



HOUSE OF COMMONS

# Environmental Audit Committee

## Oral evidence: Preparations for COP26, HC 222

Tuesday 17 March 2020

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Members present: Philip Dunne (Chair); Duncan Baker; Mr Robert Goodwill; Ian Levy; Claudia Webbe.

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### Witnesses

I: Dr Katherine Kramer, Global Lead on Climate Change, Christian Aid; Melanie Coath, Senior Climate Change Policy Officer, RSPB; and Richard Black, Director, Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit.



## Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Dr Katherine Kramer, Melanie Coath and Richard Black.

Q1 **Chair:** Good morning. Welcome to the first public session of this Parliament of the Environmental Audit Committee. I am delighted that you have been able to join us for our session looking at the preparations for COP26, the objectives of the Government and the international community, and NGO expectations. I suspect that the session will be an hour long. The private session that we were going to have with the ONS is not happening, so we have a bit more time than normal, which we may or may not need. I will ask our witnesses to identify themselves for broadcasting please, starting with Dr Kramer.

**Dr Kramer:** Hello, I am Dr Katherine Kramer from Christian Aid.

**Melanie Coath:** I am Melanie Coath from the RSPB.

**Richard Black:** I am Richard Black, from the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit.

Q2 **Chair:** Thank you.

We have assumed the presidency of COP relatively late in the day, in September last year. The Government began their year as president by making some ambitious claims for what they were seeking to do to provide global leadership, to follow up the Paris accords in a substantive way. Could you set out for us, first, your credentials to be talking to us? It would be helpful if you could explain the extent to which you have been involved in previous COPs. Can you give us a sense of how feasible it is, given the time and the challenges? I am sure we will come on to the immediate challenges posed by coronavirus during the course of our remarks, but in the absence of the pandemic, is there enough time to be able to make substantive progress? What do you see as the primary objectives of COP26?.

Shall we start with you, Mr Black?

**Richard Black:** Sure. I have been to 10 COPs. I was a BBC environment correspondent at the first five, the final one being in 2011—I was there at the debacle of Copenhagen. Since 2014, I have been running a small think tank and have been to five other COPs, including Paris. I have written a lot about it, observed it from a distance, and never been involved in negotiations themselves. In terms of the Government's leadership plans for COP26, I think it boils down to a couple of things. One is getting the diplomacy right; we can perhaps unpack what that means a bit later, if that is of interest. The other thing is demonstrating leadership. Clearly, there is a dearth of leadership out there in the international arena—the US, Australia and Brazil are not there, the EU may be by then, but the UK has got a decent story to tell provided it can sort out some of the things that are currently preventing it telling that story effectively. We have the world-leading net zero target but we are not on track to it. There is a wide view among observers in civil society,



not only in the UK but overseas, that being demonstrably on track to net zero before the summit opens is a necessary condition, if you want to play that global leadership card. We have seen mixed signals so far from the Government. There were some things in the Budget, but there is lots more to come. I am not sure whether the connection between national policy making and the international situation has been internalised at the highest levels in government. There are other things like export credit finance for fossil fuels. If you are adhering to the Paris agreement, should you be doing that? Arguably not.

In terms of where we are now with coronavirus. Obviously, it is going to be a massive disruption and one presumes that there will be an impact on all kinds of international gatherings. We have the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting coming up in June, and one presumes that a decision on that would be taken before a decision on COP26 in November. We have the UN General Assembly in September. Some of the rumours that have been around this morning from political pundits suggesting that COP26 will be postponed are well premature. To start with, the decision to postpone is not within the gift of the British Government. The process is owned by the international community. We saw last year when Chile pulled out of being the physical host that they did not cancel the summit. It went back to the international community and Spain stepped forward. The UK could say at any stage, "We don't think we can host it". Then it would be up to all Governments under the UN Climate Convention to decide what they wanted to do. If the worst projections of the pandemic come to pass, one can see absolutely that hosting it would be difficult, but under the Paris agreement a number of things are due to be delivered in 2020—that is what the language says; it does not say "by COP26" it says "in 2020"—and they are the enhancement of Governments' commitments to carbon cutting by 2030, which are the so-called nationally determined contributions, the invitation to provide long-term strategies, the pathways to deep decarbonisation to net zero in 2050 or thereabouts, and the promise of having mobilised \$100 billion per year for the poorest countries to help them green their economies and to adapt to climate impact. This was first promised back in 2009 and was reconfirmed in the Paris Agreement, and both of those are explicit that it needs to be delivered in 2020, not by COP26, so there is a lot for the UK.

The other point, of course, is that the UK is not actually the president of the UNFCCC at the moment. That still rests with Chile. The UK only becomes formally the president when COP26 happens, so that is another part of the dynamics, the way in which the UK works with Chile over this year.

**Q3 Chair:** Can you remind us when Chile decided that they were not in a position to host and how long it took to get to Madrid all told?

**Richard Black:** It was about a month before.

**Melanie Coath:** Four weeks.



**Richard Black:** Four weeks, yes. Initially the UN Climate Convention put out a holding statement saying, "We are looking at this, looking at our options", and then the Spanish Government while they had been obviously thinking about this as a contingency. That raises an interesting question: if the UK coming in later in the year decides that it cannot host, is there another Government that have handled coronavirus very effectively that might step forward and say, "Well, we could host it instead"? That is a possibility.

Q4 **Chair:** Hard to predict at this stage. Roughly, how many people? Do you have a sense of how many will attend? Is there a bigger attendance expected for COP26 because it is the five-year review point than would be attending a normal conference of the parties, and do you have a feel for how many attended in Madrid?

**Richard Black:** I think there would be higher than normal, yes. At Copenhagen there was something like 45,000 registered delegates. Obviously the majority of those are not Government delegates. They are from civil society observers. I think there were 4,000 journalists in Copenhagen. Glasgow would be up the upper end. It might not be as big as that but the figure of 30,000 has been bandied around and that is probably a reasonable estimate I would have thought.

Q5 **Chair:** Thank you. We are going to come on to a number of the points that you have made during the course of the morning. Dr Kramer?

**Dr Kramer:** Just on your credentials point, I have been following the UNFCCC in various ways since 1997 when I was doing a Masters and got very excited by Kyoto. I had my first real experience within the EU Commission preparing for a COP. I then got involved in the process in 2006 and I have spent over a year of my life in the climate negotiations, so I feel I do have some experience to bring.

To build on what Richard says, there are four main heads that the UK needs to deliver on. The first is domestic because I do not see that the UK will have any credibility with the international community. It is great that we have the net zero target but that is not anything that we are seeing being implemented. I would argue that we would need wide-ranging, comprehensive national legislation to implement the net zero target, in order to be able to show that not only do we have the target but we are taking it seriously. That is something that needs to be very advanced by the time of COP.

The three other heads that I would see are diplomacy, which Richard has talked about. There needs to be serious outreach and the Foreign Office needs to have the resources available to do that properly because, as you know, we are coming into this a lot later than the French were in advance of Paris and this is a very political COP with a lot of big things on the table that need to be delivered.



