

UNFCCC technical workshop under the Nairobi work programme on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change

Integrating practices, tools and systems for climate risk assessment and management and disaster risk reduction strategies into national policies and programmes

Objective of the Nairobi work programme on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change

The overall objective of the Nairobi work programme is to assist all Parties, in particular developing countries, including the least developed countries and small island developing States, to improve their understanding and assessment of impacts, vulnerability and adaptation, and to make informed decisions on practical adaptation actions and measures to respond to climate change on a sound scientific, technical and socio-economic basis, taking into account current and future climate change and variability.¹

Activities under the Nairobi work programme are undertaken with a view to advancing the objective stated in the annex to decision 2/CP.11. This workshop intended to address, in particular, sub-themes b(i), “Promoting the development and dissemination of methods and tools for assessment and improvement of adaptation planning, measures and actions, and integration with sustainable development; b(ii), “Collecting, analysing and disseminating information on past and current practical adaptation actions and measures, including adaptation projects, short- and long-term adaptation strategies, and local and indigenous knowledge”; and b(iv), “Facilitating communication and cooperation among and between Parties and relevant organizations, business, civil society and decision makers, and other stakeholders”.

Preliminary report of the workshop

I. Introduction

1. The Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advise (SBSTA), at its twenty-eighth session, requested the secretariat, under the guidance of the Chair of the SBSTA, to organize, before its thirtieth session, a technical workshop on integrating practices, tools and systems for climate risk assessment and management and disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies into national policies and programmes, with a view to facilitating the identification of successful examples of using such tools and integrating such practices into national policies and programmes.² The SBSTA further requested the secretariat to prepare a report on this workshop to be made available by its thirty-first session.

2. The workshop took place in Havana, Cuba, from 10 to 12 March 2009, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment of Cuba and the Inter-Agency Secretariat of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR). Ms. Helen Plume, Chair of the SBSTA, chaired the workshop. Participants at the workshop included representatives from Parties, relevant international organizations, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations, research entities and the private sector, that are active in the areas of adaptation planning, climate risk assessment and management, DRR and development planning.

3. Discussions at the workshop were informed by, and took into account, ongoing and previous work under the Convention, in particular under the Nairobi work programme, as covered by the following documents:

- (a) Technical paper on integrating practices, tools and systems for climate risk assessment and management and DRR strategies into national policies and programmes;³

¹ Decision 2/CP.11, annex, paragraph 1.

² FCCC/SBSTA/2008/6, paragraph 57.

³ FCCC/TP/2008/4.

- (b) Information contained in the summary report of the implementation of the first phase of the Nairobi work programme;⁴
- (c) Annex of the SBSTA 29 conclusions on the Nairobi work programme;⁵
- (d) Call for Action #03;⁶ and
- (e) Decision 1/CP.13 – the Bali Action Plan.⁷

4. This note provides a brief summary by the Chair of the workshop on the presentations, exchange of views, some of the key issues discussed, and the recommendations for next steps in facilitating the integration of climate risks assessment and management, and DRR strategies into national policies and programmes. More detailed coverage of the outcomes of the workshop will be provided in the report mentioned in paragraph 1 above. The relevant documentation, including the presentations made during the workshop, are available on the Nairobi work programme website.⁸

5. The workshop took stock of existing strategies and practices of, and methods and tools for, integration, with a view to identifying good practices and success criteria, practical tools to support integration, gaps, key challenges and ways to address them. It also identified the most viable areas for action in order to facilitate the further integration of climate risk assessment and management, and DRR into national policies and programmes.

6. The workshop provided a bridge between the fields of adaptation and DRR in facilitating the sharing of knowledge and information on current practices and available tools for integration, and in enhancing learning and cooperation in the two disciplines. Furthermore, in response to the identified needs and gaps in advancing the integration, a large number of organizations pledged a range of activities, many of which effectively seek to link the areas of work on adaptation planning and practices, and that of climate-related risks and extreme events under the Nairobi work programme. This catalytic function of the work programme underlined the potential role of the Nairobi work programme as a hub for knowledge sharing in an enhanced adaptation regime.

II. Proceedings

7. The workshop consisted of plenary, breakout and panel discussions. The introductory session provided the backdrop to the workshop's theme, including the context of the Nairobi work programme and that of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. The UNFCCC technical paper⁹ provided background information that served as a useful input into the ensuing deliberations.

8. In the second session, representatives from Parties¹⁰ presented on specific empirical examples of integration at national level while those from international organizations and regional centres¹¹ shared information, experiences and lessons learned on available methods and tools, and on planned and ongoing initiatives to support integration into national policies and programmes from different perspectives and entry points. In-depth assessments of success criteria and discussions on key challenges and opportunities took place in breakout group sessions conducted from the perspectives of different hazard type, sector and governance level.

