

Submission of SustainUS

SustainUS, the United States network of youth advocating for sustainable development, is in strong support of research and analysis to improve the understanding and assessment of impacts, vulnerability, and adaptation. It is imperative that decisions related to adaptation be based on scientific, technical, and socioeconomic knowledge. The Nairobi Work Programme (NWP) provides an opportunity to inform negotiations on matters relating to adaptation, and its first review can enhance the NWP to assist negotiations under the Bali Action Plan (BAP). Adaptation has gained deserved attention and has come a long way since Berlin, but it will take a concerted effort to address the global challenges to manage the unavoidable impacts of climate change.

Achievements in the implementation of the NWP

The first two years of the NWP have shown that there is a lot of information on methodologies, socioeconomic data, climate-related risks, and case studies on adaptation planning and practices. Whether qualitative or quantitative, the accessibility to such information varies widely. The spatial and temporal specificity and quality of the information varies, with more high-quality information in developed nations and less, or none in some cases, in developing countries.

Some of the information available is not tailored to inform policy-makers, and the NWP has created momentum to enhance the applicability of ongoing research. The NWP has served to highlight the need for information at different scales and specific approaches in the different areas included in the NWP. This momentum has helped start dialogue and collaboration between different stakeholders, particularly research institutions and intergovernmental organizations.

Overall, the first two years of the NWP have been an important period to map out the different approaches and knowledge available, and to catalyze new efforts. The Action Pledges are an example of the outcomes of the NWP, and are a first step towards comprehensive action on adaptation. The openness and transparency of the NWP has allowed for the review of important topics related to the impacts and adaptation to climate change, and this model could help advance much of the discussion over the next two years until Copenhagen – provided that the COP follows recommendations from the NWP.

Further Activities

The NWP has developed important momentum on research, collaboration, and partnerships at the completion of two years of consultations and workshops; however the next two years will require an intensification of efforts and setting of clear goals for the NWP. Any consultation or workshop under the NWP must have pre-set goals and structure, and participation from developing countries, particularly SIDS and LDC's, must be enhanced. In addition, participation from non-governmental organizations from developing nations must be supported in order to bring their expertise to the NWP.

Important gaps remain in improving the understanding and assessment of impacts, vulnerability, and adaptation. SBSTA should provide further guidance to complete activities in the following areas:

Insurance—Vulnerable areas in developing countries, particularly LDC's and SIDS, lack the necessary framework and incentives for traditional insurance schemes. The NWP could convene a workshop with the goal of promoting joint venture insurance schemes and other methods to provide affordable and reliable insurance to the sector of the population at greatest risk.

Cost of adaptation—There is still much uncertainty as to the cost of responding to the impacts and adverse effects of climate change. While there are a few global figures available (i.e., by the World Bank, Oxfam, Stern Report, etc.), most countries do not have access to methodologies to determine the cost of adaptation. While international financial institutions have developed their own formulas, it is imperative that developing countries be able to determine the cost of adaptation under their own reviews and for their own planning.

Capacity building at the national and regional level—Although there is a wealth of global data and information, developing countries do not have the necessary capacity and resources to apply that data and information to their context. Vital resources are available on the Internet, but are not optimized for adaptation planning. The NWP could suggest possible actions and funding priorities for capacity building in vulnerable regions, including options such as identifying or creating regional centres for adaptation planning and training that can guide countries on how to use socioeconomic information pertinent to their context and vulnerable sectors in more specific scales.

Integration of adaptation into development agendas—While there is a recognition of the importance of linking national development agendas with adaptation strategies in the pursuit of sustainable development, adaptation initiatives are normally accomplished in a vacuum. The NWP could identify the strategies to promote the integration of adaptation into development agendas. Through workshops, submissions, and other forms to collect input, the NWP could guide countries to mainstream adaptation to national planning and identify ways in which international donors can support developing nations in making adaptation a vehicle for sustainable development.

The future of Adaptation in the UNFCCC system and the role of the NWP

The Bali Action Plan (BAP) agreed last December to set adaptation as one of the corner stones for future international action on climate change. This emphasis provides for an opportunity to promote and finance adaptation. The BAP sets an extensive list of items for consideration for adaptation, and the NWP must set its future programme of work to support the COP in meeting its paramount duties before December 2009. While the work already achieved by the NWP will be of relevance to the negotiations under the BAP, there are a series of aspects listed in the BAP that are currently not considered by NWP. Some of these aspects are:

- Prioritization of actions and financial needs assessments
- Capacity-building and response strategies
- Means to incentivize the implementation of adaptation actions
- Ways to enable climate-resilient development and reduce vulnerability
- Disaster reduction strategies

Moreover, the revision of the NWP should also consider how the NWP can support the work of the newly-formed Adaptation Fund Board. The decisions taken by the Adaptation Fund Board should be founded by sound technical and expert advice, and the NWP can be used to answer some of the questions that will arise for the decision-making of the Board. A dedicated expert group on adaptation could be worthwhile

International collaboration to advance our understanding and approaches to adaptation is crucial. Because the impacts of climate change are already evident in many parts of the world, efforts must be expedited for the sake of safeguarding the life of millions of people at risk of natural disasters, particularly those most vulnerable. SustainUS believes that effective adaptation policies are sustainable development policies, and that action must aim to enhance health and food security, and reduce economic losses, poverty, loss of natural heritage, loss of biodiversity, conflicts, and indirect losses.

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