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Having said that, though, we do recognise there are limitations to a consensus-based process. We do see the need for some of these coalitions that are willing to come forward. There were many that were set up and the UK took a very strong leadership role around adaptation and resilience in last year's UN Secretary General's process. We have a Powering Past Coal Alliance. Arguably, we need to get out of all fossil fuels as quickly as possible and maybe setting up a coalition of the willing around powering past oil and gas would be something we could recommend.

The fourth head I would see is the UK's offer to the world, and this goes to Richard's point on finance. The UK was at the forefront of that pledge for the \$100 billion back in 2009. The accounting that has gone on around that means that it may be delivered numerically but it may not be delivered in a way that is useful. For instance, a lot of that seems to have been delivered as loans rather than as grants to the developing countries. A lot seems to be going towards mitigation rather than helping them to build their resilience to the climate impacts, so I think there will be a huge dynamic around financing the negotiations of how they are delivered and what is the future offer going to be and that is another area for the UK to lead on.

**Q6 Chair:** Mark Carney, having stepped down as Bank of England Governor on Monday, is appearing before colleagues in the House of Lords tomorrow. Do you take any comfort from the fact that he has taken on an ambassadorial role specifically in relation to green finance aspects?

**Dr Kramer:** I have not followed him in great depth but I was chaired to hear him talk about fossil fuels becoming stranded assets and bringing that dynamic into the financial community. That is a very important point for him to have raised. If he understands climate change and is bringing his understanding to that community, with the credibility that he brings, that is a very important dynamic.

**Q7 Chair:** Thank you. Melanie.

**Melanie Coath:** I co-ordinate the RSPB's climate change policy work. I have been to five COPs as far back as 2008 but also in Madrid last year.

I want to pick up on the point you were asking around the primary objective, and of course 2020 is, as you say, a key review period year and a key opportunity for countries to up their ambition through their enhanced pledges under the Paris approaches. Those are the only acronym I hope we use today, which is NDCs, so the commitments under the Paris process.

We do see the UK prioritising ambition and the need to use its political power and soft power to try to raise ambition, and we applaud that. From my perspective, RSPB is looking at the ecological and climate crisis in tandem and this year it is being called the super year because, of course,



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we have two COPs. We have the CBD COP in Kunming, and we might come on to that in a bit.

We know that from the science that the climate and ecological crises need to be solved in tandem, so this is a real opportunity for the UK to—recognising that—play that role. It is in a great position to do so because we have a joint science meeting of the IPCC on climate change and the ITBAS on biodiversity in May, which the UK is also hosting, so the UK can build on that and reach out to the Chinese Government hosting the Kunming COP and can build that together. We recognise that the Government are making nature a priority theme within the COP as well, so it is a real opportunity to land that successfully this year.

Q8 **Chair:** Did you say the UK is hosting that in May?

**Melanie Coath:** The science meeting, yes, it is.

Q9 **Chair:** Will that be a substantial meeting or could that be done by technology?

**Melanie Coath:** That is a good question. As I said that I had not thought about the coronavirus. I do not know how they are going to take that forward now. It was planned to be a fairly substantial meeting with some conferences around it to make the most of those opportunities. We will have to see how that goes now. Maybe that will get pushed forward as other events. I very much hope it can still happen in person, yes.

Q10 **Duncan Baker:** Mr Black, can you explain the role and the importance of the COP presidency in terms of diplomacy?

**Richard Black:** Yes, sure. As a way of background, I think the French are the model to do this. As my colleague said, the French knew two years beforehand that they were going to be hosting the 2015 COP and all of their embassies were tasked with making that their number one priority for two years. It is about building alliances; setting your objectives and building alliances.

As one example, the UK is keen to do something on resilience. This is basically helping some of the poorest and most climate vulnerable countries to protect themselves, to anticipate what is going to happen, to get money leverage, whether it is things like building flood defences or whether it is scientific institutions that develop new crops strains that are resistant against drought, whatever it is, this kind of resilience.

That is fine but, in order to get a package over the line that everyone is going to agree with, they have to build the alliances with some of those smaller, vulnerable countries that are going to be the recipients of that; make sure that is co-produced; make sure that other countries that would be weighing in with the funding—one thinks immediately of the EU, for example—are actually aligned with that, because 95% of this stuff is done by the time you get to the COP. There are other alliances that one could talk about, for example, nature-based solutions and so on.



This is particularly important in the area of ambition, which is a catchall term for three things. One is the nationally determined contributions that Mel referred to. The second thing is the long-term strategies, the movement towards net zero by 2050, and the third thing is movement in different sectors, whether it is coming off coal or adopting renewables or electric vehicles or whatever it might be. Each of those will need a group of countries that bought into it before you get there.

There probably is a certain amount of defensive diplomacy to be done as well because there are a number of countries, not just the US, that are not progressive on this at the moment. Australia is one that comes to mind at the moment, so yes.

Q11 **Duncan Baker:** How in your view do you bring them along?

**Richard Black:** It is very difficult to bring countries such as Australia currently or the US along. A damage limitation strategy is probably quite a good way to go. In the past, what we have seen at COPs is that there is often a coalition of the willing and there are a few countries that are outside that. If the coalition of the willing is powerful enough, they can drag some extra progress out of those other ones at the last minute.

**Dr Kramer:** I think the only time we have seen movement in the UNFCCC has when the EU and when the UK was part of the EU forming that alliance with vulnerable countries, the least developed countries, the alliance of small island states, the Africa group, some of the Latin American countries. That coalition has been strong enough to deliver Paris.

I was lecturing yesterday and reminded myself that that coalition became so desirable in Paris that the US was so keen to walk in the room, as part of this progressive alliance under Obama, that it made concessions to be able to be part of that progressive alliance, so they can build their own momentum and, absolutely, that has to be part of the diplomacy that the UK is doing.

I would underscore the importance of working closely with the Europeans because of the developed countries. The EU is the bloc historically—with the UK as part of it—that has been the one that has had the clout of the developed countries to form those alliances and to move forward progressively.

Q12 **Chair:** Thank you. Picking up on a couple of those aspects, do you think that the hiatus caused by the general election and then the subsequent reshuffle while the Government was prioritising leaving the EU has left a void in these diplomatic negotiations and are you seeing any increased momentum following the appointment of the Secretary of State for Business and the Environment as the new COP president?

**Dr Kramer:** Where we have seen the greatest building is at the official level, and that is very good. I have been speaking with one of our colleagues from the Foreign Office who is kind of the nexus of the core of



the diplomatic outreach, and it does feel like that is moving. I hear from colleagues in different countries that the UK embassies are reaching out to civil society around the world, so I think that is a really important step. Although, what I would really would like to see is more obvious outreach at the political level, a real sense that there is a real political commitment to this that they do see that this is a crisis and are acting in that light.

**Q13 Chair:** Do you feel that the British lead—I accept that Chile remains president at the moment, but that we have given enough indication of what the ambition is for this conference?