⁴ FCCC/SBSTA/2008/12

⁵ FCCC/SBSTA/2008/L.22

⁶ Call for Action #03. Available at <<http://unfccc.int/4430.php>>

⁷ FCCC/AWGLCA/2007/6/Add.1

⁸ <<http://unfccc.int/4742.php>>.

⁹ See footnote 2.

¹⁰ Presentations were made by representatives from Cuba, South Africa, Indonesia and Germany.

¹¹ Presentations were made by representatives from UNISDR, WMO, UNDP, BCAS, IGAT-ICPAC and CCCCC.

9. Following the reporting back from the breakout groups, which included the recommendations for further actions, the Chair invited organizations to make action pledges under the Nairobi work programme, update on the status of implementation on the previously pledged actions, and share plans for future collaboration, with a view to addressing the challenges for advancing the integration.¹²

10. The workshop concluded with a wrap-up panel discussion on the way forward, which reiterated the importance of building upon existing initiatives and coordination to spearhead the integration effort, as well as the urgency to take action. A set of suggestions for follow-up actions under the Nairobi work programme were also made for a number of specific activities, under the guidance of the Chair of the SBSTA, in order to address the needs and gaps identified during the workshop as well as in the previous work under the work programme.

III. Summary of discussions

11. There was a strong consensus among participants on the need for integration, as the outcomes of climate risk assessment and management and DRR will be of limited scope and are unlikely to be sustainable for the long run unless they are “internalized” within the development planning process. The need to link national policy frameworks to adaptation strategies, poverty reduction strategies and DRR strategies under the Hyogo Framework for Action was underlined in order to focus on addressing underlying risk drivers.

12. All three disciplines – adaptation, DRR and national development planning – converge on attaining sustainable development in the face of increased climate-related risks. Adaptation and DRR complement each other as both focus on vulnerability to extreme events, yet with different time horizons. Taken together, adaptation and DRR address the full spectrum of climate-related risks with contextually appropriate responses.

13. In all of the presentations, similar messages were brought forward that apply to all levels of action. These include the synergistic nature and common objectives of DRR and adaptation; the need for simple methods and practical tools that can be used by stakeholders; the importance of building on existing experience on coping with present-day climate variability and risks; the need for enabling environments, including for education and awareness, institutional set-up; the need for resources to build and sustain capacities as well as avoid fragmentation; the need for strong coordination and cooperation at all levels, to achieve economies of scale supported by leveraged knowledge, expertise and resources; and the need to give attention to action at community level, with the aim of both supporting the most vulnerable as well as of learning from their existing practices that can be scaled up to wider contexts.

A. Practices, tools and systems for integrating climate risk assessment and management and DRR strategies into national policies and programmes

14. Two broad types of strategies emerged from the discussions: taking a long-term perspective, focusing on adaptive capacity and policy development; and a near-term risk reduction orientation. They are complementary to each other and closely linked together through the common objective of achieving and sustaining development goals in the face of climate-related risks.

15. Underpinning both types of strategies, there are generic approaches towards integration that appear to be applicable across a range of hazards, sectors and governance levels. These include engagement of stakeholders, establishment of multi-stakeholder committees, validation and utilization of indigenous knowledge, multi-hazard and multi-sectoral, and adaptive management approaches.

16. A range of processes were identified as conducive to integration. In particular, the process of preparing national communications and the National Adaptation Programmes of Action, which involves

¹² The Following Parties and organizations pledged actions and/or provided information on relevant activities: Brazil, Canada, ADPC, BCAS, ENDA, FAO, IFRC, ProVention Consortium, RIOCC, UNDP, WFP, WHO, WMO.

the engagement of multiple stakeholders, particularly those at the national level. National and global policy frameworks (e.g. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, etc) are also identified as synergistic policy frameworks and could be the entry points for integrating adaptation and DRR into national development plans and policies.

17. Other practices and systems in support of integration identified at the workshop include: working with existing processes (e.g. environment impact assessment), facilitating the interactions between different stakeholder groups including developers and users of information through forums and dialogues, strengthening key national institutions (e.g. meteo-hydrological services), drawing on local knowledge, leveraging coordination and cooperation, communicating in accessible language, and encouraging interaction between science, policy and local knowledge, further enhancing regional cooperation and networks to address the disparities in capacities, expertise and experiences, as well as the common challenges, among countries within the same region. In addition, capacity building, research, training and awareness raising were underlined as key elements of adaptation and DRR strategies and their integration into national policies and programmes.

