



WSDS-ACT4EARTH NATIONAL DIALOGUE

Strengthening Multilateralism on the Road to COP30 and Beyond

Date: 17 October 2025 (Friday) | **Time:** 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm (IST) | **Virtual Platform:** WebEx

EVENT SUMMARY



SUMMARY

Event Overview

The **WSDS–Act4Earth Virtual Dialogue** brought together scholars and climate policy experts to deliberate on how multilateral climate governance can adapt amid increasing geopolitical fragmentation. Convened by **TERI** under the **Act4Earth initiative**, the session examined pathways to make the UNFCCC process more equitable, accountable, and implementation-focused in the run-up to **COP30 in Brazil**. Discussions centred on renewing trust in multilateralism, strengthening institutional effectiveness, and ensuring that global cooperation delivers tangible climate outcomes rather than remaining confined to rhetoric or negotiation cycles. The dialogue featured perspectives from global institutions, academia, and civil society, each underscoring that the multilateral system must evolve to reflect the urgency of the planetary crisis and the shifting balance of power between the Global North and South. Participants highlighted that the coming decade represents a decisive window for reform, with implementation, equity, and institutional innovation forming the three pillars of credible climate governance.

Speaker Summaries

Dr Shailly Kedia, Senior Fellow & Director, TERI (Welcome Remarks)

Dr Kedia inaugurated the session by tracing the evolution of the Act4Earth initiative and situating it within ongoing UN reform debates. She noted that while the UN80 process has opened discussions on mandates and efficiency, climate governance remains peripheral to that agenda. She proposed that dialogues must now evolve toward institutional clarity and reform.

Key Takeaways:

1. Introduce a **dedicated UN agenda item on multilateral climate reform** to bridge the current gap between climate action and institutional restructuring.
2. Ensure **participatory dialogues translate into actionable mechanisms**, linking storytelling and moral reflection to decision texts and accountability systems.
3. **Reimagine the UN Trusteeship Council** as a coordinating body for global commons governance, aligned with the ethos of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*.

Mr Rajani Ranjan Rashmi, Distinguished Fellow, TERI (Chair's Address)

Mr Rashmi framed the discussion through five critical dimensions: synergy, decision-making, equity, finance, and institutional reform, urging that multilateral systems evolve beyond negotiation fatigue. He emphasized the need for adaptive mechanisms that keep pace with geopolitical and planetary realities.

Key Takeaways:

1. Strengthen **synergy and accountability** so that inclusivity under the UNFCCC is matched with measurable responsiveness and transparency.
2. Revisit **consensus-based decision-making**, exploring formats that balance inclusiveness with timely, ambitious outcomes.
3. **Reform the COP structure** to prioritise implementation and measurable progress, transforming them into platforms that assess real-world climate delivery.

Dr Abhilash Kolekar, Research Associate, TERI (Framing Presentation)

Dr Kolekar introduced TERI’s analytical framework to evaluate institutional performance using five variables: scope, membership, decision-making, functions, and form. He demonstrated its application through governance gaps in managing global commons, highlighting how structural reforms could enhance representation and adaptability.

Key Takeaways:

1. Use **five institutional reform variables** as a diagnostic tool to assess the UNFCCC’s structural strengths and limitations.
2. Broaden the **scope of the Convention** to include transboundary and global commons issues currently excluded from its jurisdiction.
3. Establish **science-based advisory bodies and decision mechanisms** to ensure more inclusive and evidence-driven climate governance.

Prof Benito Müller, Managing Director, Oxford Climate Policy (ECBI)

Prof Müller critiqued the expansion of COPs into “mega-events” that hinder meaningful negotiation and inclusivity. He proposed structural reform through the separation of negotiation, summit, and expo functions to make COPs more efficient and equitable.

Key Takeaways:

1. **Separate negotiation sessions** from broader expos and summits to restore focus and efficiency in formal decision-making.
2. Adopt a **dual-venue model** that allows smaller, negotiation-focused countries such as Pacific Island states to host segments of future COPs, promoting equity in hosting rights.
3. **Streamline COP agendas** by limiting discussions to critical decisions and converting informational sessions into open exchanges outside negotiation tracks.

Mr Ovais Sarmad, Vice Chair, Greenhouse Gas Protocol Steering Committee

Mr Sarmad underscored that the pace of diplomacy lags behind the accelerating climate crisis. He called for pragmatic reforms that prioritise accountability and visible delivery while preserving the legitimacy of the UNFCCC.

Key Takeaways:

1. Shift focus **from perpetual negotiation to concrete implementation**, with mechanisms like an Implementation Forum to track progress transparently.
2. **Rebuild trust through transparency and delivery**, ensuring that credibility is restored through measurable outcomes, not political rhetoric.
3. **Renew rather than replace multilateralism**, reforming existing institutions to suit contemporary geopolitical realities while maintaining global legitimacy.

Mr Niclas Svenningsen, Manager for Mitigation, UNFCCC Secretariat

Mr Svenningsen analysed the COP as an overcrowded ecosystem hosting 60,000 participants and 7,000 meetings that risks losing purpose. He called for structural rebalancing through new engagement models for non-state actors.

Key Takeaways:

1. **Refocus the COP on its core function** of negotiation and decision-making by rationalising its scale and streamlining overlapping agendas.
2. Replace the **inefficient consensus-only model** with procedures that encourage clarity, ambition, and timely agreement.
3. Establish a **Conference of the Climate Actors** as a pre-COP collaborative platform to engage civil society and non-state entities more effectively.