**Richard Black:** At the topline level I think we have. The hiatus was unfortunate but it is what it is. I do not think it is insoluble. I was quite encouraged a few weeks ago when there was a conference at Wilton Park, which Alok Sharma hosted, and a lot of very smart people were in the room as a kind of advisory council. The language that came out of that was very good.

What I am hearing is that that has not necessarily been translated down into detail. We have the general concept of what resilience might mean but what other countries are not yet hearing is the detail on that. It is not clear that the UK Government currently plans to root that in what the Paris Agreement and the UN Climate Convention are supposed to deliver. For example, there is this big stream of work called loss and damage. That is about recognising that some countries will be materially damaged by climate impacts that their own emissions had absolutely no part in causing, so what is the mechanism that—this is a toxic word and I use it in inverted commas—“compensates” them for that damage? There is a formal process there and what is not clear, I am hearing, is whether the rhetoric around resilience is being matched up and being couched in terms of what those developing countries actually want to see in the process.

Diplomacy is obviously going to be a bit more difficult now and a lot of the meetings are going to be called off. Some of that is still going ahead. I believe Mr Sharma has a meeting in his diary with his Chilean counterpart next month, which is great news, and—as I was saying earlier—whatever happens with COP26, it is not quite irrelevant but there is this fact that things need to be delivered in 2020 and the UK and Chile have a major role to play in delivering those.

If I could add one other thing to what Dr Kramer said about the EU. Whatever happens with Brexit it is in the EU’s interest and in the UK’s interest to absolutely work together on this issue. It would be a real signal of leadership if at the top level our Government were to say, “Whatever happens, we are going to work cheek by jowl with the EU on this”, not least because of the China piece.

China is the world’s biggest emitter. Just in terms of bending the curve of emissions, if bending it downwards to keep the Paris targets in reach of China does not make any material change it is hard to see how those



things could be effected, so there needs to be a piece of diplomacy that brings China into the fold. Britain cannot do that alone. It needs the European Union and it needs, above all, Germany to do that so that is another reason why close working with the EU is especially desirable.

Q14 **Chair:** Italy being the co-president presumably is a helpful way of trying to create that cement.

**Richard Black:** Absolutely, yes.

Q15 **Chair:** Sir David King was on the radio this morning talking about the global climate alliance as a means of trying to bring in—in particular, he was referring to US states if the US Federal Government are not going to be as co-operative. Do you think that is an appropriate way forward?

**Richard Black:** Sir David spoke of one global alliance but because this is not Sir David's idea, this idea has been around for a very long time and there have been such alliances that have been proposed and, indeed, established at various times. There are two lessons from all of that. One is that, if an alliance is going to be really effective and everyone is going to buy into it, it needs to have a connection with the UN process. It cannot be something that is outside the UN process, not least because if it is going to bring in developing countries it needs to recognise what their priorities are. You cannot just get a bunch of big emitting countries in a room and sort out a private deal. That has been tried and it has never worked. It always fails. It does not have longevity.

The other lesson from history is that it does need to be done at the political level. It needs high level political buy in from all of the important countries. Having an idea and chucking it on the table and saying, "Here is a good idea" isn't enough.

Q16 **Ian Levy:** Could you explain the role of nature-based solutions and what needs to be agreed at the summit?

**Melanie Coath:** Yes, absolutely. I mentioned earlier about having a climate crisis and an ecological crisis, and what both the scientific institutions with expertise on each of those make clear is that you cannot solve one without solving the other. The IPCC was very clear that nature plays an absolutely critical role in getting to 1.5. There are a number of ways that we can make sure that that happens. Ecosystems play this critical role in absorbing carbon out of the atmosphere, but that must be in addition to the ambition that is achieved from fossil fuels reduction, so it provides additional ambition to getting to 1.5 not offsetting business as usual emissions and, for example, from fossil fuels companies.

I mention that because at Madrid there was a lot of discussion around nature based solutions, a lot of excitement at COP25, particularly at the side events. There was also concern that nature based solutions could be used as a way of allowing people to carrying on with business as usual, so when we are looking at COP26—and, as I mentioned, we have this welcome theme of nature at COP26—we absolutely need to land solutions



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that ensure that we are tackling the crises in tandem and not allowing the business as usual.

As NGOs we have been thinking carefully about what kind of principles really good nature based solutions look like, and that these would need to be the kind of thing that has landed both at COP but also in countries' own commitments nationally in their NDCs in the role that nature plays. The first is obviously additionality to fossil fuels that I mentioned. The second is making sure that we protect the ecosystems that we have already, protect and restore those and look to reconnect those.

The third is making sure that if we are looking at roles, for example, for trees—which obviously get a lot of public attention—that we are looking at ecosystems that are biodiversity rich, so not single species, monoculture plantations of forests but much more. Creating woodlands and re-establishing and connecting up ancient woodlands, protecting existing rainforests, when we are looking at it globally, and allowing a natural regeneration because that really delivers for climate and for wildlife and often much better for people than just short rotation forestry, for example.

I mentioned people. The fourth principle is very much that we need to bring people with us, and we cannot do this in isolation. It is particularly important in developing countries. Indigenous people's rights are extremely important and if you do not take that approach you can end up with a nature/people conflict. That is obviously to be avoided.

Then the fifth principle is making sure that we have and invest in the evidence that we need. A lot of this stuff, for example, understanding of nature based solutions has come up the agenda really quickly. There are some very clear wins. There are a lot of case studies out there which NGOs are very keen to promote and others are keen to showcase of the kinds of triple wins that you can have for nature, for people and for wildlife. We need to make sure that the evidence is there and that we invest in that.

I mentioned that there was a lot of interest in nature based solutions in Madrid, but it was surprising how little that interest shown in side events and fringe events made it across to the text that came out in the negotiations. There was one short paragraph. It was a good paragraph and ambitious countries and NGOs worked hard to get that ambitious paragraph, but if the climate convention is not recognising the important role that nature is playing in the language that is coming out, that is an opportunity missed, so we need that language in there and then we need everything that sits around it.

We mentioned Brazil earlier playing a very tricky role, and that particularly applies to nature based solutions and land and climate ambition, because of their huge rainforests and their proposals for what they want to do with that. There are other mechanisms. For example, a ministerial declaration—building on Richard's point of bringing high



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ambition countries together—that Ministers could sign up to from high ambition countries would be a useful tool. We saw a high ambition coalition for nature formed at the UN Secretary General’s summit, and Costa Rica, which is a leading country in this area, took that forward at the pre-COP as well and generated some momentum there. There are countries that are keen on the space.

We are also seeing momentum in the CBD COP that language around climate change is being incorporated there, so the greater dialogue between these two processes the better that we can learn this.

**Dr Kramer:** A couple of points. I endorse absolutely everything Mel said. The joining of the nature crisis and the climate crisis and finding solutions that work for both is absolutely critical.

A lot of the conversation around nature based solutions is around the mitigation. The classic vision that comes to mind is replanting a forest so that it will soak up the carbon and all will be fine. As Mel said, again we have to emphasise we are not going to win this unless we kill off the fossil fuel emissions.

