Adaptation Policy Brief

**Necessary elements for adaptation**

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

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With climate change impacts increasingly manifesting around the world, the need for international support and frameworks for climate change adaptation grows as time marches on. The UNFCCC has seen progress in recent years on adaptation, with the creation of the Cancun Adaptation Framework (CAF) and the establishment of a permanent Adaptation Committee and of an adaptation window under the Green Climate Fund. More remains to be done, however, in order to translate general frameworks into meaningful action on the ground. Implementation of the CAF and other mechanisms will require continued work under the Adaptation Committee, SBI and SBSTA, but it will also require sustained political engagement at the highest levels to ensure that commitments are fulfilled and are commensurate with adaptation needs as they evolve. As such, **while detailed negotiations under the ADP on adaptation may not be necessary, inclusion of adaptation in the ADP at a political level will be important.** In addition, discussions and decisions at COP 18 should:

- **Allocate specific and adequate funds from the developed world for adaptation in the developing world.** In particular, formal commitments should be made under the AWG-LCA as it concludes and adaptation should be integrated into both workstreams of the ADP.

- **Articulate the form and function of National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) as well as financial modalities to enable flexible, long-term adaptation planning in developing countries.** Include integrated approaches to adaptation that place a high priority on ecosystem and community based approaches, the value of local and traditional knowledge, modalities for mainstreaming adaptation, and the ways in which plans can be translated into concrete action that benefits the most vulnerable communities.

- **Finalize a work programme on Loss and Damage.** Developing and developed countries need to be able to address climate impacts that are too great to adapt to and also to assess the links between ecosystems and how they can assist in disaster risk reduction, innovative finance, and risk management.

- **Strengthen the Nairobi Work Programme under the SBSTA** through continued efforts to highlight effective work on the ground in adaptation, including water resources management and ecosystem-based adaptation, and ensuring participatory approaches in planning and decision-making for adaptation.
**Approach**

Adaptation traverses many sectors and requires holistic solutions. An integrated approach to adaptation should include and consider ecosystems, the services they provide, indigenous and local knowledge, and community needs and capacities comprehensively. Doing so will result in solutions that are more sustainable for the medium to long term.

This requires definitive action that reflects Parties’ commitment to advancing the science on adaptation and securing additional sources of funding for both capacity building and adaptation implementation. Formal commitments should be made under the AWG-LCA as it concludes to ensure consistent financial and political attention is given to adaptation moving forward. Adaptation should also be substantively included under the Durban Platform under both workstreams – in line with mitigation under Workstream 1 and substantively included under enhanced ambition in Workstream 2.

**Funding and Political Support**

In order to ensure that adaptation funding is sufficient and commensurate with the needs in developing countries, Annex I Parties should allocate specific and adequate funds for adaptation in the developing world in line with commitments under the Convention and separate from mitigation funding through the provision of sustainable funding. The funding should be new and additional to existing Official Development Assistance (ODA) targets as to not compromise the Millennium Development Goals. With the Fast Start period closing this year, Parties’ should make formal commitments to adaptation finance under the AWG-LCA to ensure sustained adaptation and planning.

Given the urgent need for adaptation in vulnerable developing countries, it is not a surprise that many operational funds target adaptation specifically. These funds include, but are not limited to the Adaptation Fund, GEF-Least Developed Countries Fund, GEF-Special Climate Change Fund, World Bank Climate Investment Funds, and numerous bilateral funds. While they mobilize hundreds of millions of dollars annually, funding still falls short of the global estimates of funding required for adaptation. Further, the Green Climate Fund (GCF), which will include an adaptation window, has not yet become operational, nor has it secured sources of funding. Draft decisions concerning the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) suggest that planning processes maybe supported through the existing channels of the GEF or the GCF. However, looking forward, efforts must be made to secure additional financial resources for the implementation of concrete adaptation in vulnerable countries. In addition to financial support, negotiations should also emphasize political support under continued discussions under the Convention bodies on long-term finance and the Durban Platform under the AWG-DP through both workstreams. It is critical that adaptation be considered under the AWG-DP at the same level as mitigation in Workstream 1 and as a subject of “enhanced ambition” under Workstream 2. Otherwise, we risk a business-as-usual scenario where adaptation remains severely underfunded internationally, and not given commensurate attention as mitigation under the Convention.

The Adaptation Committee should consider ways in which international delivery mechanisms can be streamlined. To avoid duplicate funding instruments and to minimize the start-up costs and time to operationalize a new Fund, Parties should consider ways to integrate adaptation funding, but also ways in which delivery mechanisms for funding can be downscaled to a more local level where adaptation solutions are implemented.

Further, the existence of funds does not imply equitable and efficient access. The access modalities and mechanisms for funds, recognizing that adaptation assists countries meet urgent and immediate needs, should be transparent, equitable, and swift. The direct access modality, which has become operational through the Adaptation Fund (and
soon the GEF and Green Climate Fund) represents a significant opportunity for enhanced developing country ownership of projects, allows countries to retain additional funds for adaptation measures, and strengthens institutional capacities through the accreditation process and implementation of projects. Parties should explore ways to enhance and enable direct access further, assisting countries in identifying the most appropriate institutions in countries, and strengthening their capacity to identify and implement projects that are driven at the community level.

