

Further Guidance on Nationally Determined Contributions and Adaptation Communications

Submission from Conservation International

Introduction

After the entry into force of the Paris Agreement in November 2016, Parties agreed to undertake a two-year process for developing the details to make the Paris Agreement fully operational and facilitate implementation. During 2017, countries will take stock of progress made to-date and, by December 2018, will finalize “The Paris Agreement Rulebook,” the rules necessary to implement the agreement.

During the Bonn intersessional meetings (SBs 46 and APA 1-3, May 2017), Parties discussed what additional guidance should be provided to countries to prepare their nationally determined contributions (NDCs), including what information should be included in an NDC, the timing of reporting, consistency of reporting between countries, and how to approach accounting of emissions and reductions. Parties shared concerns related to environmental integrity, double counting and aggregation of emissions. Developing countries raised the need for capacity building on accounting guidance. Standalone guidance on accounting in the land sector and linkages between NDCs and international trading of mitigation outcomes were also suggested.

As a result of discussions, Parties requested additional and focused submissions outlining their views on recommended guidance on NDCs, including on the elements and issues of features, information and accounting. These submissions will be compiled into a summary in advance of the November session, capturing convergence and divergence of views as well as potential options for guidance.

Status of NDCs and Need for Further Guidance

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are the main vehicle created under the Paris Agreement for countries to define national goals, policies and means of implementation to contribute to global climate efforts.

Most countries have submitted their NDCs, which include mitigation and, in some cases, adaptation goals, policies and measures, with many developing countries stating that their level of effort will be conditional on receiving additional financial support to reach more ambitious targets. However, in preparing NDCs, not all countries followed the same structure, scope or

level of detail, making it difficult to compare and aggregate information across NDCs for regional and international planning.

During the Marrakech and Bonn mid-year negotiations in 2016-17, Parties were not able to substantially advance in developing further guidance on the NDCs, and decided to focus discussions on the “features” of NDCs, the detail of information to be provided both in commitments and reporting of progress, and accounting approaches for reporting. *Countries may submit their views on the topic of NDC guidance until September 15th, and roundtables on the issue are also planned for November 6th in advance of the COP 23 negotiations.*

Responses to Questions from Facilitators¹ on NDC Guidance

In Marrakech, facilitators provided a set of questions for Parties to elaborate on the features of NDCs and the need for additional guidance. While some Parties proposed modifying the framing and wording of the questions, no final agreement was achieved, therefore, the questions identified in Marrakech will continue to be relevant for the discussions at COP 23 in Bonn.

What is the understanding of features of NDCs under this agenda item?

- “Features” of NDCs should be understood as key characteristics such as the scope (e.g. should all sectors be included in the NDC? Should it include both mitigation and adaptation?), level of detail (e.g. should the NDC include quantitative targets or just qualitative ones?), or other information needed to ensure completeness of an NDC and facilitate comparison and aggregation across countries. Guidance on timing for NDC refinement should also be provided.

What should be the purpose of further guidance on features under this agenda item?

- The purpose of providing guidance is to ensure that countries understand the breadth of options they have for the content of their NDCs and how to prepare future NDCs in a consistent and comparable way. In this regard, it is worthwhile for guidance to highlight the need of all countries to progressively shift towards low-carbon development paths and to define country-wide targets to support the achievement of agreed global goals.
- For example, guidance on features should encourage countries to consider the emissions reduction potential of all sectors as they refine their NDCs, as well as options for reflecting adaptation measures consistent with the country’s chosen form of adaptation communication.
- Using the most recent IPCC guidelines is a key element to advance towards more robust, accurate and transparent monitoring and reporting of NDCs incorporating multiple sectors.

¹ The questions from the Facilitators on which submissions are requested can be found at: http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/marrakech_nov_2016/in-session/application/pdf/informal_note_item3_v2.pdf.

- Further guidance should encourage countries to address both mitigation and adaptation efforts across all sectors to ensure the most efficient and impactful approach to achieving climate goals. Sectors with high emissions should be considered, as well as those with potential for emissions removals from land and coastal/marine activities (e.g. forest, mangrove, and peatland conservation and restoration are among the most readily available and cost-effective tools for mitigating emissions and adapting to a changing climate, especially in developing countries). The land sector should particularly be addressed due to these considerations.
- To facilitate implementation and later monitoring, guidance could also include information on best practices for achieving NDC goals, particularly ways to maximize synergies between mitigation and adaptation through cross-sectoral planning, approaches for monitoring progress, as well as enhanced financial support for developing countries through GCF and other financial mechanisms, as a means to better address capacity for accounting and transparency.