Nature based solutions are also critically important for resilience. My organisation has a number of projects going of rehabilitating mangroves, for instance. If you remember the huge Asian tsunami, the areas where their mangroves were intact were much less adversely affected than the areas that chopped them down. That is true if you are getting more and more storm surges and sea level rises—these kinds of impacts.

Again, talking about my credentials, my PhD was in carbon, forestry and biodiversity. There is huge literature on the biodiversity side and the diversity stability hypothesis. The more biodiverse a system is the more stable it is to impacts. That presumably holds for climate impacts as much as anything else.

Miles’s point about the biodiversity is critically important. We may need to enhance monoculture plantations just to replace some of the steel and concrete and some of these materials we use but critically important for resilience, for more carbon storage, for everything, is that nature restoration.

It is not just trees. Even thinking about things like reintroduction of beavers in the UK for flood defences, slowing down the rivers, thinking of that holistically by planting trees to slow down the peaks in rainfall going through the rivers. Trying to think very holistically about this will be critical.

An important role for the long-term strategies is being able to stand back and thinking long-term about where we need to get to in the future, not just in terms of our economy but in terms of our landscape and how do we build resilience into that as well as building in our carbon? I am very pleased to note that the Climate Change Committee made a strong point



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in its “Net Zero” report, that the UK’s net zero needs to be done domestically and that will require thinking about how we manage our landscape.

If I may return to an earlier point about China that links to this, China is critically important. One of the reasons we got the Paris Agreement at all was because there was a US/China summit. They managed to reach enough confidence with each other that those two superpowers allowed or enabled the Paris Agreement to go forward. I believe there is going to be an EU/China summit in September. That is going to be critical for this year’s COP.

This goes back to our point earlier, the UK really, really must work with the EU on this agenda because we are not going to win it without that kind of co-operation, and because that summit is so critically important and also because China is hosting the Kunming COP for the biodiversity. It is such an opportunity to bring those agendas together.

**Melanie Coath:** I was just going to come back in. What Kat said reminded me to speak to what we can do domestically in the run up to COP to show leadership in this agenda. Of course, because we are leaving the EU and we are leaving CAP behind—which has had negative impacts on our countryside—we have a great opportunity with the public money for public good system that is coming out of the Agriculture Bill to show real leadership and really show how we can redesign the system to deliver for climate and biodiversity. That is really exciting. That is something that the UK can definitely talk about.

There are some easy wins as well that we would like to see secured, which would show that the UK is really practising what it preaches, so particularly stopping burning on peat. The fact that we are still burning and digging up our peat in a time of a climate emergency does not look good. That is an area that the UK could show instant leadership on. We have a large area of peatlands.

Plans for tree planting are well underway. I know that there is a lot more to be done to get rollout, but the RSPB commissioned an evidence review of where trees should go to deliver for climate and biodiversity. We can share a summary of that with you if you are interested. This really underlined that the trees have to be the right species and go in the right places. For the UK to get that right, with trees they have such a long lifespan that we need to get that right this year and next year, so focusing on native species, making sure we are not planting on deep peat, as happened in the Flow Country in the 1980s, which was a bad example of tree planting but we can show this year how we really get it right.

The final thing, in terms of domestic delivery, is that we have amazing salt marshes around our coasts and the understanding of blue carbon has come up the agenda as well as part of a nature based solution. I think we should not be focused just on the terrestrial carbon. Salt marshes suck



up carbon up to four times faster than tropical rainforests. They are also incredibly important for wildlife. Seagrass beds caught the headlines last week. They suck up carbon 30 times faster, so protection for the areas around our coast as well is really important for climate and wildlife.

**Richard Black:** One or two observations building on what Mel said. It is important to realise that there can be a package of things on nature based solutions, which is good and positive for livelihoods and nature and all of the things that Mel mentioned, but there could also be a package that would just be awful for all of those things and would bring us no reduction in carbon emissions as well. There are some in the corporate sector I think who have now basically thought, "Oh, net zero is the thing. We will put forward a net zero target and we will do it all by tree planting abroad".

That sort of approach cannot be sustainable in the long run for various reasons. First of all, eventually we will run out of forest to plant. There are no safeguards for some of the things that Mel was talking about, and some of these schemes on people's livelihoods and so on. Also, as we have seen in Australia last year, you can have climate change impacts where some of that forest you planted literally goes up in smoke. You need to know that whatever you are doing that carbon is going to be locked up there for many, many decades to come. One of the concerns that some of us have, looking at this picture, is that if there is too much of a drive just to get a package done it could be something that in the long run is very retrograde, so the detail is really very important in this area.

Q17 **Ian Levy:** Dr Kramer, how should the climate COP link to the biodiversity COP in China?

**Dr Kramer:** My understanding is legally they are two separate entities and they have different memberships, so legally they cannot be drawn together into one. What can be done, certainly, historically the secretariats of the two conventions have had meetings and also with the certification convention, so there is one level in which they can just map out things like agendas and make sure that they are talking to each other. There are the scientific things that Mel has talked about between the IPBES and the IPCC, which again are separate entities but are very influential in the advice that goes into the political processes.

There is also the level of individual countries making that link between ministries having those conversations, incorporating both climate and biodiversity considerations into their long-term strategies, and doing it from the bottom up through consultative processes. It is possibly more of an intellectual exercise than a legal exercise, but I think there is a lot that must be done if we are going to get the co-benefits that we should be able to get.

Q18 **Ian Levy:** Is there more that the Government can do?



**Dr Kramer:** I think, Mel, you are better placed than—

**Melanie Coath:** The relationship between the UK Government and the Chinese Government will be important. I mentioned earlier that the CBD COP is likely to include mention of climate change and climate change targets. That is still under discussion at the moment. Equally, building on Madrid, I hope that the UNFCCC COP will be talking a lot more about biodiversity, whether that is informally through a ministerial declaration or formally in the text. The role that the Chinese and the UK Governments have to kind of build a high ambition coalition will land that best in both spaces, building on the kind of coalitions of the willing that Richard was talking about before.

**Dr Kramer:** Also, to build coherence between the conventions.

**Ian Levy:** Thank you.

Q19 **Mr Robert Goodwill:** A question I think primarily for Richard. We have talked about the NDCs, the nationally determined contributions, the effect, how we divvy up our fair share of the burden. Could I ask how ambitious does the United Kingdom's nationally determined contribution have to be to demonstrate climate leadership in the run up to the COP?

**Richard Black:** The simple answer would be more ambitious than it is now. There is a slightly complicated set of factors involved in doing this. Logically, each country works out what it wants to do with its own analysis and then puts that figure on the table. Historically, the UK has not had its own one. It has been under the EU one. Now we have come out of the EU we have to put our own one forward. We could put one forward on the table that was simply the same as the old EU one.

However, our national targets are already more ambitious than the EU's are. Whereas the EU's has been 40% by 2030, our emissions reduction by 2030 have to be 57% because that is what the Committee on Climate Change advised for the UK's own emissions at that period. This is the period 2028 to 2032, so what is known as the 5th carbon budget. We could simply put that 57% figure on the table now but that would not represent an increase in ambition because it is actually what the UK is doing anyway.

