

## Adaptation Policy Brief

### **Necessary elements for adaptation**

#### United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

The Cancun Agreements' (FCCC/CP/2010/7/Add.1) section on "Enhanced action on adaptation" provides an initial step towards raising the profile of adaptation in the negotiations and laying out some initial actions and parameters for an adaptation framework through the creation of the Cancun Adaptation Framework. Moving into COP 17, the UNFCCC must continue to develop the modalities of the Adaptation Framework and link it to robust financial mechanisms that provide predictable, adequate and sustained support for vulnerable regions, countries and communities to adapt to climate change. The Framework should:

- **Hold all parties accountable for meeting their adaptation-related commitments** under the Convention and the Bali Action Plan, in particular the provision of financial support by developed countries to enhance developing countries' adaptive capacities by obtaining reliable sources of funding from developed countries;
- **Allocate specific and adequate funds from the developed world for adaptation in the developing world** in line with commitments under the Convention and separate from mitigation funding through the provision of sustainable funding that is new and additional to existing Official Development Assistance (ODA) targets so as to not compromise Millennium Development Goals and poverty reduction by creating an adaptation window in the Green Climate Fund and obtaining reliable sources of funding from developed countries and supporting other relevant funds;
- **Acknowledge and reference the importance of an integrated approach to adaptation that includes natural ecosystems**, their needs and the services they provide, placing a high priority on ecosystem based approaches, drawing on Article 2 of the Convention;
  - **Recognize and incorporate the need to build and maintain natural ecosystem resilience.** Acknowledge the use of ecosystems and their services as part of overall adaptation strategies to help people adapt to the adverse effects of climate change (this approach is often termed Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA)), and facilitate building of knowledge on the relationship between ecosystem health and human resilience to climate change. This has been done in the Cancun Agreements and must continue to be referenced under the Adaptation Committee, the Work Programme on Loss and Damage, an adaptation window under the Green Climate Fund, and any other adaptation relevant decisions;

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- **Acknowledge and reference the importance of an integrated approach to adaptation that includes local communities**, placing a high priority on community-based adaptation and the value of local and traditional knowledge, drawing on Article 2;
  - **Ensure the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in program and project development and implementation.** This includes respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and members of local communities, by taking into account international obligations, national circumstances and laws, and noting the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). This has been done in the Cancun Agreements and must continue to be referenced under the Adaptation Committee, the Work Programme on Loss and Damage, an adaptation window under the Green Climate Fund, and any other adaptation relevant decisions;
- **Support and articulate the commitment of developing countries to prepare and pursue robust and comprehensive adaptation programs** that protect vulnerable communities and the natural ecosystems on which they rely. This should be done through the integration of participatory processes and the value of ecosystem services into the National Adaptation Plan process mandated in the Cancun Agreements as it is developed.

## Introduction

Adaptation efforts help human and natural communities adjust to and prepare for the impacts of climate change that have already been set in motion, thus reducing impacts. These activities include conducting climate vulnerability assessments, identifying appropriate adaptation responses, supporting alternative livelihoods, developing early warning systems, enhancing science-based capacity building, and protecting/restoring ecosystems and their services, particularly in areas identified as highly vulnerable. Ecosystems can provide services such as protecting fresh water supply and reducing storm damage that, along with other services, make us more resilient to a changing climate

Immediate and substantial adaptation efforts are needed to ensure that human societies and the natural ecosystems that sustain them are able survive and thrive in a rapidly changing climate. Rising temperatures, changes in weather and storm events and sea level rise along with impacts to the chemistry of the ocean will continue for decades even if emissions are stabilized today.<sup>1</sup> The resulting impacts of climate change on people and nations, biodiversity and ecosystems, will persist for centuries. Impacts to natural ecosystems will undermine the vital services they provide, including the freshwater, food and income needs of many of the world's most vulnerable communities. Therefore, it is imperative that countries around the world begin adaptation action now, to protect vulnerable people and ecosystems.

Conservation International's experience in building understanding of ecosystems and biodiversity together with our experience in working with governments, natural resource managers, indigenous peoples and local communities to develop effective approaches to the conservation and sustainable use of critical ecosystems around the world, enables and compels us to support a socially and environmentally sound international climate adaptation policy process.

## Adaptation in the UNFCCC: The power of natural solutions

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has the stated goal of stabilizing greenhouse gas concentrations at a level that allows for "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." A legally-binding agreement that results in global action and specifies

national commitments in key areas such as adaptation, mitigation, financing and capacity building is therefore necessary in order to achieve this goal within a timeframe that ensures the continued healthy functioning of natural ecosystems and the ability of people to better cope with changes.

Adaptation efforts will miss a huge opportunity if they fail to recognize and capitalize on the inherent interconnectedness of biological diversity, ecosystems, and people. Examples such as the protection of the Páramo watershed providing water for Bogota, Colombia, community-based resource management of fisheries creating food security in Verde Islands, Philippines and many other similar local and regional efforts show the importance of ecosystems for climate resilience and demonstrate the potential contributions healthy ecosystems can provide. These initiatives can also provide mechanisms to restore and maintain ecological infrastructure such as wetlands and riverine vegetation can help prevent or reduce the effects of disasters. Stewardship and sustainable management of ecosystems and their services can provide a cost effective opportunity to generate a broad range of benefits for people facing an increasingly variable climate.

The UNFCCC's first principle states that developed countries should take the lead in combating the adverse effects of climate change. Yet, over a decade later, negative impacts on communities and natural ecosystems worldwide are increasing; the efforts of developed countries to mitigate emissions and support adaptation efforts in the most vulnerable countries remain insufficient. Substantial effort and resources are urgently needed to confront the climate change challenge. A recent World Bank report on the economics of adaptation to climate change estimated the **cost of adaptation** to climate impacts as **US \$70 - \$100 billion per year.**<sup>ii</sup> Yet only a fraction of that is currently being invested in adaptation.