Recommendations on Adaptation Communications

In Bonn, countries moved forward on an iterative approach towards guidance for adaptation communications, with many commonalities on what should comprise the “skeleton” of a decision text. Among the multiple aspects under discussion, CI provides recommendations on the purpose, elements and vehicles for countries to communicate their adaptation plans, priorities, and progress. *Countries may submit their views on this topic until September 14th, and will discuss submissions at a roundtable on Saturday, November 4th before the start of the COP 23 negotiations.*

What should be the purpose of adaptation communications?

- Adaptation Communications should help to signal global and regional adaptation needs; share individual countries’ priorities, needs for implementing adaptation measures; share national-level plans and action towards lowering vulnerabilities as well as increasing resilience to climate change impacts (as specified in the Paris Agreement Article 7.10).
- The Adaptation Communications could also be a basis for developed countries to report on the support for adaptation that they intend to provide, if not already covered in their NDC.

What elements should adaptation communications include?

- Communications on priorities, implementation needs, planning and action should address all sectors, especially including approaches that leverage ecosystem-based adaptation to deliver significant socioeconomic and mitigation co-benefits. Ecosystem-based adaptation can increase the climate resilience of communities by improving the health of ecosystems,

such as protecting wetlands or coral reefs, which buffer against coastal erosion, and provide the habitat for nearshore fisheries—a primary source of food and livelihoods.

- When providing guidance on monitoring and evaluation of national adaptation actions, Parties should consider the long-term nature of ecosystem-based adaptation results, the long-term outcomes for livelihood and biodiversity benefits, the need for ecosystems to play a role in disaster risk reduction, and the need for assessing both short- and long-term progress towards maintaining healthy ecosystem functions and their contribution to mitigation and adaptation efforts.

What should be the vehicle and timing for communicating them?

- Current guidance allows for Adaptation Communications to be reflected as a component of an NDC or take the form of a National Adaptation Plan (NAP) or other national communication. There may also be linkages across these vehicles of communication, and this should be encouraged so as not to produce separate adaptation inputs across various communications.
- Countries pursuing NAPs or other national communications on adaptation should be encouraged to additionally reflect adaptation-related goals and activities, as appropriate, within their NDCs. Since NDCs are the primary vehicle for communicating national efforts under the Paris Agreement, including adaptation elements within the NDC can promote comparability of actions and elevate the importance of adaptation efforts.

Inputs on Including Nature in Further Guidance on NDCs and Adaptation Communications

Healthy, natural ecosystems are crucial for a stable climate—the world’s forests currently store more carbon than is in the entire atmosphere.² Yet deforestation contributes 11 percent of global anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, more than all passenger cars combined.³ Halting tropical deforestation and degradation and allowing tropical forests and other ecosystems to continue sequestering carbon and regrow at current rates can provide at least 30 percent of all mitigation action needed to limit global warming to 2°C.⁴

To harness this potential, the global response to climate change must recognize the role of natural ecosystems in mitigating emissions. They also offer tremendous potential for adapting to

² The atmosphere contains ~720 gigatonnes of carbon (Falkowski, P. et al. 2000. The Global Carbon Cycle: A Test of Our Knowledge of Earth as a System. *Science* 290:291- 296.); Forests contain 861 +/- 66 gigatonnes of carbon (Pan, Y. et al. 2011. A Large and Persistent Carbon Sink in the World’s Forests. *Science* 333:988-993.).

³ Goodman, R.C. and Herold, M. 2014. Why Maintaining Tropical Forests Is Essential and Urgent for a Stable Climate. Center for Global Development working paper No. 385.

⁴ (a) McKinsey & Company. 2009. Pathways to a low-carbon economy. McKinsey & Company.

(b) Le Quere, C., et al. 2013. Global Carbon Budget 2013. *Earth Syst. Sci. Data Discuss.*, 6, 689–760 (averaged for 2003–2012);

(c) Grace, J., et al. 2014. Perturbations in the carbon budget of the tropics. *Global Change Biology* (data from 2005–2010);

(d) Houghton, R.A. 2013. The emissions of carbon from deforestation and degradation in the tropics: past trends and future potential (data from 2000–2005). *Carbon Management*

climate change by, for example, providing buffers from storms and securing freshwater sources. Natural ecosystems are among the most readily available and cost-effective tools for climate adaptation. Working in coastal and marine ecosystem conservation and restoration for instance, provides meaningful opportunities to prevent the loss of our natural defenses to the impacts of climate change while also generating mitigation benefits.