Planning

While technical solutions have already been implemented and tested in many countries, there remain many limitations to adaptation policy and planning, particularly with regard to mainstreaming adaptation. These challenges stem from the inherent challenge with defining and differentiating adaptation relative to business-as-usual development, lack of robust data or projections, and limited adaptive, absorptive, and institutional capacity. In this context, Conservation International strongly supports and encourages the capacity building, planning, and preparatory measures envisioned through the UNFCCC process aimed at addressing and minimizing these challenges including, inter alia, the Nairobi Work Programme (NWP) and the National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPA) / National Adaptation Plan (NAP) processes. By strengthening capacities, countries and communities will be better equipped and informed to confront climate change stressors.

For the successful implementation of the CAF, Parties at COP18 should articulate the form and function of NAPs as well as financial modalities to enable flexible, long-term adaptation planning in developing countries. This should acknowledge and reference the importance of an integrated approach to adaptation that places a high priority on ecosystem and community-based approaches, the value of local and traditional knowledge, and measures targeting the most vulnerable communities. Guidelines presented to parties should provide substantive tools and guidance on water resources management, ecosystem-based approaches, mainstreaming adaptation, and the ways in which plans can be translated into concrete action in a participatory way. The delivery mechanism of funding for the creation of NAPs should also be clear and transparent.

Further, the work programme on Loss and Damage should be finalized. Developing countries need to be able to address hazardous climate impacts through a holistic approach that includes the loss of ecosystem services, livelihoods, and cultural values. The key elements of the work programme should be a mechanism for disaster risk assessment and reduction, compensation for damage, and rehabilitation. The work programme should include an effective monitoring system, the use of local/indigenous knowledge, and the involvement of women and children. It is recommended that the knowledge base be strengthened through coherence with other mechanisms.

To ensure the continued and strengthened impact of the NWP under the SBSTA, it should be emphasized that efforts on the ground in adaptation, such as the value of ecosystem services and participatory approaches in integrated water resources management be highlighted. The NWP should very substantively highlight case studies and examples that demonstrate the success and potential of these approaches, particularly in building ecological infrastructure to assist in the adaptation of water provisioning ecosystems.

Implementation

Needless to say, sustainable funding should be committed to implement the plans, measures, and mechanisms identified under the NAPs and the work programme on loss and damage. Failure to do so would render much of the planning and mobilization under the NWP and NAPs ineffective. Further, innovative mechanisms should be employed to allow adaptation to reach the local levels where the funding is most needed, such as micro-finance and public private partnerships. Micro-finance, for example, would allow some poor and vulnerable communities to be actively engaged in adaptation. In this regard, synergies are required not only at the international political level, but also at the national level in
order to ensure that adaptation works across sectors, ministries, and stakeholders, thereby maximizing engagement at the local and regional levels.

At a technical level, continued work on adaptation should utilize a cross-sectoral, integrated approach. Doing so would comprehensively include consideration of water and ecosystems, which constitute key areas in which expertise should be built. At the conceptual level, Parties should continue to ensure that their decisions, policies, and mechanisms are informed by science and estimates of risk, harm, and funding needs.
Adaptation at the UNFCCC

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.” Progress 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.

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 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.¹ Yet only a fraction of that is currently being invested in adaptation.

The Cancun Agreement (FCCC/CP/2010/7/Add.1) section on “Enhanced action on adaptation” raised the profile of adaptation in the negotiations and laid out initial actions and parameters for an adaptation framework through the creation of the Cancun Adaptation Framework (CAF). During COP 17 in Durban, the UNFCCC continued to develop the modalities of the Adaptation Framework, establishing three main priorities for its implementation. As a result, an Adaptation Committee has been formed, having held its first meeting following the 36th session of the SBs. The framework also initiated the process to build on the short-term national adaptation programmes of action (NAPAs) with medium and long-term National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and to develop a Work Programme on Loss and Damage. Adaptation has also continued to be discussed within the SBSTA through the Nairobi Work Programme, the SBI, the Adaptation Fund under the Kyoto Protocol; and the Green Climate Fund.

Conservation International: Supporting natural solutions

Immediate and substantial adaptation efforts are needed to ensure that human societies and the natural ecosystems that sustain them are able to adapt in a rapidly changing climate and occurrence of extreme events. Rising temperatures and sea level along with impacts to the chemistry of the ocean due to increased greenhouse gases will continue for decades even if emissions are stabilized today.² 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.

Adaptation efforts must consider the inherent interconnectedness of biological diversity, ecosystems and people. For instance, water is one of the main vehicles through which climate changes are experiences – whether it is droughts, floods. Conservation International’s experience in building understanding of ecosystems, the services they provide, 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.