## What is needed

### Parties should develop Adaptation further under the Cancun Agreement.

- **Establish the Adaptation Committee and make it operational in 2012:**

The Adaptation Committee should:

- Be balanced, with a majority representation from developing countries and with greater emphasis on gender and regional and local representation;
- Have meaningful observer access and participation;
- Ensure that Parties have access to technical adaptation information;
- Coordinate and synthesize the adaptation elements in the UNFCCC, including the Least Developed Countries Expert Group, the various technical committees, and the Nairobi Work Programme; and
- Create a process for providing information and recommendations on adaptation action to the financial mechanisms of the COP.

- **Finalize a process for creation of National Adaptation Plans:**

The National Adaptation Plan (NAP) process should:

- Move beyond the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) process by developing a flexible design framework that includes support for implementation of the plans and increased focus on the medium and long-term adaptation needs;
- Facilitate international cooperation and coherence with other multilateral agreements;
- Facilitate inclusion of civil society;
- Acknowledge that adaptation is iterative, lessons learned should be fed into the process and plans should be changed accordingly;
- Mainstream climate impacts information into all levels of planning, design, and implementation;
- Identify key information gaps, including the importance of evaluation, and integration of local knowledge and scientific information;

- Avoid maladaptation by ensuring that adaptation solutions are sustainable in the medium and long term. This should include incorporation of lessons from Ecosystem- and Community- Based adaptation, integrated cross-sectoral planning and coordination; and
- Resources allocated for the NAPs must support all of these elements in order for adaptation planning to be effective and to avoid many of the challenges and limitations experienced in the NAPA process.

**Beyond the Adaptation text, Parties should make progress on the agenda items highlighting adaptation under other elements of the AWG-LCA, the SBSTA and the SBI.**

**On the Nairobi Work Programme (SBSTA):**

- **The NWP’s mandate should be extended** and the Secretariat should continue to support the functions it provides. NWP plays a critical role of collecting and communicating adaptation experience for the negotiations and providing capacity building opportunities on specific adaptation related issues. The NWP has provided a transparent venue that encourages collaboration between governments, NGOs and the private sector which does not otherwise exist in the UNFCCC process.
- **The NWP should work to increase active participation** of different government ministries, a wider sample of NGO and private entities, and increase support for Southern organization participation for submissions and capacity building efforts in order to remain relevant and increase the effectiveness of its outputs.
- **The NWP should evolve to link with the new Adaptation Framework and Adaptation Committee** that are forming under the AWG-LCA and can provide a venue for information gathering and synthesis and organization of necessary workshops to support the work of the Committee.
- **The NWP should enhance the understanding of and access to indigenous and traditional knowledge in climate adaptation** by prioritizing and actively pursuing submissions and dialogue with vulnerable groups, women, indigenous peoples, and local communities.
- **The NWP should improve availability and access to climate science information**, including climate change scenarios and knowledge products, highlighting the availability of local information through providing easy access for local stakeholders to support local adaptation actions in line with national policies.
- **The NWP should increase sectoral and cross-sectoral participation** and sharing on activities, including water, food security, ecosystem service protection, infrastructure development, and land-use planning.
- **The NWP should improve understanding of effective adaptation actions from examples on the ground**, including those focused on water, food security, ecosystem service protection, infrastructure development, and land-use planning.

**On a work programme on agriculture:**

The creation of a SBSTA work program on agriculture is being considered under Sectoral Approaches. A work program on agriculture could help focus attention on this issue and develop guidance on how adaptation and mitigation in this sector can be addressed in environmentally- and socially-beneficial ways. Understanding and minimizing impacts to agriculture from climate change will be critical for food security around the world. A work program on agriculture should seek to:

- **Clarify the potential trade-offs and synergies between adaptation and mitigation** in agricultural systems and clarify the range of options available and appropriate in different agro-ecological contexts;
- **Increase understanding of the the need for ecosystem services in agricultural adaptation**, such as water supply stability and availability of key pollinators;
- **Emphasize the importance of the role that sustainable farming practices can make on adapting to and mitigating climate change** (climate smart agriculture); and

- **Clarify links with other evolving work** such as the Adaptation Committee and the Green Climate Fund.

**On Finance Parties should ensure that the Green Climate Fund:**

- **Becomes operational**, looking at, developing, and mobilizing innovative sources of financing;
- **Includes an adaptation window** that includes protecting and restoring ecosystems and inclusion of local knowledge and practice as a principal strategy and function; and is accessible to indigenous peoples and local communities, ensuring their involvement in decision-making; and
- **Considers the role of other funds**, including the Kyoto Protocol's Adaptation Fund, the Least Developed Countries Fund, and the Special Climate Change Fund.

**On the AWG-LCA Parties should:**

- **Continue to work towards a binding agreement on climate change** that includes the importance of catalysing adaptation approaches globally, and provides substantial support for adaptation for the most vulnerable communities and the ecosystem services that support them; and
- **Make significant progress in creating the modalities of the Work Programme on Loss and Damage** to provide compensation for climate impacts that cannot be adapted to through insurance and other mechanisms so that recommendations can result in a decision by COP 18.

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<sup>i</sup>IPCC, 2007: Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Core Writing Team, Pachauri, R.K and Reisinger, A. (eds.)]. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland.

<sup>ii</sup> World Bank Group, August 2010. *The Economics of Adaptation to Climate Change: A Synthesis Report. Final consultation draft.* [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTCC/Resources/EACC\\_FinalSynthesisReport0803\\_2010.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTCC/Resources/EACC_FinalSynthesisReport0803_2010.pdf)