

# Cross-Party Group on international development

19 November 1800 - 1945

Minute

Present

MSPs

Sarah Boyack MSP  
Maggie Chapman MSP  
John Mason MSP

Invited guests

Mark Barrell  
Adeline Cyuzuzo  
Ben Wilson

Non-MSP Group Members

Frazer Hay; Mark Chadwick; Francis Rodgers; Frances Guy; Becky Kenton-Lake; Chad Morse; Clara Birling; Frances Sinclair; Ibrahim Yusuf; Lorna McDonald; Minara Farzaliyeva; Sarah Komashko; Silence Chihuri.

Apologies

Karen Adam MSP  
Foysof Choudhury MSP  
Maurice Golden MSP  
Liam Kerr MSP

Agenda item 1 - Welcome

Sarah Boyack MSP opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

The minutes from the last meeting were agreed.

Agenda item 2 - AGM

The AGM began with a reflection on a successful year, and an acknowledgement of the contribution of Louise Davies from SIDA, who has moved on to work at Scottish Fair Trade. The group expressed thanks for her work and noted continued support from new members.

Frances Guy of Scotland's International Development Alliance chaired the meeting temporarily to call for nominations for convenor of the parliamentary group. John Mason MSP nominated Sarah Boyack MSP as convenor. This was seconded by Maggie Chapman MSP. Frances called for nominations for deputy convenor. Maggie Chapman, MSP nominated Karen Adam MSP. This was seconded by John Mason MSP.

Sarah Boyack MSP then chaired the meeting and proposed that Scotland's International Development Alliance remain as the secretariat to the group. This was seconded by Maggie Chapman MSP. The AGM business was concluded.

Sarah thanked the members for their continued support and expressed enthusiasm for the group's work moving forward. She acknowledged the importance of the group's efforts and looked forward to collaborating with all members in the upcoming year.

## Agenda item 3 - Discussion

The next part of the session was a discussion with three speakers joining live from Baku at COP29. Sarah gave a brief overview of COP29, taking place in Baku in Azerbaijan. The key focus of COP 29 is to secure a new commitment to climate finance for the least developed countries and encourage nations to set more ambitious climate reduction targets and develop specific adaptation plans.

Sarah introduced Mark Barrell, Head of Advocacy at CBM UK with a focus on disability inclusion in climate action.

Mark shared his extensive experience working in Africa, particularly in supporting locally led access to justice programs. He emphasised that people with disabilities represent 16% of the global population, approximately 1.3 billion people, and are disproportionately impacted by climate change, with 80% of this population resides in low- to middle-income countries. He pointed out that the inclusion of people with disabilities in climate action not only enhances the effectiveness of global climate policies but also aligns with human rights laws. However, despite being one of the most affected groups, persons with disabilities are not officially recognised as a constituency in the UNFCCC process, a gap that needs to be addressed.

Mark also discussed the challenges facing this community in climate negotiations, particularly at COP 29. Due to limited accreditation opportunities, only a small number of people with disabilities were able to attend, and those who did often found themselves overlooked during the negotiation processes. The International Disability Alliance, which represents over 1,100 organizations, was granted just one badge for COP 29, underscoring the barriers to meaningful participation.

In response, Mark called for the official recognition of people with disabilities as a constituency at COP. He also stressed the need for financial support for disability-

inclusive climate action and the amplification of voices from the Global South. On a more positive note, he showcased the Climate Just Communities (CJC) program, funded by the Scottish Government, which integrates disability inclusion into local climate action efforts in Rwanda, Malawi, and Zambia. The programme prioritises marginalised communities, including those with disabilities, and has seen positive progress despite challenges in its first year. It has gained support from local governments and communities, further emphasising the potential for successful inclusive climate action.

Looking ahead, Barrell highlighted an upcoming side event on November 20th, 2024, focused on designing and financing nationally determined contributions for climate action inclusively, with speakers including Gerard Howe from the FCDO. In conclusion, Barrell urged for broader recognition and support for disability inclusion in climate negotiations and called for continued efforts to expand and scale up inclusive programs such as CJC.

Sarah then introduced Adeline Cyuzuzo, Storytelling Coordinator of the Loss and Damage Youth Coalition, based in Rwanda. She is dedicated to advocating for vulnerable countries' needs regarding climate finance and enhancing climate action both nationally and internationally.

Adeline opened the discussion by emphasising the critical importance of youth involvement in climate action and decision-making processes. She highlighted a real-world example to demonstrate how youth are actively contributing to climate solutions. She focused on the Loss and Damage Fund, explaining that in 2021, the Scottish Government made a financial pledge to address loss and damage at COP 26. A portion of this pledge was allocated to the Climate Justice Resilience Fund (CJF), which, in turn, launched a youth grant-making initiative called the Loss and Damage Youth Grant-making Council in 2022. Through the CJF, \$150,000 was distributed across 11 projects in regions including Africa, Latin America, the Pacific, and South Asia to help address loss and damage. Overall, the Loss and Damage Youth Coalition mobilized over \$400,000 to support 22 youth-led projects across four regions.

The aim of the youth grant initiative is to make funding more accessible to young people, ensuring that the funds are not only for youth but are also directed by youth, empowering them to take an active role in decision-making related to climate action. These grants primarily focus on action to address loss and damage, providing young people with the resources they need to tackle climate challenges in their communities. Adeline also addressed some significant challenges faced by civil society, particularly in accessing COP events. She pointed out the high cost of accommodation, such as \$500 per night in Baku, which makes it financially difficult for many civil society organizations to participate. Additionally, the limited availability of badges and access for civil society members restricts the ability of youth and marginalised groups to engage in COP discussions. These challenges underscore the need for more inclusive and accessible spaces for youth and civil society at COP events. In conclusion, Adeline highlighted the success of the youth grant-making initiative and its positive impact on empowering young people to influence climate finance decisions.

