

ADDRESSING ADAPTATION IN A 2015 CLIMATE AGREEMENT



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With the adverse effects of climate change becoming more frequent and intense, all countries face increasing climate risks and adaptation needs. The negotiations toward a new climate agreement in 2015 present an unparalleled opportunity to elevate and advance climate adaptation both within countries and under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The 2015 agreement could establish a clearer global vision for adaptation under the Convention; provide a framework for presenting national adaptation contributions to catalyze adaptation action; streamline and enhance UNFCCC institutions; and mobilize resources to help particularly vulnerable developing countries cope with climate impacts. This brief provides an overview of: 1) UNFCCC provisions and institutional arrangements addressing adaptation, and 2) issues and options in addressing adaptation in the new agreement due at the 21st session of the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP 21) in Paris. (Issues and options related directly to the provision of finance for adaptation are beyond the scope of this brief.)

ADAPTATION UNDER THE UNFCCC

Although the UNFCCC historically has placed greater emphasis on climate mitigation than on adaptation, a number of the Convention's provisions relate directly or indirectly to climate adaptation.

Article 2 defines the Convention's ultimate objective primarily in terms of mitigation: stabilizing greenhouse gas concentrations to "prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system." It notes, however, that "such a level should be achieved within a time frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner." Though framed as thresholds for determining the level and time frame of mitigation, not as objectives in their own right, these aims highlight the need for adaptation to occur.

Article 4 establishes both common and differentiated commitments related to adaptation. Article 4.1 commits all parties to "(f)ormulate, implement, publish and regularly update national and, where appropriate, regional programmes containing...measures to facilitate adequate

adaptation to climate change," and to "(c)operate in preparing for adaptation to the impacts of climate change." Article 4.4 commits Annex II parties (a subset of developed countries) to "assist the developing country Parties that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change in meeting costs of adaptation to those adverse effects."

In the years since the Convention's adoption, parties have strengthened its adaptation focus through a series of decisions and work programs. These have established institutions and mechanisms geared primarily toward providing support for adaptation in developing countries. Following is a summary of major elements of the existing adaptation infrastructure within the UNFCCC.

ADAPTATION PLANNING

The Least Developed Country Work Programme was launched under the 2001 Marrakech Accords to support least developed countries (LDCs) in addressing the challenge of climate change. It provides support for the preparation of National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs).

Through the NAPA program, LDCs identify and communicate priority adaptation activities, focusing on immediate adaptation needs in agriculture and food security, water resources, coastal zones, and early warning and disaster management areas. NAPAs are country-driven and are designed to facilitate development of proposals for implementation. Fifty LDCs have now completed NAPAs.

The Cancun Adaptation Framework (CAF) was adopted in 2010 to bring greater coherence to adaptation-related activities under the Convention and to strengthen support for LDCs. The CAF established a process to help developing countries advance beyond NAPAs by developing and implementing national adaptation plans (NAPs). These plans are geared toward identifying medium- to long-term adaptation needs, and developing and implementing strategies and programs to address them. In 2011, the COP encouraged all parties to undertake NAPs, and the NAP process was launched in 2013.

BUILDING CAPACITY AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE

COP 11 launched the Nairobi Work Programme (NWP) to help all parties, particularly developing countries, better understand potential impacts and vulnerabilities and develop adaptation strategies. The NWP is structured around nine work areas¹ and engages with, and disseminates information to, a wide spectrum of adaptation stakeholders. It has a network of 285 non-party partners, including 87 private sector partners, and has received 181 action pledges, 81 of them from partners. Originally launched as a five-year work program, the NWP has been extended and refocused to consider key issues (ecosystems, human settlements, water resources, and health) and to provide support to the CAF. The NWP will be reviewed in 2018 with a view to further enhancing its effectiveness.

ADAPTATION FINANCE

Developed countries commit in the UNFCCC to assist particularly vulnerable developing countries in meeting the costs of adapting to climate change. UNFCCC parties have established several funds aimed exclusively or in part at supporting adaptation in developing countries:

Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF)

The LDCF, established under the Marrakech Accords, supports the preparation and implementation of NAPAs.

Bhutan, for example, was given a grant to finance a project to reduce climate change-induced risks and vulnerabilities from glacial lake outbursts in the Punakha Wangdi and Chamkar valleys. Projects are designed in accordance with country priorities, executed by national stakeholders, and involve the active participation of vulnerable communities.

The LDCF has provided \$12 million to 51 LDCs to prepare NAPAs, and \$864 million to 48 of those countries to implement 158 country projects. Cumulative pledges total \$915 million.

Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF)

The SCCF, also established under the Marrakech Accords, finances adaptation, technology transfer, mitigation, and economic diversification in developing countries. There are two active funding windows under the SCCF: an adaptation window (SCCF-A) and a Technology Transfer window (SCCF-B). The fund supports short- and long-term adaptation activities in water resources management, land management, agriculture, health, infrastructure development, fragile ecosystems, and integrated coastal management. For instance, an SCCF-funded project in Ethiopia developed and piloted a range of coping mechanisms to reduce the vulnerability of farmers, especially women and children, to current and future drought and climate change. Of the \$348 million pledged to the SCCF, \$241 million has been allocated to 57 adaptation projects. Both the LDCF and the SCCF are managed by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF).

Adaptation Fund

The Adaptation Fund was established under the Kyoto Protocol. In contrast to the LDCF and SCCF, which rely entirely on voluntary pledges by developed countries, the Adaptation Fund has been financed primarily through a 2 percent levy on proceeds from the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), supplemented by voluntary contributions. The Adaptation Fund supports concrete adaptation projects and programs in developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. For example, the Seychelles will receive funding for a project to reduce climate vulnerability by maintaining and enhancing tidal and watershed wetlands, beach berms, and coral reefs and developing watershed management policy.

The fund is operated by the Adaptation Fund Board (AFB), which has dedicated \$265 million to increase climate resilience in 45 countries. However, with demand and prices for CDM credits currently at very low levels, Annex I parties and international organizations have been encouraged to scale up funding with a view to reaching the AFB's new fundraising goals of \$80 million per year in 2014 and 2015.

Green Climate Fund (GCF)

The recently constituted GCF, established under the Cancun Agreements, includes an adaptation window. The GCF board has decided the fund will aim for a 50:50 balance between mitigation and adaptation over time. Initial capitalization of the GCF is underway; as of April, more than \$10 billion had been pledged by 33 countries.

OTHER EXISTING INSTITUTIONS

The Marrakech Accords established the Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG), which provides technical guidance and support to LDCs on NAPAs, NAPs, and the LDC work program. The LEG provides direct advice, reviews draft NAPAs on request, and provides additional support through training workshops, guides, tools, technical papers, and databases.

The CAF established the Adaptation Committee as the overall advisory body to the COP on adaptation. Its objective is to enhance action, coherence, and synergy on adaptation by strengthening and better utilizing existing institutional arrangements and expertise under the Convention to facilitate the coordination of the growing adaptation agenda. The Adaptation Committee organizes its activities according to three workstreams: 1) technical support and guidance on adaptation action; 2) technical support and guidance on means of implementation; and 3) awareness-raising, outreach and sharing of information. The Adaptation Committee's initial three-year work plan is set to end in 2015.

The mandate of the Technology Mechanism established under the Cancun Agreements includes providing assistance for the development and transfer of adaptation-related technologies, and for the preparation and implementation of strategies supporting climate-resilient development.

LOSS AND DAMAGE

Closely related to adaptation is the question of how to address loss and damage resulting from unavoidable climate impacts, including extreme events and slow-onset events. The Cancun Adaptation Framework established a work program to address loss and damage associated with climate change impacts in particularly vulnerable developing countries. COP 19 established the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage Associated with Climate Change Impacts as the main vehicle for carrying this work program forward. COP 20 adopted a work plan and decided on the composition of, and procedures for, the mechanism's executive committee. The Warsaw mechanism is to be reviewed in 2017 at COP 22.

Given the growing attention devoted to the issue, parties are debating whether, and if so how, to address loss and damage in the 2015 agreement.

ISSUES AND OPTIONS IN A 2015 CLIMATE AGREEMENT

The COP 17 decision launching the current round of negotiations identified adaptation as one of the core issues to be considered in developing the new agreement to be adopted at COP 21 in Paris. The Lima Call for Climate Action adopted at COP 20 affirmed that adaptation is among the issues to be addressed in the Paris agreement.

Beyond the question of how to ensure adequate financial resources to assist particularly vulnerable developing countries in strengthening their adaptation efforts, which is not directly addressed here, broad issues for consideration include:

- How the new agreement can establish greater parity between mitigation and adaptation.
- Whether the agreement sets some form of adaptation goal, establishes new adaptation commitments and/or provides for country-level adaptation contributions.
- Whether the agreement should improve monitoring and evaluation of adaptation and resilience.
- How to incorporate existing institutions and mechanisms, and whether new ones are needed.
- Whether to somehow formalize the link between the ambition of mitigation efforts and support for meeting adaptation needs.