18. The effective application of tools requires a system of institutional and policy frameworks, technical capacity, coordination and cooperation among key stakeholders and dedicated resources. Tools that were identified as particularly helpful in either creating the enabling environment for integration or as an integrating tool on its own include: scenarios, risk communication to raise public awareness and gain political support, regional networks and forums to build regional capacity and foster collaboration, monitoring and early warning, hazard, risk and vulnerability mapping, spatial analysis, risk atlas, critical thresholds for risk communication and assessment, financial risk transfer instruments, guidance and guidelines for integrating adaptation and DRR into national development plans and programmes.

B. Barriers to and challenges for integrating climate risk assessment and management and DRR strategies into national policies and programmes

19. Despite the rising political visibility of adaptation at international level in recent years, there remains a limited understanding of the need for urgent actions on climate risk management. Climate risk and disaster are often perceived as an environmental issue rather than a fundamental component of development with strong social and economic implications. Discussions revealed a range of underlying causes for the lack of political support, including: large uncertainties related to climate change and its impacts, inadequacy in communicating risk/uncertainty, and short-term nature of political process (e.g. election cycle and success criteria for politicians).

20. Another major barrier to integration relates to compartmentalization and the associated lack of cross-sectoral/ministerial coordination at the policy, strategic development and implementation levels. The lack of financial support for developing and sustaining capacity, and for implementing integral policies and programmes remains as a key barrier. It was highlighted that, despite the broad recognition of the importance of de-centralization of risk management, implementation often falls short due to the lack of financial commitment from the national government level.

21. The workshop affirmed that the progress has been made towards the provision and dissemination of key information in many parts of the world. However, persistent gaps remain in knowledge and information required for informed decision making on adaptation, DRR and their integration into national policies and programmes. Parties and organizations continued to report on the gaps in technical capacity to carry out data processing, working with appropriate methods and tools for risk assessment. These include formidable uncertainties associated with local climate scenario information, lack of socio-economic information and absence of economic estimates of climate change impacts and adaptation options. Lack of ability to make policy relevant risk assessments hinders the efforts to engage the wide public and policy makers in policy dialogues which may lead to adaptive management decisions.

IV. Summary of recommendations

22. Based on presentations and discussions, a range of priority areas of work to move the integration agenda forward were identified. These include the following:

- (a) **Creating an enabling policy environment including incentive mechanisms:** Possible ways to achieve this include: promote public education, awareness raising and advocacy, particularly at high political level; identify and mobilize political champions; develop draft model legislation and implementation guidelines that can be adapted at national and local levels; integrate climate risk assessment and management and DRR requirements into environment impact assessment guidelines; mobilize key institutions such as regional development banks; use the occurrence of high impact extreme events as catalysts for change in public policy. At the international level, a MDG-type of instrument, or institutional arrangement/legal mandates, calling for the elaboration of national plans for integration may be helpful to create the necessary policy framework at the national level.
- (b) **Improving availability, accessibility and relevance of knowledge and information:** Possible ways to achieve this include: incentivize and continue support for enhancing observation systems, data collection and dissemination, and developing modalities for information/data/knowledge management and sharing; enhance technical capacity for data processing and analysis; increase relevance of knowledge and information to varying stakeholder groups, including through de-structuring and re-packaging scientific knowledge/information in a way that stakeholders understand and can act upon; make information available in non-English languages in order to address the issue of access to information.
- (c) **Developing and disseminating practical methods and tools:** Possible ways to achieve this include: develop and document practical tools and report on the pragmatic application of them; ensure even distribution to, and application by all levels and sectors.
- (d) **Engaging multiple stakeholders:** Practical ways recommended to ensure stakeholder engagement include: define the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders within the context of development planning; engage stakeholders/agencies with implementation mandates and capacity; ensure national level dialogues among stakeholders on risk - underlined as critical to deliver integration- to be centred on sectoral and/or thematic issues, rather than driven by climate information.
- (e) **Improving communications with stakeholders:** Steps that can be undertaken include: use common language; ensure the common understanding of the terms and expressions used; use local, national and regional experiences in DRR as an entry point into broader discussions of the importance of adaptation; and quantify and visualize risks to increase the effectiveness of communication.
- (f) **Enhancing regional cooperation and networks:** Potential ways to achieve this include: formally recognize their roles and contributions as a mechanism to increase their visibility and to attract necessary resources; provide support for their processes to generate and share experiences, knowledge and information; and ensure two-way flow of knowledge and information between regional networks and countries within the region.