Dr Bob Reinalda, Political Scientist, Radboud University Nijmegen

Dr Reinalda examined leadership in international organisations through historical examples, demonstrating how vision, diplomacy, and management define institutional success.

Key Takeaways:

1. **Leadership quality determines institutional effectiveness**, and executive heads must blend technical skill, diplomacy, and foresight.
2. Enhance **Global South representation in top leadership** to rebalance power dynamics and enrich global governance perspectives.
3. Cultivate **visionary, cross-sectoral leaders** capable of steering international organisations through complex geopolitical transitions and crises.

Mr Huw Davies, Managing Director, Centre for Multilateral Negotiations

Drawing from his experience with COP26 and COP28 Presidencies, Mr Davies proposed practical reforms for procedural efficiency and stakeholder accountability. He highlighted the importance of inclusivity and clarity in reporting frameworks.

Key Takeaways:

1. **Streamline accountability and reporting** across UN processes and establish a standing platform for non-state actors to track commitments year-on-year.
2. Introduce a “**silence procedure**” to automatically adopt non-controversial items, allowing negotiators to focus on truly contentious issues.
3. **Broaden representation** by formally recognising the roles of climate migrants and working-class communities within the COP framework.

Mr Indrajit Bose, Senior Researcher, Third World Network

Mr Bose critiqued the persistence of inequitable power dynamics within the UNFCCC, noting that developed countries often evade responsibility under the guise of “efficiency.” He emphasised restoring credibility through equity and delivery.

Key Takeaways:

1. **Deliver on existing commitments first**, ensuring that agreed principles and finance pledges are honoured before proposing new frameworks.
2. Address the **colonial mindset** within negotiations that marginalises developing-country priorities and undermines equity.

3. **Reinforce CBDR-RC and predictable finance**, ensuring that justice and fairness form the foundation of multilateral cooperation.

Mr Ethan Spaner, International Policy Senior Advisor, The Climate Reality Project

Mr Spaner analysed the evolving authority of COP Presidencies, proposing stronger ethical standards to rebuild trust and integrity. He argued for the establishment of new precedents that distance COPs from vested interests.

Key Takeaways:

1. **Empower COP Presidencies to lead by example**, using their convening power to drive integrity and transparency in global climate governance.
2. **Limit fossil-fuel influence** by excluding industry-employed representatives from official roles and prohibiting conflicted sponsorships.
3. **Institutionalise transparency** through public commitments embedded in Host Country Agreements, setting lasting precedents for future COPs.

Dr Dhanasree Jayaram, Senior Assistant Professor, MAHE

Dr Jayaram underscored the need for trust-building, knowledge integration, and meaningful inclusivity in multilateralism. She cautioned against fragmentation while encouraging multi-level governance coordination.

Key Takeaways:

1. **Bridge knowledge systems** by integrating local, scientific, and institutional expertise into COP decision-making processes.
2. **Manage policy fragmentation** by fostering synergies across climate, biodiversity, and security regimes to prevent “problem-shifting.”
3. **Deepen inclusivity** by ensuring representation is substantive across gender, geography, and governance levels, not merely symbolic.

Mr Tim Bosch, Research Fellow, German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP)

Mr Bosch highlighted the resilience of the Paris Agreement amid geopolitical turmoil and emphasised accountability in implementation. He called for integrated, measurable frameworks to track progress.

Key Takeaways:

1. Maintain **multilateral resilience** by aligning domestic policies with global goals and insulating climate governance from geopolitical shocks.
2. **Operationalise the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA)** through measurable indicators linked to a transparent implementation forum.
3. **Integrate climate and biodiversity frameworks** to reduce duplication and promote coherence in international environmental governance.

Chair's Summary (Mr R.R. Rashmi)

Summarising the dialogue, Mr Rashmi highlighted four collective themes: distinguishing negotiation from implementation, enhancing coherence across regimes, building trust and accountability, and advancing the implementation agenda as the next frontier for global climate governance.

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ABOUT WORLD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT

The World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) is the annual flagship multistakeholder convening organized by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). Instituted in 2001, the Summit series has a legacy of over two decades in making ‘sustainable development’ a globally shared goal. As the only independently convened international summit on sustainable development and the environment based in the Global South, WSDS strives to provide long-term solutions for the benefit of global communities by assembling the world’s most enlightened leaders and thinkers on a single platform. Since its inception, WSDS has convened 59 Heads of State and Government, 149 Ministers, 13 Nobel Laureates, 2,158 Business Leaders, 3,730 Speakers, and more than 41,000 Delegates representing a diverse base of ecosystem actors from around the globe.

ABOUT ACT4EARTH

The Act4Earth initiative, launched at the valedictory session of the 21st World Sustainable Development Summit, builds on WSDS discussions to sustain engagement through research and dialogue. Its core objectives are to amplify Global South perspectives for equitable global governance, and to accelerate progress towards climate and sustainable development goals through knowledge-based dialogue. Act4Earth comprises two interlinked components. The COP Compass seeks to promote equitable multilateral mechanisms capable of driving paradigm shifts in climate action. The SDG Charter focuses on identifying policy gaps and recommending measures to embed sustainability within governance frameworks, thereby advancing environmental, social, and economic outcomes.