Sarah introduced Ben Wilson, Director of Public Engagement at SCIAF.

Ben gave a detailed update on the climate negotiations at COP29, emphasising the critical role of finance in addressing climate change. He explained that COP29 focuses on finance, particularly the implementation of financial commitments made in previous COPs, such as the \$100 billion a year target set in 2009 and the more recent push for \$1.3 trillion per year. The finance discussion is pivotal as it impacts the three main areas of climate action: mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage.

Ben highlighted the tension between the Global South, which is calling for greater financial support, and the Global North, which has yet to propose a concrete financial commitment. Ben also noted the challenges in moving past the political and economic tensions that often arise during negotiations. The Global South is seeking a significant increase in financial support, focusing on grants rather than loans to avoid further debt. However, the Global North has yet to offer a counterproposal that meets these demands, with some EU members suggesting \$200–300 billion per year, still far from the \$1.3 trillion goal.

He reflected on the Copenhagen COP failure in 2009 and the progress made in Paris in 2015, where nations endorsed the Paris Agreement. However, the implementation of that agreement remains a challenge, especially with the financing gap. Ben also pointed to COP30 in Brazil as a critical event where more progress must be made. If COP29 fails to secure a strong financial commitment, the hopes for COP30 could diminish.

Ben mentioned the role of Ed Miliband and the UK Government in trying to build consensus, noting that the difficult context with global political tensions and the Trump presidency possibly influencing the outcome. He encouraged a renewed focus on the global climate action process, particularly from civil society and regional leaders, despite the challenges. He concluded with the reminder that climate action cannot wait, as countries like Pakistan and those in Sub-Saharan Africa are already suffering the consequences of the climate crisis.

## Agenda item 4 – Q&A

**Maggie Chapman MSP asked how individuals and groups concerned with international development and climate crisis can leverage their influence to support civil society, especially given the rise of isolationist policies. She emphasised the importance of social movements in driving transformation.**

Ben responded by highlighting the role of sub-state actors, such as the Scottish Government, in international climate networks like the Under 2 Coalition. He pointed out that, despite challenges like the Trump presidency, regions and cities can continue to push for climate action. He also stressed the need for multilateralism and global cooperation to address environmental crises.

Mark agreed with Ben, noting that while some critics argue that international processes like COP are ineffective, they are still the best approach to tackling climate issues. He emphasised the importance of supporting these processes, affirming ambitious climate goals, and fostering collaboration both within the UK and globally. He also

advocated for cross-collaboration between countries and sectors, including disability advocacy.

Adeline emphasised the need for better accessibility and capacity building for young people and activists involved in climate negotiations. She suggested that while many face challenges in understanding complex issues at these conferences, there is valuable information that can be used to influence the climate process.

**Frances Guy asked Adeline to provide an example of a youth-led project that effectively addressed climate issues, particularly one that was imaginative or impactful.**

Adeline shared an example from her youth funding programme, which supported various projects. One notable project was in the Republic of Guinea, where they received a larger funding allocation of \$50,000. This project focused on the resettlement of displaced communities affected by climate-related disasters. The initiative included building shelters and latrines for the displaced families.

Adeline also highlighted an important aspect of the project: educating the community, especially young people, about "loss and damage" from climate change. Many individuals, particularly in vulnerable communities, were unaware that their losses were linked to climate change, often attributing the events to natural causes or divine will. The project aimed to raise awareness, explaining how climate change led to their displacement, and helping them understand the broader environmental context of their struggles.

Sarah reflected on discussions at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) conference, held just before the Baku conference, emphasising some similar themes. Key topics included youth involvement in addressing the climate emergency, challenges faced by smaller countries and subnational states, and the vulnerabilities of African nations. Special focus was given to small island nations like Vanuatu and the Maldives, which are already experiencing severe climate impacts. The conference involved sharing best practices, with a call to action for the UK and Scottish governments to play an active role in tackling these challenges.

## Agenda item 5 – Update on CPG inquiry

Sarah updated the committee on the CPG inquiry into the Scottish Government's international development funding. The inquiry, which began in April, included an online survey and consultations with various experts, receiving 18 responses to the survey and a great evidence session in parliament. A draft has now been completed and sent to Scottish government officials and to MSP members of the CPG for comment.

Key draft findings include:

The Scottish Government's International Development funding is generally well-regarded but could improve in terms of transparency and communication. Stakeholders reported difficulties accessing up-to-date information on funding allocation and outcomes.

Other issues include unclear funding processes, lack of predictability, and confusion over the strategic focus of the fund, which has expanded to include additional countries and priorities without clear explanations.

The inquiry makes three main recommendations:

**Publish through the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI):** This globally recognized standard would enhance transparency, make data more accessible, and allow better scrutiny of funding effectiveness.

**Conduct regular parliamentary scrutiny:** The report suggests that the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs, and Culture Committee review Scottish Government ODA (Official Development Assistance) spending every three years to ensure accountability.

**Update and clarify the strategy:** The Government should develop a new strategy to better communicate the goals, priorities, and processes of its funding, ensuring stakeholders understand how decisions are made and how the different funds (e.g., International Development Fund, Climate Justice Fund) intersect.

Following receipt of comments, a final version should be published in January and will be shared with the CPG.

## **Agenda item 6 – Closing remarks**

Sarah thanked all the speakers. She confirmed that the next meeting will be 4<sup>th</sup> February 2025.