

COP26 President closing remarks at Petersberg Climate Dialogue

COP26 President Alok Sharma gave his closing remarks to the Petersberg Climate Dialogue by video on Tuesday 28 April 2020.

Thank you all for a very good session. We've had around thirty contributions and speakers today, and particular thanks to Chancellor Merkel and to Secretary General Guterres for their very welcome remarks.

I'd also like to thank Andrew for facilitating the discussion earlier and Minister Schulze thank you for a very good facilitation indeed. It's shown that we can all come together in a virtual way.

I think we've all recognised that we do face an immense scale of the challenge. As we've heard from Carolina Schmidt who talked about the fact that the climate crisis has not taken time off, but on the other hand we've also acknowledged the fact that there is still time to define the future.

But of course the window is closing. We know, Patricia Esponosa has said to us, there is a whole list of issues to deal with on the road to COP26, but again as Ambassador Lois pointed out, we need to have an ambitious road map to COP26, that is absolutely vital.

Sergio Costa made the very important point about the importance of youth, and the work we will be doing with our friends and colleagues in Italy in terms of pre-COP and particularly the youth events that they are going to be leading ahead of COP26.

As you know we have defined a number of key themes for COP26, which include transition to clean energy, clean transport, nature based solutions, adaptation and resilience and of course bringing it all together, finance.

I think what is very heartening, was to see the contributions today have very much echoed these particular themes. We've heard colleagues talk about the need for a green deal, a green transition, the need to invest in innovation, to shift the investment to green technologies, and all of that is going to be absolutely vital.

We heard from colleagues about raising ambition on renewable energy, and that is of course very important. And particularly, so many colleagues made comments on the importance of nature based solutions, ensuring that solutions that we have in terms of fixing climate change must integrate nature based solutions.

And also making sure that whatever we do, we have nature based adaptation and biodiversity protection at the heart of our work in tackling climate change.

And of course, adaptation and resilience which was again brought up by many

colleagues. And the final point on finance, which was made about the call to disperse climate finance from developed countries to those in the developing world who need our support.

I think from my perspective and Minister Schulze perspective, it's very good that we've had all colleagues acknowledging that the Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Goals, are a very strong framework to guide our recovery.

The Secretary General made a point where he talked about that we are in a difficult place in terms of the global economy right now, but it is always, as he said, darkest before the dawn.

Of course, we do believe that COP26 can be that moment and lead up to COP26 can be those footsteps when the world comes together to ramp up momentum towards a climate resilient zero carbon economy.

I can tell you that as incoming COP Presidency, our promise from the UK together with Italy, is that our teams will work night and day to raise the ambition on climate change.

This does mean more ambition to reduce emissions, more ambition to build resilience, and more ambition to cooperate with each other, as we have done and shown today.

And, of course, as we recover this transition must be fair and inclusive, which many of you have made the point on, and we must make sure that no-one is left behind.

I do believe we owe that to ourselves and of course to future generations. So thank you so much for participating today, and we look forward to continuing this dialogue in other forums.

The eleventh annual [Petersberg Climate Dialogue](#) is the first major climate ministerial meeting of the year, bringing together ministers from 35 countries within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

[Covid-19: Update on tax policy documents](#)

- three month extension to many consultation deadlines to give stakeholders time to submit their views
- extension will ensure those facing Covid-19 disruption will have a chance to have their say on possible tax changes
- despite the extension of publication deadlines, due to Covid-19, the

government remains committed to all planned reforms

HMT and HMRC are today setting out new timelines for tax policy consultations and other work in the light of the current Covid-19 crisis.

The government is extending deadlines to ten consultations and calls for evidence currently underway by three months – including the Plastic Packaging Tax, a call for evidence on Vehicle Excise Duty and a consultation on the HMRC Charter – and also a short delay to the publication of other documents announced at Budget 2020.

The extension will give all stakeholders, who are facing disruption due to COVID-19, more time to submit their views and allow them to fully engage with these documents and contribute to the tax policy making process.

The government is grateful for responses already received, and would welcome further early responses from stakeholders where possible, to support its continuing consideration of these issues.

Consultations on duty-free and tax-free goods carried by passengers and on the VAT treatment of overseas goods will continue to the existing timetable. This is to provide businesses with clarity as early as possible on the policies that will apply from the end of the transition period, and enough time to prepare.

The government is confirming too that it is going ahead with its fundamental review of Business Rates, and a call for evidence will be published in the coming months.

Financial Secretary to the Treasury Jesse Norman said:

Consulting on tax policy is crucial to good tax law. And a good consultation makes sure everyone with an interest in the subject has an opportunity to have their say.

That is why we are extending these deadlines. The government is very grateful to the stakeholders who have already responded to these documents. But it is also acutely aware that there may be others who want to contribute but cannot do so because of the current situation with Covid-19. This extension should help them to do so.

Alongside the consultation extensions, the publication of some documents announced at Budget 2020, including work on tax conditionality and a consultation on stronger penalties for tobacco tax evasion, will be pushed back until the Autumn.

And the government will set out in due course when it will publish other tax policy documents, including the consultation on aviation taxation and a call for evidence on disguised remuneration schemes.

The government's position on publication of tax policy documents will be kept updated through the public [consultations tracker](#).

Chair of the Tax Professionals Forum and EY Head of Tax Policy Chris Sanger said:

Acting now to extend the deadlines for consultation is a welcome decision, as these consultations cover important issues that taxpayers need time to consider. Given the current environment, attention will naturally and rightly be focused elsewhere.

An extra three months should allow sufficient time for engagement, whilst still enabling the government to deliver important tax policy changes within the current fiscal timetable.

Full List of Extensions

The deadlines for responses to the following tax policy documents will be extended for three months, to allow stakeholders to engage fully with these documents and to contribute to the tax policy making process. However, the government encourages early responses from stakeholders where possible, to support its continuing consideration of these issues:

Further information

In the light of Covid-19, the Government has considered the publication of remaining expected tax policy documents on a case by case basis. For further information on all individual tax policy documents, please see the Financial Secretary to HM Treasury's [Written Ministerial Statement](#).

[Government response to Law Commission report on the Sentencing Code](#)

The Law Commission published its report on the Sentencing Code in November 2018 alongside a draft Sentencing (Pre-consolidation Amendments) Bill, an essential paving measure for the Sentencing Code, and a draft Sentencing Bill, which will create the Sentencing Code.

In its interim response to the Report, published in May 2019, the government accepted the main recommendation of the Report to enact both pieces of legislation.

The final response to the report, published in April 2020, sets out the government's consideration of the further recommendations for the reform of sentencing law that are set out in the report.

Coronavirus (COVID-19): ministerial direction for the support fund for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)
- If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

Do not meet others, even friends or family.

You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.

Sellafield Ltd donates £10,000 to provide food to the vulnerable

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