other in the same way. You do not get to organise in the same way to solve problems more quietly than you would do if you simply met in formal sessions. I think those points are extremely powerfully made. I am grateful to you for making them so clearly.

Henry, you wanted to come in on the next one.

Q77 **Henry Smith:** Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. Your powers in the



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chair are beyond question.

I want to turn to the United Nations. Is the UN climate negotiations process still fit for purpose now that we are moving from the planning phase to the implementation phase of the Paris agreement? For example, what, if any, reforms to the process do you think are needed? I am grateful to our panel for joining us today. Professor Falkner, would you like to go first?

Professor Falkner: Happy to. In some sense, a lot of the action in international climate politics has moved away from the UN—quite rightly so. It has moved into the national and local level. We have seen, for example, a dramatic rise in climate legislation around the world. At the LSE, at Grantham, we maintain a database, and you can see just how much national action, both in legislative and executive orders, has now been implemented.

In a sense there is a huge institutional underbelly to what we do at the UNFCCC. The business community is engaged in a way that it has never been engaged. A lot of companies are taking up the challenge and issuing their own net zero targets. Investors are scrambling together to get the information they need to redirect their investment portfolios to low-carbon investment opportunities.

So there is a lot of movement away from what used to be the main show in that space. That is good news, but it does not obviate the need to get countries to come together on a regular basis to review what they are doing, to create some transparency around what pledges have been made—are they being implemented?—and to also gently compare and contrast, as there is a learning to be done. Every now and then, we still need to negotiate some rules. For example, COP26 will have to agree rules on carbon trading.

A lot of the net zero action will be based within countries, but there are still issues at the border, where we need to create consensus and deal with some differences. Some of the frontrunners, for example, are now talking about carbon border tax adjustment—a carbon tariff at the border. Those things should be negotiated, ideally in a multilateral framework.

For that reason, we need the UNFCCC as much as we needed it before. I would always imagine the UNFCCC to be an ongoing process. We might be able to scale back—it does not always have to be the mega-conference—and, if anything, it needs to become a more routine process. The connections that have been created, with regulators talking to each other and businesspeople talking to each other, and the learning that goes on in and around the conference, are truly invaluable. That is often poorly documented in research and policy debate.

We look at what happens on the last day, when the negotiators come together to hammer out a deal, but we often ignore what happens in the preceding 13 days—sometimes it is 14 or 15 days when the conference runs over. It is a massive circus, but that is where a lot of the deals are struck—the business community comes together, the NGOs come



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together—so I would not undervalue that benefit. I do not have specific reform proposals, but there is a case to be made for an evolutionary approach to moving beyond UNFCCC, forwards into a different era.

Dr Rietig: I do have reform proposals.

Henry Smith: Please, go ahead.

Dr Rietig: First of all, I need to emphasise that one of my major pieces of research is on how we can improve learning processes and political decision making at the national, regional and, especially, United Nations—UNFCCC—levels. We have already seen the UNFCCC turn into a major forum for learning, which as Robert rightly says is relatively poorly documented, because you only see it when you are actually there and experience the positive energy that often happens not in formal negotiating settings, but when civil society gets together—businesses, NGOs, academics and all kinds of civil society organisations, and indigenous peoples. People are actually presenting solutions to address climate change effectively. That is where we need to put the focus, on the assumption that the formal partners in the negotiations are starting to become the less key issue of the actual meeting. It is more about increasing ambitions, and the best way to do that is to learn from each other's positive experiences.

My suggestion would be four steps. First, for the presidency at the COP26 to ask countries not just for more ambitious nationally determined contributions, but for details on how they plan to achieve their targets with policies and other measures and—this is the key step—on what resources in terms of policy, know-how and financial resources they require to implement those policies and zero/low-carbon transition plans. This is where what I would term a marketplace-type online platform—something that is tied into the actual physical meeting—comes in, to bring together countries with national or transnational non-state actors and other countries that are capable and willing to provide support, to build capacities and to invest, so that countries can achieve their NDCs.

That allows for the transparency and accountability of climate action, in terms of capacity building and for fair access to global resources, especially for small and least developed countries. To some extent, we have those platforms—those partnerships—but some of my research has also shown that there is vast room for improvement, and it is especially those who need it most who cannot really access it properly. So some global opportunity is very important. Independent bodies such as the UNFCCC, especially the secretariat, with the proper resources, of course, would be the ideal place to administer and to monitor such a platform and to develop and agree monitoring, reporting and verification mechanisms for the capacity-building platform, to ensure equitable and, especially, fair distribution of the support, plus—this ties back to the more formal negotiations—a time plan for reviewing and improving the mechanism.

It is really about building partnerships between those who have a capability gap in implementing the NDCs that they are promising, because

this is where the major challenge is. It was very hard to agree on the Paris agreement in the first place and an incredible, major achievement, but the implementation is the even harder part. That is where we need the non-state actor support, global finance, the know-how and the experience, which is still mainly in developed countries, to really help the transitions to those low-carbon economies.

The final point, which is still not much discussed—I am still looking for evidence that it is, but it should be—is the role of artificial intelligence and all kinds of smart technologies. We will need smart electricity grids to deliver 100% renewable energy, for example. We will need smart transport solutions and smart cities—the internet of things. Sharing these technologies, but in a way that is responsible and does not curtail personal freedoms, while ensuring responsible regulation, will be a major step towards meeting zero-carbon transitions by 2050 for all countries, not just those that have economic advantages and capabilities.

Henry Smith: Thank you both for your comprehensive responses.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. Before we let you go, Graham has one last point that he wanted to make.

