

Addressing Vulnerability to Climate Change in LDCs

Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries 9-13 May 2011, Istanbul, Turkey

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Convened by: UNFCCC secretariat

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Concept note

1. Introduction

This concept note provides information on the special event on reducing vulnerability to climate change in the least developed countries (LDCs). The event will share information on the past, current and future mechanisms to support LDCs in reducing their vulnerability to climate change. It will provide a platform for sharing of experiences and lessons learned by the LDCs in implementing measures to reduce their vulnerability to climate change, and by the intergovernmental process in providing the support. The work of UNFCCC and the experiences, best practices and lessons learned are intended to inform and contribute towards the development of the new programme of action for LDCs for the decade 2011-2020.

2. Background

Climate change is the world's greatest environmental challenge, and its impacts go beyond the capacity of individual states. It brings heightened occurrences of extreme events such as floods, tropical cyclones, tornados, storm surges, landslides, droughts, heat stress, disease epidemics, and sea level rise. The particular hazards brought by these events are often not new; however, their intensity, magnitude and the unpredictability of their impacts have increased significantly in the recent past. Of the world's inhabitants, it is the citizens of the LDCs who are the most vulnerable to these impacts, due to a combination of environmental vulnerability, inadequate resources and poverty. LDCs lack many of the key elements of adaptive capacity to respond to climate change: stable and prosperous economies, access to financial and technological resources, and robust information dissemination systems.

In recognition of this acute vulnerability of LDCs to the impacts of climate change, and in recognition of the specific needs and special situations of LDCs, Parties to the UNFCCC established a special work programme in 2001 to support LDCs to implement measures that address vulnerability to climate change. The work programme focuses on planning and implementing adaptation, capacity building and increasing awareness on climate change in LDCs, and includes the following elements:

- (a) Strengthening existing and, where needed, establishing, national climate change secretariats and/or focal points;
- (b) Providing training, on an ongoing basis, in negotiating skills and language;
- (c) Supporting the preparation and implementation of national adaptation programmes of action (NAPAs);

- (d) Promotion of public awareness programmes;
- (e) Development and transfer of technology, particularly adaptation technology; and
- (f) Strengthening the capacity of meteorological and hydrological services.

The three-component special package of support included the establishment of an LDC Fund to provide finance for the implementation of the work programme, and an LDC Expert Group (LEG) to provide technical guidance and advise. The support by the LEG over the next five years (2011-2015) will focus on the following specific areas:

- (a) Implementation of NAPAs;
- (b) Revision and update of NAPAs to further improve their quality, to facilitate the integration of adaptation actions of LDC Parties into development planning and to reflect increased adaptation knowledge and changed priorities in the countries, upon request by LDC Parties;
- (c) Identification of medium- and long-term adaptation needs, their integration into development planning and the implementation of identified adaptation activities;
- (d) Strengthening gender-related considerations and considerations regarding vulnerable communities within LDCs;
- (e) Implementation of the elements of the LDC work programme other than the preparation and implementation of NAPAs that are relevant to the expertise of the LEG.

This special support to LDCs has led to huge successes in LDCs on efforts to address climate change. LDCs have successfully prepared NAPAs and submitted them to the UNFCCC secretariat to enable their funding. Priority interventions identified in the NAPAs seek to achieve or address the following goals:

- (a) Achieve and safeguard food security;
- (b) Achieve and safeguard water security and sanitation;
- (c) Protection of life and property against climate extremes and disasters including along low lying and coastal areas;
- (d) Protecting livelihoods and enhancing adaptive capacity;
- (e) Climate proofing major components of national economies and sustainable development (socio-economic growth engine);
- (f) Supporting and enhancing human health and safety;
- (g) Protecting and enhancing ecosystem structure and function for the sustainable provision of ecosystem goods and services;
- (h) Climate proofing renewable energy sources and supplies;
- (i) Protecting and preserving cultural values and cultural systems;
- (j) Protecting and improving the design of critical infrastructure.

Furthermore, LDCs are now actively engaged in the process of implementing the NAPA projects through funding from the LDCF. An analysis of projects submitted to the Global Environment Facility to this effect indicates that agriculture and water resources management have been, by far, the most important sectors in the projects. This reflects the crucial importance of the two sectors in most LDCs; these sectors are often especially vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and variability.

The successes in the NAPAs have been attributed to a solid work programme with: technical support by the LEG on the design and implementation of NAPAs; support by the GEF and its agencies in accessing funding for implementing activities; technical and financial support from other regional, national and bilateral partners; and good collaboration among all partners.

Despite the successes, the NAPA process met a number of challenges and obstacles. Given the ten years since the establishment of the LDC work programme and hence the NAPAs, rich experiences, best practices and lessons have been met in the process. The LEG and partners

have compiled a publication on best practices and lessons learned in preparing and implementing NAPAs, and this publication will be launched at this event.

3. Objectives

In order to facilitate and enrich the substantive consultations of the LDC-IV on the areas of addressing vulnerability to climate change in LDCs, and to facilitate the development partners and relevant UN agencies, multilateral development and financial institutions and other relevant international organizations to come up with specific proposals and deliverables, the event will:

- Share information on the past, current and future mechanisms to support LDCs in reducing their vulnerability to climate change;
- Provide a platform for sharing of experiences and lessons learned by the LDCs in implementing measures to reduce their vulnerability to climate change, and by the intergovernmental process in providing support to LDCs.

4. Format of the event

4.1. Sessions

The event will last for one and a half hours. It will be built around short presentations and statements by keynote speakers, which will be followed by a joint interactive exchange between the keynote speakers and all participants. The event will be coordinated by a Moderator who will provide a brief summary of key emerging issues at the end of the event.

4.2. Participation

The event is open to all participants taking part in the UN LDC-IV Conference.

4.3. Documentation

A background paper on the LDC-IV theme on Reducing vulnerability due to Climate Change, Climate Variability and Extremes, Land Degradation and Biodiversity Loss: Environmental and Developmental Challenges and Opportunities for Least Developed Countries.

More information on support to LDCs under the UNFCCC can be found at <http://unfccc.int/ldc>.

5. Expected outcomes

Participants to the event will be able to gain knowledge on, and take with them into the negotiations of a new programme of action, the following aspects:

- (a) Existing modes of support to LDCs in reducing vulnerability to climate change under the UNFCCC, and what has been achieved over the past ten years;
- (b) Key best practices and lessons in addressing vulnerability in LDCs over the past ten years that could inform the design of the new programme of action.

These are expected to facilitate the design of high level guiding frameworks to be set up in the new programme of action, that would also compliment the support provided to LDCs under the UNFCCC.

6. Further information

The event will be conducted in English with simultaneous French translation.

For further information regarding the event, please contact:

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