

Remarks by Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, at the Committee of Paris Session at COP-21, 12 December 2015, Paris, France

President of COP, Minister Laurent Fabius

Executive Secretary Christiana Figueres

Thank you, France.

The Republic of Singapore – we are a tiny island, one degree north of the equator, one quarter of our land is reclaimed from the sea. So on behalf of my people, we express our deepest appreciation for your outstanding efforts at arriving at this historic Paris Agreement. And needless to say, we fully support this historic agreement.

Many of you have said that this is not a perfect agreement. But Voltaire – a French Enlightenment philosopher – was supposed to have quoted a wise Italian who said that “Perfect is the enemy of Good”. And so we don’t have a perfect agreement but we have a good and necessary agreement. This historic agreement sets us on a collective journey for climate safety.

We do not live in a perfect world. If this was a perfect world, the problem would have been solved many decades ago. The Kyoto Protocol was paved with good intentions, and high ambition and it was legally binding, but yet it was also fatally flawed because of the lack of universal participation.

This is why Singapore has always emphasised the need for a comprehensive, rules-based, legally binding agreement applicable to all. Without universal participation, we will fail the future generations.

But the key hurdle has always been differentiation. The challenge has always been how to create a fair system – a fair system that recognises the inequalities of the past, the diversity of the present, and the uncertainties of the future. In particular, the developed countries with historical responsibilities have to be seen to be fulfilling their prior commitments and to continue to take the lead. Without this reassurance, there would have been insufficient strategic trust for the rest of the world, the developing country Parties, to raise our ambition at great cost to ourselves.

At its core, differentiation is really about fairness. We all want to be treated fairly, but sometimes the perception of fairness is subjective. Hence there needs to be reassurance to all Parties that this agreement accounts for the past and looks towards the future. A fair deal that recognises the great diversity of our respective national circumstances. Developed countries have argued that we need to be focused on the present and the future. We agree. But developing countries also point out that the present is a function of the past and that the future is not a given.

I believe the current agreement strikes the right balance between the developed countries and the developing Parties, the right balance between mitigation and adaptation, the right balance between means of implementation and ambition.

The second core issue that Singapore focussed on was transparency. Our Chief Negotiator Mr Kwok Fook Seng exercised great effort and imagination to help refine the text for Article 13. We need transparency in order for us to build mutual trust and confidence within the structure of this agreement. Good transparency rules hold us accountable to each other. It helps demonstrate that we will do what we say.

But there is actually another more important reason for transparency. And that is that our own citizens demand that. We need to account to our own citizens back home. They want to see that we are going to do everything it takes to deal with the challenge of climate change. And transparency keeps us accountable not just to each other as Parties but to our own people whom we represent here, and it helps us to collectively move forward with confidence.

Finally, as a member of AOSIS, let me express our appreciation to all the Parties for taking into account the special circumstances of the most vulnerable low-lying island states. The commitment to hold the 'increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C' and to 'pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C' will give us, all the islands, some reassurance. My brothers and sisters in AOSIS will also appreciate the mechanism for 'loss and damage'.

Mr President, on behalf of all the citizens of Singapore, it is my honour to thank you. It is not often in the lives of politicians, diplomats or [members of] civil society to be present at the genesis of a major earth-changing moment, and we have been blessed to be here, in Paris on the 12th of December 2015.

Thank you all very much.

Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#)