Q78 **Graham Stringer:** The emphasis being on “one.” I will ask a very simple question. President Biden has called a climate summit on 22 April. Is that more important than COP26, Professor Falkner?

Professor Falkner: Not more important, but it is the right kind of meeting that we need to have—perhaps we need more of them—in order to build consensus behind high ambition. The US are planning to invite 20 major emitters, so it is a more mini-lateral forum. Often, you can get meaningful discussion going among those big players because they feel more comfortable in that setting and they are not held to ransom according to the UNFCCC process, as they sometimes are in the regular meetings.

I think it is a stepping-stone. In 2014, the US and China agreed a bilateral agreement, which many see as having helped to pave the way for the Paris agreement, so this should be taken seriously. For the British side it presents a major opportunity to advance the agenda, but it should not be seen as an alternative.

Dr Rietig: I fully agree. This is one of the steps towards COP26, and especially beyond. Whatever comes out of COP26, we won't be done implementing the policy agreements. It is really about starting a vision into the 2020s moving forward. Having the US finally back in the international arena and taking on an important leadership role will be absolutely crucial, together with China, the European Union countries and the UK, and with all the other major emitters, especially the emerging economies. So, a G20-type of circle is good to push major ambitions.

This is a very important thing. What we need to move towards in our thinking is that those countries who take leadership should show that zero-carbon economies are possible, that they work and that they are

something worth achieving. Having this positive group pressure and this leadership will help countries that currently have more politically challenging leadership around climate change to overcome those challenges through subnational actors and non-state actors, and to continue pushing until their leadership is back on the world stage, as we have seen with the US.

We need this type of summit much more frequently and in a more serious fashion, to continue talking across all levels of governance and to see the UNFCCC as a forum that brings those things together, which helps with capacity building and with learning from each other to make those zero transitions work.

Graham Stringer: Thank you.

Chair: Can I thank you both enormously for your insights and your thoughts? You have been extremely generous with your time and I am sure we could have kept you for many hours longer. I am very grateful that you were extremely brief and to the point. On that note, I thank you both very much. You are of course very welcome to stay and listen to our next panellist. After I have introduced her, I will also ask her briefly to say exactly how she would like to be described in those few words that follow your name in a newspaper when it writes your name.

Examination of witness

Witness: Laurence Tubiana.

Q79 **Chair:** Madame Tubiana, thank you very much indeed for joining us. We are extremely lucky to have you with us this afternoon. It is very good of you to attend. You were instrumental in shaping the outcomes of the Paris accord, which have been so important, not just in shaping climate diplomacy around the world but in now being seen as the reference and example that the UK should be following. On that basis, thank you very much indeed for joining us. Can I ask you very briefly to introduce yourself?

Laurence Tubiana: Thank you for the invitation. Of course, I am happy to be related to the crafting, shaping and negotiating of the Paris agreement on one side, but also with my academic activity on the other side. We need to understand that we must be tenacious. Paris was of course a very important milestone, but I am keeping very focused on implementation and raising ambition, so I would like you to consider my actual role more than that of being an ambassador and special envoy for Paris. Anyway, more and more has to be done now.

Q80 **Chair:** Thank you very much indeed. You may find that these questions pick up elements that you were going to discuss, so please try to stay with us. It would be great to have your insights in so many areas but we have only a short time with you, so I would be grateful if you can keep your answers as brief as is reasonable. Please do not be shy in sharing your expertise; we are very grateful that you are here.



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You were a key architect of the landmark Paris agreement in 2015. Is there a big gap between the ambitions declared in Paris and the current actions by Governments?

Laurence Tubiana: The gap is the evolution of emissions globally. But as the previous panellists said, Paris is built around a learning process. In 2015, countries were not ready to make climate laws or ambitious climate plans because they did not know what the Paris agreement would be—the presentation of climate plans went before it—and that is why in the decision we included the clause to revise the contributions to make them definitive in 2020. We see that the momentum is still potentially there, with individual countries increasing their commitments for 2030 and really having long-term strategies that are consistent with the Paris goals, and that is a key element for COP26. This is not done, and that of course is a huge task for the UK Government as a powerful presidency.

The second element is the idea of net zero. I remember exactly when some countries—more difficult ones—decided to sign up for that in the early hours of the last Saturday. The idea behind what net zero by 2050 meant was not there in Paris, so people and Governments signed up but did not get it. Now, five years after, we see that. That is why it is so important that the UK Government puts the notion of net zero by 2050 as the new norm, supported by, as the previous panellists said, credible and precise plans. It is no longer the time for having only targets; we must have precise development of technology investment and decisions and a policy framework as well.

So the gap is there—just look at emissions, which have not really decreased seriously, except for through the impact of the covid crisis—but the learning lessons have been digested more and more. So this is a fantastic opportunity for 2021.

Q81 **Chair:** I am very grateful for your insight. What are the most effective levers for ensuring that countries comply with the provisions? As you rightly say, the ambition you described is great, and there are many options for ways to take this, but what levers are most effective?

Laurence Tubiana: One progression that ideally could be made in Glasgow is to have not only general commitments to the Paris goals but individual commitments to be consistent with that. That is a very important step forward, that we should try to get some of the 2030 targets and link them with the Paris goal, or link them with long-term strategy—the individual ones, to be consistent. The consistency element, in my view, is the first lever, because that allows us to finally revise the climate plans, and not just unilaterally, but to look for the global picture, the top-down element, which is in the Paris agreement. That, I would say, is the first one.