In the context of the Paris Agreement, it is important that updates to NDCs every five years will represent a progression beyond the Party's previous NDC, and will reflect the highest possible ambition. The revision or updating process for NDCs should be a meaningful opportunity for countries to enhance the role of nature-based solutions, including by expanding the scope to other sectors not included in their original submissions.

Further guidance on NDCs and Adaptation Communications should encourage countries to incorporate mitigation and adaptation efforts across all sectors, including nature-based solutions to mitigation and adaptation (such as REDD+, climate-resilient agriculture and coastal carbon) that also generate environmental and socioeconomic co-benefits.

- Forest Sector: Reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD+) and enhancing carbon stocks is a readily available and cost-effective way to mitigate climate change, particularly when it comes to primary forests and mangroves. Additionally, REDD+ activities can provide significant non-carbon benefits such as preservation of water flows important for adaptation, water security and protection of biodiversity. All forest countries should be encouraged to consider the potential of REDD+ for both mitigation and adaptation benefits, and for supporting countries' efforts to generate additional funding for their national REDD+ strategies that contribute to their NDCs. Countries working on REDD+ readiness should be encouraged to include this in their NDCs, as should other countries with REDD+ potential.
- Agriculture Sector: Adaptation in the agriculture sector is critical to ensure food security around the world and to improve the resilience of agricultural communities to climate change. Agriculture is also a significant source of GHG emissions⁵, including emissions from land use change, fossil fuel use, pesticide application, paddy rice production, fertilizer use and cattle production, among other sources. There are multiple opportunities for improving the sustainability of agricultural systems through integrated management practices that provide

⁵ Smith, P., D. Martino, Z. Cai, D. Gwary, H. Janzen, P. Kumar, B. McCarl, S. Ogle, F. O'Mara, C. Rice, B. Scholes, O. Sirotenko. 2007. Agriculture. In Climate Change: Mitigation. Contribution of Working Group III to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [B. Metz, O.R. Davidson, P.R. Bosch, R. Dave, L.A. Meyer (eds)], Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA.

both adaptation and mitigation benefits.^{6,7} For example, the use of soil conservation practices can help to conserve carbon stocks in the soil, while also making the agricultural system more resilient to climate change.

- The conservation of riparian areas or forest patches in farmland can enhance carbon stocks, while ensuring continued water provision for ecosystems, agriculture and human use. The promotion of agroforestry systems can buffer crops against increasing temperatures, while also enhancing on-farm carbon stocks. In addition to providing adaptation and mitigation benefits, many sustainable and climate-smart management practices can also increase farmers' resilience to climate change by ensuring the continued provision of key ecosystem services (e.g., water provision, food provision, nutrient regulation, pest control and pollination) on which agriculture depends.
- Marine and Coastal Resources: Coastal ecosystems such as mangroves, tidal marshes and seagrass meadows are powerful carbon sinks that sequester up to 10 times the carbon of tropical forests by area. Beyond this massive carbon mitigating capacity, these ecosystems provide critical protection from the impacts of climate change for some of the world's most vulnerable people by attenuating waves, providing storm protection and stabilizing shorelines from erosion. In addition, these ecosystems are essential to contribute to food security and maintaining fisheries and aquaculture production, improving water quality and conserving unique biodiversity and cultural identities. Countries should be encouraged to consider the potential of these ecosystems for meeting their mitigation and adaptation aims and including them in their NDCs and adaptation communications.
- Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge: Countries should ensure the full participation of all actors in refining their NDCs, particularly indigenous peoples and local communities who can provide traditional environmental knowledge to inform responses to climate change. These processes can provide an understanding of how communities have historically managed and restored critical ecosystem functions in the event of past climate stresses and shocks.

⁶ Harvey, C.A., M. Chacon, C. Donatti, E. Garen, L. Hannah, A. Andrade, L. Bede, D. Brown, A. Calle, J. Chara, C. Celment, E. Gray, M.H. Hoang, P. Minang, A.M. Rodriguez, C. Seeberg-Elverfeldt, B. Semroc, S. Shames, S. Smuckler, E. Somarriba, E. Torquebiau, J. van Etten and E. Wollenberg. 2014. Climate-smart landscapes: Opportunities and challenges for integrating adaptation and mitigation in tropical agricultural landscapes. *Conservation Letters*, 7(2): 77-90.

⁷ Vignola, R., C.A. Harvey, P. Bautista-Solis, J. Avelino, B. Rapidel, C. Donatti and M.R. Martinez. 2015. Ecosystem-based adaptation for smallholder farmers: definitions, opportunities and constraints. *Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment*, 126-132.