

Report on Observations at UNFCCC SB60

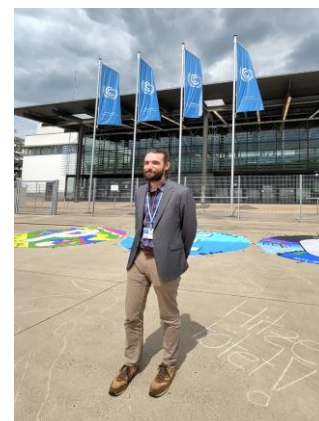
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What is UNFCCC SB60:

SB60 was the 60th meeting of the UNFCCC subsidiary bodies the “Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice” (SBSTA) and the “Subsidiary Body for Implementation” (SBI). At this meeting various topics specified during the preceding UNFCCC COP were discussed. The agenda items as well as resulting documents can be found at the following locations:

For SBSTA <https://unfccc.int/event/sbsta-60>

For SBI: <https://unfccc.int/event/sbi-60>



Observed Negotiation Tracks

I observed negotiations on the United Arab Emirates just transition work programme (SBSTA 9/SBI 7), on Matters relating to adaptation (SBSTA 5/SBI 10), on Research and systematic observation (SBSTA 4), on “Methodological issues” of “Emissions from fuel used for international aviation and maritime transport” (SBSTA 14b), and on the “Sharm el-Sheikh mitigation ambition and implementation work programme” (SBSTA 8/SBI 6). I further observed discussion of the Second meeting under the ad hoc work programme for the New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG).

My impression during the negotiations was that published science was not questioned, there was no doubt that human behaviour affects current and future climate. With regard to the production of further scientific output there was, however, disagreement how much future research is asked for and how this research would be funded. The question of funding, i.e. “who pays”, was a refrain in all of the negotiation tracks.

The mitigation negotiations stalled ending without even a procedural draft conclusion text. This means negotiations on this topic will start from scratch at the next session. In the session blocking actions were primarily taken by Saudi Arabia and China with repeated questioning of the mandate for the negotiations and the ability of the facilitators to prepare draft documents for negotiation.

In some of the sessions the more formal facilitated negotiation was interrupted for informal huddles. These were typically requested with a time window of up to 15 minutes but tended to last in excess of an hour. However, these informal negotiations did achieve agreement in e.g. the adaptation session.

Talks on the NCQG were focused on the “quantum” mainly by countries of the global south and on specifications of the use of funds by countries of the global north. The values for the “quantum” ranged from “a floor of 100bnUSD per year” to “1.4trnUSD per year”. A further issue of contention was whether this money would be “new” or partly consist of existing transfers and if the funds would be in the form of loans, private investments, or government funds.

Side Events

I participated in a number of side events, some organised by UN staff or the parties and some organised by NGOs. An especially interesting discussion was had in the side event “Fossil Free Policymaking” organized by youth representatives. The panellists decried the presence of fossil fuel industry lobbyists at COPs and SBs, apparently often wearing party badges and not observer badges (for context people with party badges get priority in the case of full rooms and are allowed access to informal, where observers are excluded).

General Impressions

During the SB it was possible to mingle with negotiators and seek direct contact. I had chats with negotiators from multiple parties which helped to get a feeling for the state of the negotiations. A bilateral meeting with members of the YOUNGO constituency and one of the German negotiators Moritz Weber was especially interesting. I did not have the feeling of being excluded in any way, which I had heard described from colleagues who were observers at COPs. I found the daily coordination meetings of RINGO (Research and Independent Non-Governmental Organizations) to be very valuable to get an overview of other negotiation tracks and meet fellow researchers. If the EAERE is not already a member of this constituency, it should consider membership. A talk by Axel Michaelowa on the Negotiations surrounding Article 6 was especially enlightening.