An added bit of complication is because of the way that the emissions are calculated that 57% is a real emission reduction of 61%. The difference arises because a large chunk of our emissions is dealt with by the European Emission Trading Scheme, so it is purely an accounting thing. What on paper is 57% is actually 61%. If we come out of the European Emission Trading Scheme, which I do not think is certain yet—I certainly have not seen any definite statement from Government as to what we are doing—but if we come out we could put 61% on the table and that would still be business as usual. That would still not represent an increase in ambition.



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The other thing to bear in mind is that that 5th carbon budget figure, when the Government adopted it, was on a pathway to the old long-term 2050 target of 80%. Now we have the net zero target for 2050, so logically our 2030 figure should be whatever is appropriate on that pathway to net zero, not on a pathway to an 80% cut.

In September, the Committee on Climate Change will put forward its next official recommendation for the 6th carbon budget, the years around 2035. In with that there will obviously be a line that shows what the figure ought to be in 2030. Logically, the Government ought to take that figure and put it on the table for their new NDC. If we are out of the European Emission Trading Scheme that would probably be in the order of 64%-65%.

**Q20 Mr Robert Goodwill:** Does that timing work in the timescale of setting the agenda and ambitions from other countries?

**Richard Black:** That is absolutely the question. It is quite a difficult one here, and the sequencing is nobody's fault but it is not ideal. If the Government basically says, "We are just going to put our 57% or 61% figure on the table now and that is leadership. Look, we have put in our enhanced NDC", I do not think anybody is going to buy that.

**Q21 Mr Robert Goodwill:** They will just say, "Whatever".

**Richard Black:** Yes, "It is business as usual". Exactly, "That is what you are doing anyway".

Equally, they cannot do nothing now because that would be to leave a— countries need to be putting forward enhanced NDCs to encourage others to. If the UK is putting this climate leadership image forward, well, you need to do it.

Probably the way to get around this is to put a figure on the table now that is more ambitious than the EU's and is based on the 5th carbon budget, together with a concrete unequivocal commitment that they will upgrade it again in September based on the new Committee on Climate Change advice. It seems to me that deals with everything that needs to be dealt with. Colleagues might have other views on that.

**Dr Kramer:** Within the process everyone knows what other countries are doing. There is a very clear watch on what is happening and what the domestic circumstances are. If the UK is not sufficiently ambitious it is going to be hard to sweep under the carpet and pretend it is.

I have been very pleased to hear from the Climate Change Committee that it plans a very open book process with BEIS as it is doing its modelling through to September. The timelines are not quite as tight as Richard is implying. The report will be delivered in September and that is the first sniff that anyone will have of what the recommendations will be. There will be advance knowledge of what the recommendations will trend towards looking like.



One thing I would say, though, is it is great that we have a net zero target, but there is more science coming out now that showing that the climate is more sensitive to greenhouse gas emissions than was previously thought. That is based on one study but a very good study from what I have heard, and scientists are now looking to do more work around that. What it means is that what we thought were probably fairly ambitious climate targets may not be ambitious enough, and certainly as Christian Aid were calling for a real frontloading of UK effort before 2030—

**Q22 Mr Robert Goodwill:** Conversely—excuse me—we are getting more evidence on how methane reacts in the atmosphere and aerosol effects and all the rest, so there is a little bit of swings and roundabouts as the science comes forward. Would you agree?

**Dr Kramer:** Certainly, back when I was studying atmospheric chemistry donkey's years ago, the mechanisms for methane removal and methane reaction were very clear. It is a fun area of radical chemistry, but things you do not here in committee every day.

What is the bigger uncertainty on methane or where the data is coming out, is there is a lot more that is being emitted through fugitive emissions from the fossil fuel industry, both from extraction and through transportation. Again, that is another reason why we do have very strong concerns on gas. Some of the latest science coming out is saying it is bad because the methane is coal. That is something that really needs to be addressed.

In terms of net zero, what matters to the atmosphere is the area under the curve. It is emissions through time. If we frontload then, first of all, we are reducing the area under the curve and that is important in light of this later science. In terms of society, in terms of economics, we are avoiding or reducing the number of stranded assets that we are creating because we are saying, "We are going zero carbon. We are going for nearer zero emissions and not allowing some of the infrastructure to be built that would take us away from that goal", so I do think that front loading is an important element.

**Melanie Coath:** We have had a look at the recent science around the methane in terms of what has come out from the Oxford Martin Institute. From our assessment, although methane is a shorter lived gas and so, therefore, not hanging around in the atmosphere as long, one of the most effective things you can do to cool the climate is to reduce those methane emissions because that has an immediate cooling effect. Methane still has a role to play, albeit, a different role and so bringing base down is still very important.

**Richard Black:** The science Kat was referring to is some of the newer climate models that are projecting that the earth's system is more sensitive to carbon dioxide than has previously been thought. Of course, that is just one part of the evidence. The IPCC now is some way through



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its next big assessment report, and my understanding is that the overall numbers on climate sensitivity that are likely to come out will not be significantly different from the ones that we have now.

Just in terms of the ambition offer for COP26 that the Government could be working on—and I am not the only person to suggest this—it seems that you have a number of countries now, 120-odd countries, who have said they would like to be at net zero by 2050 and that is an awful lot of countries. It does not cover half the world's emissions but, nevertheless, it is more than half the world's countries.

A lot of them do not have a plan for getting there, so the UK not only has a target but it has done a lot of the analytical work that you would need in terms of: what is your pathway for industry? What is your pathway for electricity, and so on? So is Sweden. So is New Zealand. The European Commission is going through that work at the moment, so there is an awful lot of that technical work there. It seems to me that there is a natural offer to try to put on the table, "Well, you want to move to net zero, we have done a lot of the analytical work. We know how it is done. Let's work with you and help you translate this ambition into something that looks like a concrete delivery plan".

In a national sense, that puts additional emphasis on the necessity of being demonstrably on track for net zero before the summit starts, so you are proving to other countries that you are doing this. It is not just a figurehead.

**Q23 Mr Robert Goodwill:** Could I ask you briefly about aviation and shipping because obviously it is more difficult to apportion those emissions to a particular country? It might be Chinese goods being delivered to the UK. Obviously, the IMO is making progress of its own, particularly switching to LPG from heavy fuel oil. We have the start of an international aviation emissions trading system within ICAO. Do you feel that the UK's NDC should include some element of shipping and aviation or has that already been done or too difficult to include?

**Richard Black:** It needs to mention about it. It cannot go further in a sense than what is happening nationally at the moment, and nationally of course it is this slightly uncomfortable thing where they are outside carbon budgets but they are covered under the actual target. It is a bit of a mess what we have at the moment. Clarifying would be very useful but I know Kat has done a lot more thinking in this area.

