



Environmental Audit Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

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Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP
COP President
Cabinet Office
9 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AG

Sent by e-mail only

23rd December 2021

Dear Alok –

Thank you for appearing before the Environmental Audit Committee and several members of the other select committees forming the ‘Committee on COP26’ on 7th December.¹ It was helpful to discuss the outcomes from COP26, implications for UK climate policy, and priorities for the UK COP Presidency up to COP27, to be held in Sharm-El-Sheikh in November 2022.

I hope you found the session to be constructive. Please pass on our thanks to Peter Hill, Matt Toombs, Archie Young and Alison Campbell for their contributions to the session.

We would like to congratulate you all for the individual contributions you made to the collective progress across a wide range of fronts in moving so many participating nations forward in their journey towards achieving the goals set for COP26 in decarbonising the planet. Of course, there is always more that can and needs to be done, including by the United Kingdom.

I have set out below a number of issues arising from our session on which you either agreed to respond, or where Members felt a further response would be appropriate. I would be grateful if you could respond in writing not later than 17th January 2022.

Continued committee scrutiny of the UK Presidency of the UNFCCC COP

The evidence session represented the last meeting in the ‘Committee on COP26’ formation agreed between you and the relevant select committee chairs in March 2021.² Members present appreciated your ready agreement to continue to appear before committees in a similar formation at regular intervals during the remaining UK Presidency of the UNFCCC Conference of Parties.³ In these meetings committee members will expect to examine progress made by the Presidency in delivery of the commitments made at COP26 in Glasgow and fulfilment of the Presidency priorities set out in your written Ministerial statement of 14th December.⁴

¹ The transcript has now been posted to the committee’s website and can be found at:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/3166/pdf>

² The exchange of correspondence is published on the Committee’s website at:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/4964/documents/49655/default/> (letter of 12 February 2021) and

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/4965/documents/49657/default/> (letter of 26 February 2021)

³ Q2. A news release announcing the agreement was issued on 8th December:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/62/environmental-audit-committee/news/159561/committee-on-cop-to-continue-scrutinising-uk-presidency-in-2022/>.

⁴ *Official Report*, 14 December 2021, HCWS479: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-12-14/hcws479>

I note the reference in the statement to the “existing Parliamentary processes” to be used to “ensure the necessary scrutiny and support to deliver on the commitments made at COP26.”. Committee members will also wish to examine your domestic ministerial responsibilities, including the chairing of the Climate Action Implementation (CAI) Cabinet committee.

I anticipate that colleagues will seek to hold at least two meetings of the ‘Committee on COP’ during the Presidency, potentially in March and in July 2022. Committee Chairs will communicate a more detailed proposal for scrutiny early in the New Year.

The Climate Action Implementation Cabinet Committee

We discussed the operation and respective responsibilities of the Climate Action Implementation (CAI) Committee, which you chair, and the Climate Action Strategy (CAS) Committee, chaired by the Prime Minister.⁵ You indicated that while work on the Net Zero Strategy was coordinated through CAI, its delivery is monitored by the Government Priorities Delivery Committee.

It would be helpful to colleagues if you could set out in more detail the relationship between these three committees, particularly in respect of monitoring progress on delivery of the Net Zero Strategy and the domestic agenda for achieving the commitments which flow from the agreements made at COP26.

Colleagues will be interested to know where Ministerial accountability for the overall execution of the strategy lies, if not with CAI, and the extent to which you consider the committee which you chair responsible for implementation of the policies agreed upon by CAS.

Emissions reductions projected from the Net Zero Strategy

Caroline Lucas MP referred to a recent request made to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) under the Environmental Information Regulations for the disclosure of a spreadsheet detailing the projected emissions reductions from the various policies contained within the Net Zero Strategy.⁶ It has been reported that the request had been refused on the grounds that it was an internal document and disclosure could undermine commercial discussions. Given the substantial public interest in ensuring effective delivery of the Strategy, we consider that it is important to have information on these projections released to the committees examining this vital policy area. You undertook to consult with Ministerial colleagues and to respond to the Committee about the release of information contained in the document.

I should be grateful if you would arrange for the information to be provided to the Committee, or give a full explanation as to why it is not possible to disclose the projections supporting the Ministerial decisions on the content of the Strategy.

⁵ QQ22–36

⁶ Q13

Climate reporting under the UN Transparency Framework

The Chair of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee asked about the current arrangements for the UK to report annually on domestic emissions, and the implementation from 2024 of the Enhanced Transparency Framework as agreed at COP26.⁷

Please indicate, as far as is possible at present, the likely additional obligations on the UK to report emissions under the Framework from 2024; how these compare with the UK's current practice in reporting; and whether the Government plans to add datasets to its pre-2024 reports so as to provide consistency of historic data and to enable better assessment of progress towards its international obligations.

Technologies for net zero

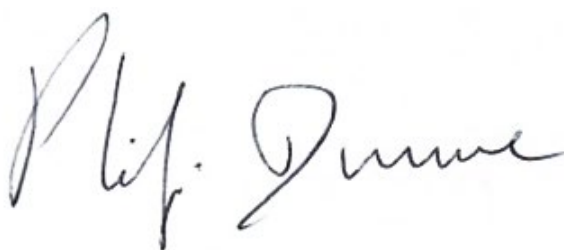
You stated that, following the actions of your Presidency and the pledges made at COP26, 90% of global emissions were now covered by mid-century net zero targets, compared with 30% when you became COP President Designate.⁸ The Chair of the Science and Technology Committee asked what proportion of the emission reductions required to meet those net zero targets was expected to be met by existing technologies, and how much would rely on the development of new technological breakthroughs. You undertook to respond to the committee in writing on this point.⁹

I would be grateful if you could set out in your response:

- What proportion of the emission reductions required to reach net zero could be achieved purely by deploying existing technologies?
- What assessment has been made of the relative contribution of existing versus new technologies in meeting net zero, and what assumptions (e.g. on costs and timescales) underpin this assessment?

I expect the Committee will publish this letter together with the response, once received.

A copy of this letter goes to the Chairs of each committee in the 'Committee on COP26' formation and to the Chair of the Liaison Committee.



Rt Hon Philip Dunne MP
Chair of the Environmental Audit Committee

⁷ QQ 42–45

⁸ Q48

⁹ Q50