The second one, of course, is for some major players—of course, we can think about the EU, US, China, and with mediation and mobilisation, that can be really engineered by the UK presidency—to show that there is no way out of the decarbonisation of the whole world economy. These are not



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agreements; these are signals, in terms of policies on some sectors, and in some cases carbon pricing and investment. This is, I think, the notion that would accelerate the move from countries, in particular the emerging countries into G20, that have not decided yet that it is the only way to go. That is why, again, that is really the sign that we—China, US, EU—have to produce by Glasgow, and that, of course, is a responsibility that is not a simple one for the UK Government.

There is also the investment element and the elements of solidarity, because we cannot just ignore, of course, the global situation and the crisis: the economic and social crisis, and the health crisis. I see an element of anger and opposition that I have not felt before Paris, one because we had more time to prepare, in a way, because there was not this incredible situation, and because there was a hope that there was more everyone could find something—*[Inaudible]*—and of course probably the time is so short because of the crisis. And then the problem of the vaccines, the solidarity vis-à-vis covid, and the debt crisis are elements that were not there in 2015. In 2015, most countries had recovered from the 2008 economic crisis. It is not the case now. We are in full deployment of this, and that is a geopolitical dimension that is entirely new.

Chair: You raise some very important changes in the nature of the conversation we are having in the run-up to COP26 from the one you were having in the run-up to COP21. I am very grateful for your insights on that, but I know that Stewart McDonald wanted to pick up on some of these questions, so I am going to hand over to him, if that is all right.

Q82 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** Thank you, Chair, and thanks for joining us. As a Member of Parliament representing Glasgow, I am looking forward to seeing you in my home city, I hope, later in the year. Could I ask you to talk a bit about how the diplomatic service was used in the run-up to Paris? Could you maybe speak to some of the diplomatic preparations that went on there, and what role the diplomatic network played to create the right political conditions for a successful COP?

Laurence Tubiana: Very simple: on two levels, and again, in a structure where all Government Departments were involved. The team I was heading had every Ministry represented, from Treasury to ODA to, of course, ecology, environment, businesses and so on. That was very important, and the consistency of the team was really helpful. This projection of this consistency helped the diplomatic service in two elements.

The first one was the work in-country, where finally the embassies—together, by the way, with many colleagues from the European Union, and of course the UK at that time—had the capacity to open the discussion on climate in countries, and they had to do that regularly. That was the demand of them, and they were, of course, sending information. I am sure your service is doing that already, but the demand was to create a place where climate plans—climate action—are in a way opened up, even in societies where the question was not at all. For example, for the anecdote,



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I think the first unique discussion that took place in Pakistan was at the French embassy at the time.

The second level, as I discussed many times with Alok Sharma, was really using the capacity to invite Ministers, heads of delegation or different levels to informal discussions throughout the year, first, just to create that group of friends that you will need at the last moment, and secondly, to understand and, in a way, bring people along, because the level of knowledge of the complexity of the problem and the details of the negotiation are not always shared. We had multiple informal meetings, which I still think you can do—maybe not now, but maybe starting in June or July, having some more limited physical meetings with the ones who will help at the end. You can have these with 35 or 40 countries at a maximum, which will give you a pretty fair representation of all the interests and the nature of the countries.

Those are the two levels where the diplomatic service works, using the theory of 360° diplomacy, not reaching out to traditional foreign colleagues but to companies, local authorities, NGOs and academia. Everyone was using 360° diplomacy, and it has been quite efficient in my view.

Q83 Stewart Malcolm McDonald: Obviously, we have lost some time because of the pandemic, as you mentioned. How important were the early months of negotiations, in terms of securing a positive outcome at the end of the conference?

Laurence Tubiana: There was this two-level game, in a way. There was the level with the big players, trying to find some kind of benchmark with the US and other EU colleagues—when you have the presidency, you will no longer be a country of Europe, you will be different; you will no longer be the UK but the president of a UN process—and a big chunk of, for example, bilateral discussions of the mechanism of review with China and the question of the long-term strategies with the US. You need your benchmarks with the key players.

It is also very important to bring the more affected countries, with their moral power and their capacity for really making every country look back and say, “Yes, these are my narrow interests today, but I cannot ignore the global perspective.” It is very important not to neglect the less developed or more affected countries, because they will bring the imperative of ambition at the end of the day

Curiously enough, the G20 are very impacted by climate change. We see, for example, the situation in Beijing these days. They may think that there is a trade-off with economic development, but of course that is not the case for the most affected countries. Big players, in terms of countries, do not have so many things to negotiate, by the way, for Glasgow; it is two elements, which are not big. The ambition and the individual commitments are, in my view, more important.



Plus, if I may, since 2015 we have, in a way, encouraged the private sector, investors, local authorities, but now we have to go a step further. That is why Glasgow can be a turning point, where we can ask every company—not in general—to be trustworthy in what they say. Credibility and truth could be a very strong contribution of Glasgow—no more words, but actions. That will be the sense, in my view, of the immediate headlines from Glasgow. We are doing it now, and we have proof of the concept that we are doing it, individually, not in general.

Q84 Stewart Malcolm McDonald: That is some good insight, and it leads me on to my next question quite nicely, actually. In terms of some of the other, some of the wider diplomatic issues at play right now internationally, regarding vaccines and supplies; major human rights issues, not least in China, in Xinjiang; and other issues relating, for example, to trade. How do these kinds of issues interplay with the climate negotiations, in your experience from Paris, and how do you think they might impact negotiations in Glasgow?

Laurence Tubiana: In a way, I think the UK is well placed to put the climate in a separate order of concerns from the bilateral trade-offs that everyone has. Of course, the big question is how we craft a space for discussions with China, particularly on climate. You have seen the moves from Chinese diplomacy, on one side saying, “We don’t want compartmentalisation; we want every topic to be treated equally,” but, in a way, feeling now that it would be interesting to have a safe space for co-operation on climate.