- Which adaptation elements should be addressed in which of the instruments comprising the Paris outcome (e.g., a core legal agreement and associated COP decisions).

Following is an overview of specific adaptation-related issues and options.

ADAPTATION VISION/GOAL

One way the Paris agreement could strengthen the adaptation focus within the UNFCCC is by articulating some form of global adaptation vision or goal. In the case of mitigation, parties have set a goal of limiting global average temperature rise to below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and are considering other types of long-term goals (such as net zero CO₂ emissions by the end of the century) as part of the Paris agreement. Adaptation, however, does not as readily lend itself to a quantitative metric.

An issue for parties is whether to adopt a global adaptation goal in line with the Convention's ultimate objective, such as:

- Achieving climate resilience.²
- Integrating adaptation into sustainable development.³
- Achieving levels of adaptation and/or adaptation support in line with global mitigation ambition.⁴
- Achieving levels of adaptation and/or adaptation support commensurate with the 2°C goal.⁵

COLLECTIVE COMMITMENTS

As noted earlier, the UNFCCC establishes both common and differentiated commitments related to adaptation.

Issues for parties include:

- Whether to establish new *common* commitments, such as:
 - A commitment by all parties to prepare, communicate, and implement national adaptation plans.⁶
 - A commitment by all parties to contribute and communicate actions consistent with the global goal for adaptation, according to their priorities and their respective capacities.⁷
 - A commitment by all parties to integrate adaptation into development policy and plans.⁸

- Whether, in addition or instead, to establish new *differentiated* commitments, such as:
 - A commitment by developed countries to undertake and communicate domestic actions consistent with a new adaptation goal; and a commitment by developing countries to undertake and communicate such actions, with support.⁹
 - A commitment by developed countries, or by countries with the greatest responsibility and capacity, to provide vulnerable developing countries with scaled-up, predictable adaptation support.¹⁰
- Whether any of the new commitments are legally binding.

NATIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS

COP 19 invited parties to communicate their “intended nationally determined contributions” (INDCs) to the 2015 agreement well in advance of COP 21. COP 20 invited all parties to consider including an adaptation component in their intended nationally determined contributions. Some of the early INDC submissions include sections on adaptation; others do not.

Issues for parties include:

- Whether the agreement should provide for the submission by parties of national adaptation contributions, and if so:¹¹
- Whether these contributions should be discretionary or expected from all parties.¹²
- How these contributions would relate to existing approaches, such as NAPs and NAPAs.¹³
- Whether the scope of national contributions should include:
 - Domestic adaptation efforts undertaken unilaterally;¹⁴
 - Additional adaptation efforts possible with international support;¹⁵
 - Support to be provided.¹⁶
- Whether the timing should be consistent with, or different than, the timing of mitigation NDCs.¹⁷
- Whether adaptation contributions should be in any way differentiated (e.g. by respective capabilities).¹⁸

INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

As described above, a number of mechanisms have been established under the UNFCCC to provide adaptation support to developing countries. In strengthening adaptation efforts, the agreement can build on the UNFCCC's existing adaptation infrastructure, streamlining and enhancing coordination where needed, and filling critical gaps.

Issues for parties include:

- How to incorporate, and whether to modify, existing adaptation institutions and mechanisms in the 2015 agreement.¹⁹
- Whether to establish new institutions or mechanisms such as:
 - A subsidiary body for adaptation.
 - An adaptation registry for recording national adaptation actions and/or matching adaptation projects with support.²⁰
 - A technical and knowledge platform to develop and share methodologies, metrics and indicators, and modeling of climate change scenarios and impacts.²¹
 - A clearinghouse that serves as a repository for NAPs, maintains a roster of adaptation experts, and provides information on adaptation technology and capacity-building.²²
 - Regional centers to facilitate a regional knowledge base on appropriate adaptation responses, support capacity-building, and facilitate research on adaptation measures.²³
- Whether to launch a process at COP 21 to comprehensively review existing mechanisms and recommend new or enhanced institutional arrangements.²⁴

REPORTING

A number of existing mechanisms provide for the reporting of adaptation-related information. Developed countries are required to provide information in their national communications on their vulnerability to climate change and their adaptation responses. Developing countries are encouraged to report on high-priority strategies and measures, opportunities for and barriers

to the implementation of adaptation measures, and how support programs meet their needs. The Subsidiary Body on Implementation is considering how to enhance reporting on the formulation and implementation of NAPs. Enhanced reporting on NAPs could serve not only to elevate adaptation nationally, but also to strengthen adaptation globally through the sharing of best practices.