**Dr Kramer:** I worked on the ICAO process in 2015. I have to say when I first heard what its target was, keeping emissions effectively at 2020 levels, and that was decided back in 2013-14, I was quite appalled because they had had since 1997 and the Kyoto protocol to try to get their act together on climate change and done absolutely nothing for around 20 years, and the CORSIA target is pretty bad. One possible benefit of this virus, if you can see any light in this particular tragedy, is



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that their baseline is 2020 and at the moment aviation, as we know, is kind of flatlining and maybe they have—

Q24 **Mr Robert Goodwill:** It has to be a pretty low baseline given the current situation.

**Dr Kramer:** It is going to be a very low baseline, but the discussions we are having on what kinds of credits would be allowed in were really tough and the quality controls are not what we would want to see. Even within the UNFCCC and the discussions on carbon markets, there is the question of whether we keep the existing Kyoto credits and bring them forward into the Paris regime. That kind of conversation is also happening within ICAO and there are some even worse schemes than that being discussed. There was one that came and gave evidence that included enhanced oil recovery as one of its offset types of project.

I do not know whether that particular body has been approved or is still under consideration, because I haven't worked on CORSIA for a few years. As I say, the quality controls within that were not what I would want to see, and not what I was impressed by, and I was pretty appalled by the existing target to begin with. If there are ways in which other countries can start putting a bit more pressure on the industry and looking at how we address it, whether that is through more video conferencing, through other technologies to actually reduce some of the need for that kind of transport would be good. I have not followed the IMO process but ICAO is a concern.

Q25 **Claudia Webbe:** Just to be clear, in your view what should the UK Government be doing to demonstrate climate leadership in the run up to COP26?

**Dr Kramer:** One thing that for me would be that comprehensive legislation to put in place a package of policies and measures that start taking us there. It is great putting a figure on the table but, unless you have the plans to implement it and the real momentum behind implementing it, then that undermines UK credibility.

**Melanie Coath:** I mentioned some of mine already from the kind of nature and climate and land use side, but post-Brexit we have a real opportunity to shape our land use system, make sure we have protection for our ecosystems, make sure that we are looking at where all the high carbon high wildlife places are, protecting those and getting nature based solutions right, doing tree planting in the right way, making sure we are not burning our peatlands anymore, protecting our coastal salt marshes.

There is an awful lot that the UK can do with the Agriculture Bill, the Environment Bill and various others. We have a tree strategy and a peat strategy coming up in England. Scotland is also looking at these areas, so there are a lot of opportunities this year. We can either land good policy outcomes or signal our intent to land them if they fall over and naturally fall over a longer time period.



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**Richard Black:** There are probably two elements to this. One is making sure that all national policymaking is aligned with the net zero trajectory, which I am not sure if it is at the moment. The national infrastructure strategy obviously was delayed. It was supposed to come out on Budget day and it is delayed.

For example, what is going to be in there about decarbonising home and home heating? It is not an easy problem to solve but surely the later it gets left the harder it looks. What is the policy on transportation? What about land use? Bearing in mind that if the UK economy should be truly net zero in 2050 that means that land is basically going to have to be carbon negative in 2050, so what is the plan to get there? What is being implemented right now across the piece?

Internationally there are things that you would not do if you are really serious about delivering the Paris Agreement. Why would you be paying for other countries to find new fossil fuel reserves? The science shows there is ample enough in proven reserves already to take us past the 1.5 Celsius target. It is about aligning everything you do with a net zero target at home and with the Paris Agreement overseas.

**Dr Kramer:** I understand it is an active conversation within Whitehall about getting UK finance out of fossil fuels, particularly around ODA and export credit. That is a no-brainer imperative.

We are doing some work with the Overseas Development Institute on why we do not need fossil fuels for development, with the adverse impacts, in terms of things like mercury from coal and how that affects people's brains and neurological development. There are lots of other good reasons why you wouldn't go into fossil fuels because of local as well as global adverse impacts.

Q26 **Claudia Webbe:** Do you think there are any policies that the UK Government are pursuing that undermine our efforts?

**Richard Black:** Supporting fossil fuel exploration overseas is probably undermining our efforts. One could question the North Sea. The official policy with the North Sea is still to extract every last drop. Is that really consistent with a net zero target in a world that is moving towards implementing the Paris Agreement? I would question that.

It is probably a conversation that we are going to have in the coming years anyway because, for a variety of reasons, the oil price is low and seems set to stay low, which obviously turns the North Sea from being a net benefit to UK Plc to a net cost on UK Plc. Therefore, we are probably going to have that conversation anyway.

One thing that is important to note is that in developing countries the countries that the UK might want to bring into kind of high ambition alliance, they are not particularly impressed with what the UK has done in the last 25 years. They do take note of what the UK and other countries



do now. For example, when the Transport Secretary came out a little while ago and talked about phasing out internal combustion engine vehicles by 2035, a colleague showed me a bit of media monitoring in Indonesia. That was reported all over the Indonesian press, so that sort of thing does make an impact abroad and the more ambitious the UK is now, the more it looks like a climate leader in terms of what it is doing now, the more likely it is to convince other countries to join it in some sort of high ambition coalition.

**Melanie Coath:** Two other quick points, one around overseas development aid spend. We work as a big coalition of environmental and development NGOs and what we are keen to see is that that money solves the kind of—I have been talking about the ecological and climate crisis but obviously there is the poverty crisis as well, so what we are looking at is the triple emergency. I know there are some constructive conversations around how ODA spend that are being taken forward, but obviously that needs to develop across all three. That is something that signals very well and can land well diplomatically if done right.

The other is thinking about the UK, we talked a lot about the political institutions and conversations about how our commercial conversations play out. For example, how our supply chains lead to deforestation overseas or not. I know that the Global Resource Initiative is being launched soon, which is looking at the UK's supply chain footprint and—because we are forging new trade relations post-Brexit—how we can set up long-term agreements with countries whereby we ensure that the supply chains are not leading to deforestation or bad outcomes for communities on the ground, making sure there are supply chains and appropriate due diligence in place, so that is another pathway for making sure the UK is landing good leadership.

**Richard Black:** One area where this is going to become quite important in a few years' time, obviously the coronavirus is going to have a major impact on a whole number of economies and obviously a lot of those economies will be thinking about reflation packages, just as happened back in 2008 after the financial crisis. Then there was a lot of talk about: how green are those packages going to be? Not many of them were green, and one of the reasons is that at that time clean technology and so on was more expensive than doing things on the back of fossil fuels. Now often they are not. Often they are the cheapest way to do things, and provide more jobs and so on.

Plus, we are much clearer about the science of climate change and the remaining atmospheric space for carbon dioxide. There is a piece to be done here around what these green stimulus reflation packages look like. I am not quite sure what it looks like right now but it surely ought to be a topic that deserves a lot of attention going forwards.

Q27 **Claudia Webbe:** It might be useful to explain how the fossil fuel subsidies and the carbon pricing helps to signal climate leadership, both



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to other countries and, indeed, to the financial markets. I do not know if you are able to do that.

**Dr Kramer:** There are two things. A really important thing about leadership and getting out of fossil fuels is the signal to the market. If there are signals that some countries are actively withdrawing and see them as very problematic commodities, investors are going to get more and more shaky about putting further money into them.