That, of course, is totally the role of the UK: to demonstrate to all the big powers that there is a common interest in securing the climate as a safe space for co-operation. Because if you begin to understand all of the trade-offs, co-operation is impossible. Co-operation is only possible if you trust that, on at least one topic, there is a common value and a common interest.

That is a long-term perspective that we have to bring to this. Whatever China thinks about what is happening today, and the trade concerns that it has—or that Europe has with China, the US or even the UK—in the long term we really need to have a good climate. We need to move to action and implementation, because we are at risk.

Q85 Stewart Malcolm McDonald: Do you think that will be easily achievable?

Laurence Tubiana: This is playing out in every country, but you see the policy veering from one side to the other; climate is just not important, then suddenly you see that the climate agenda is coming back—which it is at the moment in China, after three years where it was not at all a priority or a topic of public discussion.

I think there is clearly a space for this; it is not enormous, but it is not like the eye of a needle—it is in between the two. We see that in the new attitude of China vis-à-vis the One Belt, One Road initiative, which they



are now softly moving towards more renewable energy and away from supporting coal-fired power plants, for example.

This is a complex place, but I see it as a real possibility. I have been very pessimistic, but now I think there is again a small space where everyone can see the necessity of agreement, because it is in the long-term interests of everyone. One interest is the economic opportunities—clearly, they are there. The other is simply the risk of impacts, which is enormous for everyone.

Q86 Stewart Malcolm McDonald: When we think of how President Trump unilaterally took the United States out of the Paris agreement—thankfully, they are now back in—do you think that there is a risk of that kind of thing happening in future, whereby a more stridently nationalist type of approach affects agreements because of other issues, such as trade? President Trump obviously had a huge bee in his bonnet over trade with China. Do you think issues such as this could potentially affect the sustainability of the Glasgow agreement—as we hope it will be called—in future?

Laurence Tubiana: The complexity is that climate change is now everywhere; it is not concentrated, as my predecessor said, in the UNFCCC. It is in financial institutions, trade, and now the IMF; it is across the board. You cannot do everything in Glasgow, but you could have signs from the whole element of this climate regime that gives the right signals.

For example—I am taking a detour, but this is important—if the special drawing rights negotiation, which is promoted by Kristalina Georgieva, lends into more emission of SDR and the reallocation of some of them for poorer countries, in the context of the energy transition, this is something that can make everybody think.

Any agreement would of course be exposed to nationalism and a narrow vision, as is any international law. However, that is why I am saying to signal knowledge to others—that is, an academic, deep understanding—and I demonstrated this in the Paris negotiations; knowledge can change the perception of interests. It is evident that China shifted when the leadership realised the cost of climate change for China, and the opportunity.

So yes, nationalism will always be a crisis. But look, Trump said, “We withdraw,” and in an extraordinary movement you have seen the States, in particular—in a federal construction—say, “We take away the delegation of sovereignty we gave to you. You no longer represent us at the national level. We take this privilege back.”

It is fascinating, by the way. Nationalism is redefined by climate change and by the global commons. Look at vaccines. It is a mess, really. Of course, it is not a well-structured policy or co-ordinated, but every country feels that nationalism alone does not protect us. So that is the way, at least, that you have to make the rational argument. Sometimes it doesn't pay off. We know that.



Stewart Malcolm McDonald: Thank you for that. I hope we can continue this conversation in Glasgow later this year.

Chair: Thank you, Stewart. Henry, you wanted to pick up on this.

Q87 **Henry Smith:** Thank you for joining us today. I very much appreciate your time. I am interested to know a little bit more of your experience of the planning for COP21. For example, did the French Government solely do that through the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs? What did other Departments across the French Government do in terms of the planning process?

Laurence Tubiana: For the first time we organised an exercise that encompassed all the Departments. That is why I was heading a rather big team, but probably not very different from the UK one. We were 170 or a little less than 200 people coming from different Departments—so Treasury, budget, ODA, which was at the French Development Agency because that is where the ODA money sits. We had the economy in general and of course environment. We had defence. I think everyone was represented in the taskforce I was heading.

It was quite a top-down approach, of course, with negotiation all the time. In France the co-ordination is very complicated; normally we have, under the umbrella of the Prime Minister, negotiation of all the files. This was not the case. There was a clear leadership in one Department, which was that of Laurent Fabius as the Minister. I had my taskforce, who were, in a way, following instruction.

There had been a training process in the French Administration very similar to what you benefit from in the UK, because you have very good official training in that topic—probably the best if I look at the European level. You have a very good level of competence in your Departments. But consistency was an important element. Then, just for the planning, when I arrived to take that task in May 2014, I think I presented the plan to the Government in July 2014, and with all the elements—the agreement, the NDCs, non-state actors, etc. Of course the waters were much calmer so we had a lot of time to plan—but it was really a plan, with separate tasks we had to achieve, and in particular on finance and ODA.

I see of course all the discussion that took place in the UK and I understand that now the Government is reconsidering the decision for next year on ODA. The UK has always been a front-runner in developed countries for the share of GDP for ODA. I think that was an important element, of course—but working together with the multilateral development banks, which are a key element and player.

Q88 **Henry Smith:** Thank you very much. I have one further question, if I may. Coming back to COP21 and the French Government's response to that, were extra diplomatic staff recruited specifically for those COP negotiations, or were they drawn only from various different Departments, as you described a few moments ago?