Issues for parties include:

- Whether to enhance reporting:
 - On implementation of adaptation measures, for instance through existing mechanisms such as national communications and/or biennial update reports;²⁵
 - On support provided for adaptation, for instance through existing mechanisms such as national communications, or through a new mechanism such as an adaptation registry.²⁶
- Whether to establish a periodic review to evaluate progress toward a global adaptation goal and/or to evaluate adaptation needs relative to mitigation ambition.²⁷

PERIODIC REVIEW/ADAPTATION CYCLE

Parties are considering whether the Paris agreement should provide for periodic reviews of parties' commitments and priorities and/or other cyclical mechanisms to strengthen ambition and adaptation action over time. In the area of adaptation, issues include:

- Whether to establish means to periodically assess collective progress toward any established adaptation goal.²⁸
- Whether to establish means to periodically assess projected adaptation needs.²⁹
- Whether to establish an "adaptation cycle" that could include communication of adaptation actions and needs and a platform to facilitate cooperation and funding support for upcoming adaptation actions.³⁰
- Whether an "adaptation cycle" should provide for updating of national adaptation contributions.³¹
- Whether or not such a cycle should be synchronized with any similar cycles established to address mitigation or finance.³²

ENDNOTES

Note: Endnotes 2 through 32 refer to formal submissions by UNFCCC parties to the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform (ADP), accessible on the UNFCCC website. Those submitted in 2013 can be found at <http://unfccc.int/bodies/awg/items/6656.php>. Those submitted from January to June 2014 can be found at <http://unfccc.int/bodies/awg/items/7398.php>. Those submitted after June 2014 can be found at <http://www4.unfccc.int/submissions/SitePages/sessions.aspx?showOnlyCurrentCalls=1&populateData=1&expectedsubmissionfrom=Parties&focalBodies=ADP>.

1 Methods and tools; data and observations; climate modelling, scenarios and downscaling; climate related risks and extreme events; socio-economic information; adaptation planning and practices; research; technologies for adaptation and economic diversification (according to Decision 2/CP.11).

2 Korea, submitted November 20, 2014; New Zealand, on Elements, submitted October 7, 2014.

3 Canada, submitted June 6, 2014; Japan, submitted October 13, 2014; European Union (EU), submitted October 14, 2014.

4 Independent Association of Latin America and the Caribbean (AILAC), submitted October 17, 2014; African Group, on Adaptation, submitted October 8, 2013.

5 South Africa, on Design and Elements, submitted May 30, 2014.

6 Brazil, submitted November 11, 2014; South Africa, on Design and Elements, submitted May 30, 2014.

7 AILAC, submitted October 17, 2014.

8 United States (U.S.), submitted September 26, 2014; Japan, submitted October 13, 2014.

9 African Group, submitted June 10, 2014; Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDCs), submitted March 9, 2014.

10 China, submitted March 6, 2014; LMDCs, submitted March 9, 2014.

11 South Africa, on Determination and Communication of INDCs, submitted May 30, 2014; AILAC, submitted October 17, 2014.

12 Japan, submitted October 13, 2014.

13 African Group, on INDCs, submitted May 30, 2014.

14 AILAC, submitted October 17, 2014.

15 LMDCs, submitted March 9, 2014.

16 African Group, submitted June 10, 2014; AOSIS, submitted November 30, 2014.

17 U.S., submitted September 16, 2014.

18 African Group, submitted June 10, 2014; LMDCs, submitted March 9, 2014; China, submitted March 6, 2014

19 LMDCs, submitted March 9, 2014; U.S., submitted September 16, 2014.

20 Brazil, submitted November 11, 2014.

21 Korea, submitted November 20, 2014.

22 Least Developed Countries (LDCs), submitted October 20, 2014.

23 Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), submitted November 30, 2014.

24 Switzerland, submitted March 4, 2014.

25 LMDCs, submitted March 9, 2014.

26 China, submitted March 6, 2014.

27 South Africa, on Design and Elements, submitted May 30, 2014.

28 Brazil, submitted November 11, 2014.

29 African Group, submitted October 8, 2013.

30 AILAC, submitted October 17, 2014.

31 AOSIS, submitted November 30, 2014.

32 South Africa, on Design and Elements, submitted May 30, 2014.



The Center for Climate and Energy Solutions (C2ES) is an independent nonprofit organization working to promote practical, effective policies and actions to address the twin challenges of energy and climate change.