There have been some interesting quotations coming out. I would have to get back to you to be able to source exactly what was said, but some of the people within the investor community are coming out more strongly with concerns about fossil fuels assets being stranded assets, and I think that is an important signal to the market because if they cannot get the investment they cannot move forward. They cannot carry on as companies. Also, if there are signals that people no longer want to buy the product, that is going to send quite strong signals so I think it works both on the investment side and on the financial side as well as on the actual side.

Q28 **Chair:** Thank you. One of the ambitions for the conference, certainly from some commentators that I have seen, has been to try to sort out the money, so the \$100 billion—I think it was—pledge for developing countries. What progress has been made and how realistic is that as an ambition for this conference?

**Dr Kramer:** It is not an area I follow in great depth, but there is certainly going to be a very strong dynamic around the finance in this COP. We already saw the foundations of that in Madrid. The like minded group of developing countries was pushing very strongly on the pre-2020 delivery, and the delivery of the \$100 billion is an important part of that. My understanding of the \$100 billion is that, while the figure was put forward the devil was in the detail below. A lot of that, so far as it has been delivered—and I do not think it has—has been delivered as loans rather than as grants, which itself is highly problematic because obviously they need to be paid back, so just that feels like it is reneging on the \$100 billion.

Another thing that will be on the table at COP will be: what is the financial package going forward? So far we only have agreement to 2020. We had some pledges on the table last year, I think up to about \$2 billion.

Q29 **Chair:** Sorry, how many billion?

**Dr Kramer:** I believe it is \$2 billion. I would have to double check that countries put forward, but that still does not bridge the gap on the \$100 billion, and we still need a conversation about what does 2025 finance and what does 2030 finance look like? There will be a big dynamic around what has been delivered or not and what needs to be delivered in future.



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**Richard Black:** The original wording around this finance was that it should be new and additional. If you go back to that it should not be money that is already in ODA. It should be supplementary to that.

There has been a lot of wrangling about this, ever since it was first proposed in Copenhagen, who would control the money? Would it be the developed countries that were giving it or the developing countries that are receiving it? How much would come from public versus private sources? I am not an expert in this field but I think it is fair to say there is still a lack of clarity about this. The important thing is to get something on the table that developing countries will accept and endorse, because if it is something that they will not accept and endorse then that puts a huge wet blanket over a lot of the other negotiations because they will say, quite rightly, "This is something that you have been promising for 11 years and you haven't actually delivered it".

Q30 **Chair:** The Green Climate Fund last autumn doubled the contribution from the EU and the UK contribution I think doubled to 11.6 billion over the 2021 to 2026 period.

**Richard Black:** Yes.

Q31 **Chair:** That appears to be on the face of it, I am assuming, new money rather than just re-profiling existing DfID money. If that is the case—and we will be testing that when we get the president before us if we can—that is quite a good start by the EU and by the UK as president.

**Richard Black:** As a proportion of 100 billion per year, it is very small of course. The thing is the Green Climate Fund isn't the only mechanism for channelling this money. Any sort of form of assistance, whether it is bilateral or whatever, can be counted here and money leveraged from private sources can be accounted for as well. That is what makes it quite a tricky area to get any absolute clarity on it. It is probably fair to say that none of the three of us are expert enough to give you a complete view of this.

Q32 **Mr Robert Goodwill:** Thank you. I am sure that the media is going to have a field day in November, comparing the carbon footprint of all the global leaders jetting into the UK and presumably making short hops up to Glasgow by air and all the other limos, being ferried around and everything else. I know Glasgow has tried to set the agenda for having a really green COP. Although personally I wasn't very impressed to see that their snowploughs and gritters are going to be hydrogen powered. Those vehicles are not used for very many days a year. Can you see how we can sensibly demonstrate that we are having a green COP in Glasgow and what the Government can do to demonstrate that they do take it seriously, not only by what they say but what they actually do in Glasgow in November?

**Richard Black:** Sure. The UN Climate Convention for a number of years has been looking at how you basically green these COPs. With each host Government it makes an agreement and, as I understand it, the UK



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agreement will be signed in June having come to an agreement with the UN Climate Convention.

Just for a bit of perspective, the total net emissions of the Paris COP were the equivalent of—I think it was—800 French people for a year; equivalent to the annual emissions of 800 French people. This is because a lot of steps are taken to reduce the emissions and then to offset those emissions that cannot be reduced. The biggest single source is aviation. That is people flying in, so obviously that needs to be offset and the UN Climate Convention has a process for doing that.

COP25 was due to be entirely carbon neutral. The Spanish Government are producing a report on that, which has not been published yet. It is supposed to be out this month. That is expected to conclude that when you take into account emissions on the aviation it was an utterly carbon neutral COP. The bulk of the job is done by that agreement that the Climate Convention has with the UK Government.

Q33 **Mr Robert Goodwill:** They will all be looking carefully to see how Greta gets there I guess as well.

**Richard Black:** Yes.

Q34 **Mr Robert Goodwill:** Melanie?

**Melanie Coath:** I think it was a factor of the last minute change to Madrid that was part of this, but one of the things that caught people's attention at COP25 was the food on offer—the UK can do a lot around sourcing food—there were burgers and packaging and that sort of thing, which did not play well in the context of climate negotiations. The food sourcing offer and also there are always goody bags that are given away to conference attendees, how necessary is that in this context? So those are a couple of discrete areas that the UK can look at.

**Dr Kramer:** On the food thing I have been slightly more radical than Mel and suggested to the Government that it be a vegan COP, just to make the point about the food miles, the food footprint and the impact of meat—

Q35 **Mr Robert Goodwill:** There is a lot of very good Scottish beef and lamb produced. I would just add that.

**Dr Kramer:** That was the feedback that I also heard. It was also notable that you had to queue for at least half an hour at the Madrid COP for the vegan stall, so there was demand for it and I think it would send a useful signal and certainly having a lot of plant-based provision would be quite important.

The other thing that I have spoken explicitly to the Government about is maybe having direct flights from international hubs, very much taking your point about the short hop from London to Glasgow, so that if there are direct flights from—I do not know—JFK in the US and some of the



other big international hub airports, Singapore, that might reduce the excessive numbers of emissions that you get from the takeoffs and landings, because my understanding is that is where a lot of the emissions come from rather than the cruising.

**Q36 Mr Robert Goodwill:** I was looking at the COPs between 9 and 19 November and the US presidential election on 3 November. Is it likely that this will be a big issue in the American election and, secondly, whether the Americans will have other things on their minds? Particularly if there is a change of president that does not happen until January, so if there is a change we are not going to be in a politically changed landscape.