Laurence Tubiana: The public office in France is not exactly the same. I don't know the regulation. We had recruited some more people, but not many. For the logistics, of course, we started with specific teams. We are a private business and we are normally organising events, and we have a dedicated team for the logistics. It was not my team; it was another team, led by another ambassador. But for the substantive thing it was mainly the officials, with some new people coming, but not in a very big amount. It was more the mobilisation of everyone.

Henry Smith: Thank you very much.

Chair: Thank you, Henry. Royston, you wanted to come in.

Q89 **Royston Smith:** What countries should be prioritised in diplomatic negotiations? Should we just focus on major emitters, or is a more inclusive strategy needed?

Laurence Tubiana: There are two trends in the diplomacy normally, and I had a discussion with many of my colleagues, and even very recently with John Kerry. There is a theory that we could put in place a club model, so it is about the big emitters and then you try to find a compromise between them. When I look at the way the MEF functioned, because it was this structure that we had to play with in preparing for Paris, I think it was good to understand each other or to see how tough the job was, more than we needed to craft something differently. I believe more, to my view now—not at this club. Again, the G20, for example, is a place. It may change, but for the moment and until then, the G20 representing these big emitters has been every time a very difficult place to advance climate change.

As I remember, the G20 preceding the Paris agreement was a few days before the end of November, and the conference was starting at the beginning of December. You could have said, "Well, there is no value in trying to get there. We will never get an agreement with all these players," which of course are crucial ones. That is why I think it is very important to develop the bilateral conversation, to know exactly where the red line of the other one is and what could be a potential agreement, but they will never say yes in a club; they will say yes at the end, measuring the power politics in the particular setting. That is why you need other players—the smaller ones—and a high-ambition coalition, which I understand the UK Government is really trying to revive and mobilise.

The fact is that small islands were in the leadership role. What is the influence of the small islands? Nothing. What is the economic interest of small islands? No one. The problem was finding the moral authority vis-à-vis the media and public opinion. I definitely believe that for the bilateral you have to understand where the big players are. In a way, it is easier in a bilateral conversation than in a club one. I have experienced that again and again, even with Turkey, which is really one of the more difficult ones. But then you have to bring the different groups and pay attention to all the groups, because that is the way you put the ambition of the presidency.



Again, you have to be ambitious. The UK can draw a line—a benchmark. You may lose or win, but that will be really recognised as your agency and your leadership. Then you play with all the groups. I really feel that you need the club diplomacy. The US believes in that. In my view, it never works where you have the smaller countries coming, and it unlocks many things.

Q90 **Royston Smith:** In preparing for COP21, how important were the diplomatic negotiations with non-state actors?

Laurence Tubiana: If I look back five years, it was of course a very different situation. That was the first time, in a way, that we invited so formally. In the Paris decision—not in the agreement itself—there is a recognition that non-state actors, such as private business and local authorities, have to play a role. It was the beginning of that. It was important to try, first, because one important point to add is that at that time businesses were very much for voluntary agreements and did not really want to have a framework that they would have to relate to. They were mostly saying, “We will do what is needed on climate action, but we don’t need governance beyond the Government setting a carbon price.” I think they have changed their minds; now, naturally, they refer to Paris agreement implementation and to being consistent with Paris agreement goals, so the situation is much better, more interesting and more consistent now.

Now, of course, the big challenge for the UK Government and the champions is to make all those private businesses, wherever they are in the different branches, accountable to what they say—to get them to be really individually committed, not just saying, “We will do something; we are all these investors, all these cement companies or automotive companies,” but saying what each company will do. That is a mechanism of governance that we do not have.

That is why Glasgow could be very innovative in inventing what could be, I would say, a veritas or an agency that creates accountability for the people we want at the table, because at the end of the day we want them at the table; we want business at the table to discuss future steps. But then, with power comes responsibility, and that is where Glasgow could be very innovative, launching a reflection or a mechanism—I don’t know whether we have time—to say that private business has a whole seat at the table as well as local authorities, but they need to be accountable and something has to happen.

Q91 **Royston Smith:** May I ask you about the pre-meetings that the French Government held leading up to COP21? What pre-meetings were held, and how did they help—if they did—to pave the way for the final agreement?

Laurence Tubiana: They were very central at different stages. The meetings were at two levels: one at the head of delegation and ambassador level, and one at the ministerial level. Again, 35 to 40 countries were invited, and the idea was to socialise the state of play of



the different issues and socialise what kinds of options we could put on the table, so that when people arrived in Paris, at least they had heard the different options possible.

The difficulty we had, which the UK does not have, is that we had a process of writing the agreement, which was an official process, before any COP presidency could intervene. That process produced an awful text—I think it was 120 pages, with 900 brackets and 100 points of divergence. You do not have to be confronted with that.

The meetings at that time were focused on trying to understand the complexity of the official process and, above all, trying to familiarise the Ministers who finally have to make the decision in the last days with the issues, so that they were not under the control of their officials and could have their own judgment and make a political judgment of what they should consider and what they should advance, with deep enough understanding that they could really participate in the conversation. That allowed the French presidency to entrust some of them from different regions of the world to conduct processes and to facilitate discussion in Paris, to clarify and find compromise at least on a number of points.

The last compromise was probably more in the hands of the presidency on the key issue, which was a more complicated one. All the others, however, were solved by the parties themselves, meaning the Ministers leading processes during the last week, because we had created a trust relationship with them, and they were at a good level of knowledge. That is the difficulty for the UK Government today, because of course no informal meetings could have been organised, but I think you still have a chance to do that during the summer.

Q92 Royston Smith: Those meetings that you had, and that we perhaps should have, were they organised on a regional or thematic basis?

