

Submission of the United States of America

Adaptation Ad Hoc Working Group on Long Term Cooperative Action

The United States was pleased to hear Parties in Bonn and Accra point to the value of a common framework for characterizing our actions on adaptation. In our view, the purpose of a framework for adaptation would be to lay out the range of actions needed to promote country-driven adaptation strategies, with a view to leveraging the substantial capability that already exists in many institutions at all levels for promoting resilience in climate sensitive sectors and issue areas.

Such a framework should be designed to catalyze greater attention to adaptation at all levels and to help Parties build a robust approach in their respective efforts. It should galvanize national and international support for adaptation priorities in a range of sectors, and promote climate resilient development in a manner that is practical, informed by the best science, environmentally sound, and economically efficient, and that promotes on-the-ground results.

Such a framework should also focus on “who” should be involved, by engaging the full range of actors at all levels. At national and sub-national levels, we need to encourage the engagement of planning and sectoral institutions with key responsibilities for the most vulnerable; at the international level, we see an essential role for relevant UN Technical Agencies, overseas development agencies and NGOs. At all levels, we need to leverage existing institutions, networks, and resources already engaged in enhancing climate resilience, including for sharing of information and expertise, financing, and facilitating planning and implementation of adaptation activities.

Adaptation is a shared challenge. We can enhance our efforts by working in partnership to adapt effectively to climate change, including through knowledge sharing and exchange of practical experience, so that we build on the good work that already exists.

With respect to resources, we look forward to discussions on ideas that will lead to practical and effective outcomes in Copenhagen and beyond. In discussions about scaling up funding, it is critical to understand how such funding would be used and how its effectiveness would be evaluated. We must consider national enabling environments and absorptive capacity for receipt and use of adaptation-relating funds. Ultimately, it will be necessary to prioritize action, just as we prioritize our actions in development assistance activities generally. In this regard, we note the importance of focusing on the poorest and most vulnerable. We also note the importance of engaging the private sector in adaptation activities. Lastly, we cannot discount the role of ODA and the importance of incorporating adaptation into development assistance, in addition to the value of making use of the wealth of accumulated expertise and capacity that currently exists for addressing climate risks.

There are a number of ways to approach prioritization of adaptation actions under the Bali Action Plan. The United States sees merit in priority consideration for actions that:

- Are guided by the Convention’s definitions, its objective, and provisions;
- Have clear co-benefits or multi-benefits;
- Address responses to projected near-term climate impacts above longer-term impacts, which may be best addressed by mitigation;
- Are identified in national communications and national adaptation plans of action;
- Link to poverty reduction strategies, and so on.

In terms of details for a framework, included should be a portfolio of possible areas of action and international cooperation on adaptation. These areas of action would facilitate integration of adaptation into development planning and projects at national and international levels. The framework should also include:

- Processes for identification and assessment of adaptation needs, establishment of priorities, evaluation and implementation of strategies, and program support; and,
- A list of voluntary priority actions that various actors might take to adapt to climate change.

There are a number of ways to structure such a framework. Possible organizational structures could be the following or some combination thereof:

- *A Sectoral Approach* – organizing by economic or resource sectors (e.g., agriculture, coastal zones, forests, water).
- *A Functional Approach* – organizing by information/methods/tools, policy and planning, and implementation (e.g., Earth observations and modeling; vulnerability and adaptation assessments; adaptation planning; adaptation actions).
- *Organizing by Level and Type of Actor* – by local, national, regional, and international actors.

Elements within any of the above approaches could be organized around a basis for action, objectives, and priorities for actions. The key in our discussions should be to focus on “what” it is we looking to accomplish. This, in turn, will enable us to better determine the “how” to accomplish it.

Adaptation should be consistent with national development priorities and strategies. That is in part what we mean by the term “country-driven”. If a country does not consider adaptation a priority in their development planning, it is not something that the UNFCCC can determine to be a priority for them; although the UNFCCC can provide information and tools to facilitate such prioritization and enhance capacity. The UNFCCC can catalyze actions by others, but is not

structured to implement on-the-ground adaptation projects or create necessary domestic-level enabling environments to facilitate adaptation.

Because of the local, regional, and national scales at which adaptation takes place, responsibility for adaptation lies with each Party, assisted by action taken under the UNFCCC. It is important that adaptation be treated coherently under the UNFCCC and consistently with UNFCCC mandates and build on the work already ongoing under the Convention. It is important to link adaptation with mitigation, in that enhanced action on mitigation will limit the need for adaptation.

There may be standalone actions – that is, actions that are purely for climate change adaptation – but we do not believe that there are effective adaptation strategies independent of development strategies in relevant climate-sensitive sectors and contexts.

In terms of financing adaptation, we think that a diversity of funding sources is appropriate, for several reasons:

- First, adaptation actions and actors are diverse, which will require different sources and types of funding.
- Second, we have an interest in ensuring our funding is used effectively, and we are convinced that this can best be done if adaptation funding is integrated into broader development assistance.
- Third, the funding obligation in the UNFCCC with respect to adaptation is different from mitigation. Under Article 4.4 of the Convention, the obligation is to “assist” developing country Parties that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change in meeting costs of adaptation to those adverse effects – and assistance can and should take many different forms.

We have heard concerns from expert communities at UN bodies, for example the disaster community, that UNFCCC adaptation funding could take place in a vacuum and may not build on the considerable expertise and infrastructure that already exists. We see funding as integrated into developing planning as well. This ensures that adaptation-specific funding is leveraged with funding for climate-sensitive development, and also ensures that resources are channeled to real priorities.

On the issue of insurance, the United States sees value in exploring ways the UNFCCC might catalyze development of private insurance mechanisms, micro-insurance and or indexed insurance mechanisms, and, particularly, risk reduction/risk prevention activities. However, the United States does not support calls for an additional fund or for intergovernmental insurance mechanisms.