**Richard Black:** There are a number of factors here. If Bernie Sanders emerges as Democrat contender it certainly would be an issue, because he has been very vocal on climate change and so on. Joe Biden I think is less clear, and obviously COVID-19 sheds a whole new light on this anyway. If Trump has been elected president presumably we do see the US formally withdrawing from the Paris Agreement. Presumably that goes ahead. If he is defeated by a Democrat contender, my assumption is that whoever it is will want to bring the US back inside the Paris Agreement, so I think there will be an uncomfortable hiatus here where the incumbent regime is working to one set of principles and the regime that is going to come in in January will be working to a different set. That would make life difficult for some of the things around, for example, NDC enhancement because historically a number of developing countries, particularly China, look to the US and say, "What is the US going to do? We will follow that". You can see ways in which you could get round that by perhaps deferring some of it to next year and so on.

**Dr Kramer:** This goes very strongly to my earlier point about the international community keeps a very strong beady on each other. I was overjoyed to see what the lawyers did with the Paris Agreement, in the sense that everyone knew that Trump was a potential risk coming into the process. What did they do? It was three years before any country could announce their withdrawal and then they had to go through a one-year wait after their announcement of withdrawal, which fits rather tidally with the US electoral timelines. That kind of watching and waiting will be happening.

If we do get a Democrat, my feeling is very strongly that climate change will be very much more on the US agenda, and we will have those signals coming through almost immediately that the international community will know what that difference looks like, in broad terms, between a Trump climate sceptic presidency and a presidency that wants to move forward on some climate action, whatever that may look like.

I also think the US delegation in that hiatus period, if it is a Trump presidency they will be business as usual and pushing their points, but if it is that hiatus period between presidencies I think they will be a lot quieter. They will be resting on their hands a lot more, would be my



sense, just because there is that change of government coming forward and so the signals should be less strong from them.

**Richard Black:** Another interesting point, though, is the role of state and regional and city governments in this whole process and, indeed, in the process of reducing emissions because there are now a number of US states, along with states in Australia and other places and cities that have made big net zero commitments. Although they cannot be part of the formal UN negotiations because it is an intergovernmental process, they absolutely can play an important presence at summits. We have seen this in the past. For example, at Paris there was a big stage there for leaders. I think Nicola Sturgeon was there from memory. You have other regions, like Catalonia, for example, that are doing things.

How can they be brought into COP26 is an interesting question. One thinks there that that is an obvious job for the Scottish Government to do. One of the things that I think all of us have been slightly aghast at has been the playground style bickering between the Westminster and Holyrood Governments. The sooner that is put to bed the better I think for a constructive summit. Rather, as with the EU, the interest in both Governments are there in delivering a really good summit, so it ought to be a case of working together, getting that bit of diplomacy right.

**Mr Robert Goodwill:** Nicola has quite sharp elbows, doesn't she, so I am sure she will not be ignored? Thank you very much.

Q37 **Chair:** Thank you, Rob. Finally, following up that point, the responsibility rests with the UK Government to organise the event on behalf of the UN. In the event that coronavirus is continuing to wreak havoc on international travel and everything else that goes with it, how do you see participation in, first, Milan at the end of September/beginning of October for the youth conference and, secondly, the substantive conference in Glasgow? Who should be going in the event that it is going to be very difficult for people physically to travel around the world?

**Richard Black:** It is a tricky one because COPs are a very rich melting pot of people from all parts of the world and from all different walks of life, scientists and people from civil society, and faith groups and so on. To pare it down and have something that was just about Government negotiators would make it far less impactful. It would have less social legitimacy I think, and the opportunity for scrutinising Governments would be far less, but that may be one option that is put on the table.

One thing that absolutely cannot happen is it cannot be done remotely. You cannot have a conference call between 195 Governments. That just cannot happen. A lot of the preparatory work can perhaps be done differently. The aim could be to push some of these things even further ahead than they would have been otherwise but one sense there does have to be some sort of physical gathering, yes.

Q38 **Chair:** Would your preference be to defer so that a proper gathering can



happen in the event that we are not in a position to host it?

**Richard Black:** My preference would be not to make a decision now but to see how things unfold. It may be that COVID-19 is largely under control in Europe by then, if we are lucky. It may be that it is under control in another part of the world or it may be that it is a better option to defer the COP and have it in something like April or something like this. Potentially that changes the dynamic that you were referring to obviously with the US election as well. You could argue that potentially that makes for a more constructive situation.

**Dr Kramer:** Some of these intergovernmental meetings are already happening online. I highly echo Richard's point about the access, and lack of access reducing the legitimacy of the process. There are a lot of voices, including indigenous peoples in the nature based solutions that Mel has been talking about that have to be heard. It is an essential part of the conversation. Some of the smaller more technical bodies have tried doing it, but the developing countries have found it quite difficult because their internet connections are slower. Even within relatively small committee meetings it can be quite hard. You have probably seen online the conference call bingo cards that are out there, "Can you hear me? Is my mute on?" Those kinds of basic problems. Certainly, one of the huge advantages to the UNFCCC, for all its problems, for all its slowness, is that that is where the developing countries have an equal voice. They do have the power to speak up and have their interests put forward. That is a really important part of the process.

From my experience, too, I do not see conference call diplomacy working, in the sense that a lot of conversations happen in the corridors. That is where a lot of the real deal-making happens. That is the area you work in more than I do to know how important those quiet conversations and coming to interpersonal understandings can be. I think without those we just will not have the process.

Q39 **Chair:** A final question from me, if I may, is: what role do you think there is for UK parliamentarians—in particular this Committee—at COP26, wherever and whenever it happens?

**Dr Kramer:** There is a hugely important role for holding the Government to account and making the Government move as fast as possible on some of the domestic points, in particular, that we have talked about. Also holding their feet to the fire on levels of diplomacy that are going on, and trying to ensure that there is that very high level engagement, interest and outreach that is going on from as soon as possible onwards.

**Melanie Coath:** I have spoken a lot about trying to get the nature based solutions piece right, but there is a fantastic role for parliamentarians to make sure the whole COP is done right. I mentioned the triple emergency context, and certainly as NGOs we can share with you our paper on triple emergency and case studies of where this is done right, but I think parliamentarians through a scrutiny role can ensure that robust principles



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are followed, the ambition is genuinely achieved, the COP is as green as it possibly can be, and that we really are showing that global leadership that we always want to try to showcase. Pushing Government to deliver on that would be really helpful.

**Richard Black:** I would concur with everything there. The role of parliamentarians is far more in the year ahead than actually at the COP itself, but it is that holding the Government's feet to the fire: is this actually a priority for embassies around the world and, if not, why not? Has it been internalised in No. 10 that what you do on domestic delivery changes your international reputation and, therefore, can contribute positively or negatively to achieving a good outcome. What are you planning for the City of London in terms of reducing some of the brown finance and increasing some of the green finance?

It is a whole welter of inquiries and evidence sessions that will be useful for you and many other Committees in the Commons and Lords to have during the year, particularly, I would say if we do look like getting into a delay scenario. There are other questions then about: are the Government simply sitting back on their heels and waiting or are they getting on with doing some of the things that do need to be done in 2020, delivering those things in the Paris Agreement that are supposed to be there by 2020; building the alliances, looking at stimulus packages after coronavirus and trying to work with countries to make those forward looking and compatible with the Paris Agreement?

**Chair:** Thank you very much. That is very helpful.