Laurence Tubiana: No, the idea was to have the whole picture—a representation of all sorts of different groups of negotiation, of region and so on. But we finally dropped the idea of having regional settings of negotiations. So we invited the representation of these 35 or 40 countries altogether all the time. From time to time, they changed a little bit. The rule was that we invite 35 countries, but whoever wants to come can come. The doors were open. There was, of course, then feedback and information. The agenda was public—it was a document that was available to every country. Then, the content of the discussion—a synthesis—was drafted by the presidency.

It was not regional, because we felt it was too difficult to sense where the centre of gravity could be, so we needed the confrontation of the different views. It has created a group of friends. We need people we could rely on. Of course, they represented Brazil or even Venezuela, to take the different countries, more or less difficult at that time, but we could trust them, and we understood each other enough to facilitate a process and to be trustful to do that. The presidency cannot do that; it is just too much work—you have to delegate.



Q93 **Chair:** The points that you are raising are very important. The way that you talk about building up coalitions and teams, if you like, to make this work when a presidency cannot, is very interesting. Did you go into these discussions and the presidency with clear ideas of what you were trying to achieve per country, per region or for everybody, or did you see yourself very much as a chair just waiting for other ideas to come forward?

Laurence Tubiana: Certainly not the second. There is the value of being in that position, and the honesty, if I can say so. The challenges are not the same, so they have to be very different. The challenge for the French Government and the French presidency was, "What is a more ambitious agreement that we would like to see?" There were a number of headlines we kept saying and describing. That did not mean that we did not have to play the honest broker role. But we said, "We have an urgency. We will want the most ambitious agreement possible." That helped, because people then knew what we wanted, and they did not say, "Oh, they are pushing that, but they have a hidden agenda."

The problem of these negotiations, if I may be undiplomatic, is the paranoia as a rule. Everybody is paranoid. So if I say, "This is what I want. It may seem a little bit too ambitious, but it is what I will try to pursue and, of course, I will have to gather your agreement to go there," that takes away the idea that, "They say that, but they have another idea that we don't know about." That is, again, the philosophy and behaviour of all these negotiators, whether they are Ministers or ambassadors. That is the rule of diplomacy sometimes, and you have to be a little bit paranoid just to be serious in the job.

In my view, urgency and clarity are what you want to achieve. The challenge for you is that we could say we want the most ambitious agreement possible. There were, of course, a lot of contrarians; some wanted an agreement that lasted only five years, some wanted to say it had to be entirely voluntary. The challenge for Glasgow and for your presidency is that you want to set the ambition in terms of commitments. That is a different story, because it is one by one, in a way.

In Paris, for the first time, everyone had to make a commitment. It was not only the developed countries like in Kyoto or further on. But now you have to put in a new commitment, and with this commitment, they cannot say they do not know—"You have had five years to think about this, and the situation is deteriorating. We have to do much better." So it is a different language.

Q94 **Chair:** That's interesting. Again, your answers raise many further questions, as you can imagine, because the way in which you approach this is so fundamentally important. My question is, how did you partner? In the same way that we are partnering with Italy, you were partnered with Peru. How did you use that partnership? How did it work for you, for the coalition and for the results you were trying to get?



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Laurence Tubiana: We had a handicap, being French. It is a developed nation—a former colonial power—so the trust is not there. We have that handicap. The idea, which I defend very strongly, was to partner until the last minute, meaning the Peruvian team was part of the official team until the last hours. Why? Because we had to compensate for that handicap. Some African countries still see France as the colonial power—the old one, but still.

Trust is the one thing: when people do not trust you, you cannot achieve what you want—the most ambitious thing possible. Partnering with Peru compensated for that handicap. Again, the situations of Chile and Peru politically are not the same. They have many political problems now. I cannot sense exactly, but it has been useful to embark them.

But it was bizarre; I understand that when I proposed that to Laurent Fabius, he found it a little weird to have a team that was not French but French and Peruvian. But it worked; sometimes, we have to be practical. I cannot advise; I have not sat and discussed enough with your nominated president, Alok Sharma, what he feels about the Chilean side, but it could be a good option.

Q95 **Chair:** The next area I wanted to hear about was setting expectations. Paris 2015, or COP21, is a gold standard in so many ways. How do you think we should look at Glasgow this year? The challenge is always that you overbid and underdeliver. Clearly, not only is that not great diplomacy; it risks leaving the world feeling that these challenges are not achievable and reversing some of the important environmental change that we are seeing.

Laurence Tubiana: That is a very delicate judgment. We have seen Copenhagen promising enormous results and failing terribly, but maybe because the Danish Government portrayed that as the global summit where you save the planet. That was too much. Glasgow can be about action, seriousness and the common perception of the acceleration of the phenomenon, and about how, now, we see much more clearly what the goals we agreed in 2015 mean and why we need solidarity, joint investment and new technology. It is about painting a future, now we know a little bit more what it looks like. We know more what adaptation is about and what the electrification of transport is about. There are elements of progress in terms of the five years that you can capture, saying, “Now we know where to go; we have these milestones. We know that maybe we will not do all the steel with zero carbon by 2025 or 2030, but we know how to do it now.”

So I would really insist that Glasgow is a moment where we design the action plans and go for action, because we know where we are going. With that element of precision of describing the future—not to deliver those things by Glasgow, but to have a road map, or a pathway, that people know and share—the public will realise that, although it will be difficult to implement, at least we have a plan. That, in my view, would be a big success for Glasgow—forget the details of the rulebook you have to finish and so on. In describing that, you would bring people together—business,



companies, Governments—and say, “What do you want to achieve?” and you would try to put meat and density on that explanation. I think that would make a lot of difference.

Everything is about expectation, a self-fulfilling prophecy. You do not have a global Government to punish people, or an international court of justice that could punish people for not respecting their commitments, so everything is about expectations and shaping them. You can have a very powerful role, and Glasgow would be about saying, “Okay, we know we have had five years to prepare; now it is action time.”

Chair: Thank you very much indeed—I am extremely grateful. Stewart, do you want to come in?

Q96 Stewart Malcolm McDonald: I have just a couple of questions, Chair, if I may. May I come to the European Climate Foundation’s goal of a carbon-neutral European Union by 2050? Can you talk us through what you think are the biggest challenges in achieving that goal?

Laurence Tubiana: Again, the technical pathways are more or less known: electrify whatever we can, all activities, and try to get clean electricity or zero-carbon electricity—of course, there are some different views on whether to include nuclear. One of the big difficulties now is dealing with sectors that, for the moment, feel that they cannot do much, particularly on agricultural land use, which is a big issue for Europe.

You know the sectors that try to keep out of the EU emissions trading system and try not to pay the carbon price. They say, “We cannot change the technology”—particularly intensive energy users such as cement, steel, aluminium or chemicals. Now those sectors are exposed because we are beginning to have solutions. Net zero by 2050 is not about somebody doing something while the others are waiting for that particular sector to do the job. Everybody has to be working towards net zero. You cannot just create wonderful opportunities of carbon capture and sequestration everywhere—that will be a very limited role.

The economic challenges on those sectors are really not in the automotive sector, where I think the game is done—the UK is showing that you can do that probably earlier than you believe—but more in the hard-to-abate sectors, the energy-intensive ones. That is one thing, mainly on the business side—the proper business model, technology and, of course, hydrogen playing a role in there.

The second and more challenging thing is really the impact on sectors from a jobs point of view, and the activities and the transition in the regions that will be affected by the closing of coalmines, of coal-powered plants, of the automotive sector that will, in a way, transform into electrification—those are not the same jobs in the same quantities.

The professional transition and the job question are central, in my view. That is where trade plays a role, because, of course, the difficult sectors that really have to change their basic technologies, particularly to electrify with clean energy, will ask for protection. The challenge is that, for the



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moment, they have received free allowances—they did not pay the carbon price; only the electricity paid the carbon price. Now, everyone has to pay if we are to be consistent. That is why the problem of competitiveness is now playing out. That is why the trade issue will be part of the discussion. Of course, I would not advise at all to discuss that in Glasgow—that is not the right place. Anyway, we now have an institution that can handle that, and we should go to the WTO to see what the rules are and how we can imagine systems that are non-discriminatory. So I see the most challenge in the hard-to-abate sector, and the second one is really having the transition.

We have a sector that I know every country—the UK included—is struggling with, which is the older building sector, which is so difficult to refit, of course. The new buildings, it's okay—you know how to do it now. But the old ones? So expensive, so many social implications, so many problems with financing people that cannot do the job because it's just too expensive. At the same time, there is an issue of energy poverty. I do not know exactly how strong it is in the UK. I see it in my country, in France; it is—*[Inaudible]*—million people, or more than that, who are really suffering from energy poverty.

So, these are the issues that are more about how we do this climate action—this climate policy—while putting in social justice, and really trying not to have regressive policies and not affect the poorest households. Again, as I said, the farming sector has to do the job, but they have not done that, some of them.

Q97 Stewart Malcolm McDonald: Could I come to the legacy of COP? Obviously, in Glasgow, which I represent, as I mentioned, we are looking forward to the COP circus—if I can refer to it like that, for the purposes of this question—coming to town, but when it is all done and agreements are signed, and everyone packs up and leaves, how should we look to protect the legacy of the agreement itself? Talk us through what the French Government did to ensure there was a proper legacy of COP21? And what should we look to do to ensure there is a proper legacy for COP26?

Laurence Tubiana: That is a very interesting question, because the weird thing—I don't remember why things were decided like this; it was probably because of the process to create the convention, the UNFCCC itself, and then decide on the system or the country chairing—is that the presidency comes at the end of the year and has to craft agreement at that particular moment, and then you have one year left, so you don't know exactly what to do, if not prepare for the next one. So it's very difficult.

That could be a big innovation, by the way, for the UK Government, and totally sensible, because, again, you are speaking anyway about the goal that Boris Johnson portrayed, like net zero by 2050 for the COP, and of course, better, the 2030 climate plans, and NDCs that are really much stronger. I think you can reasonably hope for some results on that side.



Then, what you do after—again, I don't think we have been particularly bright on the legacy on the French side, because we put all the effort just into trying to get things done. Then, afterwards, of course, you have to do a certain number of things. Of course, a big legacy was to have the agreement ratified—signed, ratified and entering into force—at incredible speed, because it was entering into force a little less than one year after it was negotiated. So, that took most of the time.

However, it is difficult, I think, to maintain teams and to maintain interest when you have invested so much energy and funding. I think the system is really weird. Normally, we should begin in November 2021 and then, yes, do the agreement, but ensure the legacy of what you have produced. But again, it is a weird system.

So what I would advise, if it is about action, which, in a way, is my hope, is that we should really have some kind of accountability mechanisms that we create in Glasgow, which we really check. These peer pressures are the only enforcement mechanism we have, really. We should make sure that is there with some kind of clear organisation and rigour.

I think the UK is really well placed for that, because of all the competences you have at home. You have been very good—well, your CCC is a universal model, your climate committee. You have, of course, very good institutions that are able to track progress and measure it. You could at least offer experience. I am thinking more of the preparation for Glasgow really. Of course, I am very much attached to the success of it. The legacy could be that it is not words; it's actions, and we are able to follow them. That would be fantastic, in a way, as a legacy, I would say.

Q98 Stewart Malcolm McDonald: If we had Alok Sharma with us right now, what key recommendations would you make to him for the accountability measures that you mention and for ensuring that after the summit there is a focus on implementing what has been negotiated?

Laurence Tubiana: My recommendation would be, first, that by the beginning of the summer, or earlier, he set the headlines that he wants to achieve in Glasgow, so that everyone knows what he is looking for—almost drafting the press communique that he wants to get out of Glasgow.

I am sorry, because this is something that I have just been thinking very recently could be done in Glasgow. He could try to, maybe in advance of that, check what has been done, which in a way is relatively weak. On Governments' side—on countries' side—we have a system of measurement, and there are independent bodies that report. There is the report of UNEP, which we call the gap report. You have excellent private institutions in the UK. I am very inspired by institutions such as the Carbon Tracker, which the European Climate Foundation, by the way, is funding.

You have independent bodies that are a good third party. We need third parties—that is why I was referring to Veritas, for example, for business.



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It could begin to play with models, but again for Government we have a system in place that is finally relatively precise. We know what the emissions are. On the company side, we have to build a system, and we are just at the beginning. He could create a taskforce on that. Again, this is too recent, but I do think now that it can be done in Glasgow.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: Forgive me for popping off the screen momentarily. My laptop was about to run out of battery, and I did not want to lose you. Thank you for your time this afternoon.

Q99 **Chair:** Madame Tubiana, you have been extremely generously with not only your time but your insights, for which I am enormously grateful. Before we leave you, we have spoken an awful lot about how Governments work together, how the agenda is set by precedent, and how many different areas of progress that we hope to see require following up and the use of leverage into the future.

One aspect that we have not touched on, and that I would be really interested in your thoughts on, is people. Clearly, none of this is going to be deliverable unless we engage with our communities not just here in the UK, or more specifically in Glasgow, but around the world. What thought did you give to popular interaction in the run-up to Paris, as in bringing people with us, talking about change in travel, change in diet, change in land use and so many other different areas that are actually not matters for Government, but for individuals?

Laurence Tubiana: Again, the situation has changed totally in five years. For example, the diet issue was there in Paris. There were discussions, but it seemed so far away. Again, plane travel was there, but nobody was questioning that issue. Then there is the panorama—the landscape—of people's involvement in climate action policies. We did not have a climate march before Paris. There was only one, and because of the attacks in Paris it finally could not take place.

I am not speaking only about Europe and the US, where of course these marches were absolutely massive. You have a young generation that is already active, sometimes in very difficult situations. Look at India, for example, where this movement has a lot of difficulties about protection. You have the movement of views. People in a number of countries in Africa are fighting against coal mining or coal power plants.

The question is how to capture that energy. I think it's really interesting. I think that sometimes, and more and more—of course, here, we are trying to explain this to the French Government, with the citizens' convention I chair—society can be ahead of the Government in the way they think there is a problem, or a solution to accept. So one good thing could be to make this visible in Glasgow—to have enough representation of the different societies and to try to see how they see their involvement, how they see climate action in their own contexts, which are of course so different; you cannot have one solution that fits all. But it would be really interesting if the voices of the citizens—in particular, the young generation, but not only them—were at least served in Glasgow, because, again, that would give



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more space. I think it would be really good to encourage all the Governments, who will have to develop their policies at home, to get the support of citizens and the involvement of them, because as you say, a lot will come—not everything, but part of it—from decisions and support from their people.

So that could be a call, in the same way as we have called on Government to encourage and develop local authority involvement and business involvement and, of course, the involvement of some others. Glasgow could be a place where you encourage citizen participation, because we know that, with such transformative policies, we have to touch everything: the way we eat, the way we heat our homes or cool them, and the way we transport ourselves. This is so radical and touches so much of the jobs structure. I think that there is value in seeing how we develop a people-centred discussion, because it's a very, very radical transformation. This is about the nature of progress and how we see these economic and social opportunities to really make progress for everyone.

It's interesting. I know that your colleagues in Italy are preparing the youth conference, but it would be good to have that flavour, which is not the traditional one of young people talking to Governments at the beginning of the COP. That is really formal, and that is not the reality of society now, when everybody is more involved.

I remember the situation with the diet issue. Everybody was looking at those strange people in the corridors at the COPs who were arguing that we should stop eating meat. They were considered a phenomenon. Now it's okay; it's a normal discussion. So I think you can do a lot on people's involvement.

Chair: May I thank you enormously? It has been incredibly helpful to us to hear your views. The range of answers that you have given us has been fantastic. I am very grateful. We have been hearing a lot about the importance not just of the preparation for COP26, but of the coalition building and the partnership with Italy, and I have been having conversations with my Italian opposite number to make sure that we, at parliamentary and Committee level, are co-ordinated. But I think there is an awful lot more to do, and I am sure Alok Sharma will also be listening with great care to your words.

I am particularly grateful for the insight that you have given us on public participation, because clearly, if we don't bring people with us, these conversations are pointless. So the essential element is getting Glasgow to be a public event, despite the fact that we are going to be restricted on Zoom. I thought Dr Rietig's and Dr Falkner's insights on that were particularly important as well.

On that note, may I again thank you very much? Je vous remercie énormément, Madame Tubiana. C'est vraiment un énorme plaisir de vous avoir ici parmi nous. I hope very, very much that we will be able to hear from you again.



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