

Water and Climate Change Adaptation

Proposals for the fifth session of the UNFCCC Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-Term Co-operative Action under the Convention (AWG LCA), Bonn, 29th March – 8th April 2009

Water is a fundamental aspect of climate and needs to be at the centre of future climate agreements addressing adaptation. Water is the primary transmitter of climate change impacts on society and the environment and also a key vehicle for adaptation. Water and its availability and quality will be the main pressures on societies and environment under climate change (IPCC). If not managed properly, climate impacts on water resources will have a significant impact on human development and the MDGs due to reduced water availability, lower food production, flooding and extreme weather events. To a large extent, therefore, climate adaptation is water adaptation.

The issue of water-based adaptation featured prominently in the thematic and political process of the 5th World Water Forum that took place in Istanbul in March 2009. Participating organisations and Ministers recognized the central role of water for the adaptation policy agenda in the Ministerial Roundtable on Water and Climate.

However, the IPCC has concluded that to date water resources have not been adequately addressed in climate policy formulations. This is evident in the limited reference to water as cross-sectoral tool for adaptation in the outcomes of the UNFCCC COP negotiating process.

Recognizing this, a number of organizations and initiatives focussing on water and climate have come together to present some recommendations to the UNFCCC AWG LCA. The Global Public Policy Network on Water Management¹, the World Water Council, (co-organizer of the 5th World Water Forum), the Cooperative Programme on Water and Climate, IUCN and the International Water Association² propose the following for the adaptation component of the Bali Action Plan under discussion in the AWG LCA:

- *Recognise water as the **fundamental medium for climate change** adaptation in all sectors as well as the primary vehicle for building **social, environmental and economic climate resilience***
- *Take a **cross-sectoral, holistic, system-wide** and integrated approach to climate change adaptation, recognising integrated water and land resources management as central to a cross-sectoral approach for adaptation. Enhance and establish **linkages between NAPAs** and national and sectoral planning processes.*
- *Mainstream **ecosystem-based adaptation** through investment in natural infrastructure and adaptive governance to **avoid 'maladaptation'**, recognizing **ecosystems as water users** that build societies' resilience to climate change.*

¹ The Global Public Policy Network on Water Management is a joint initiative of Stockholm International Water Institute and Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future. It works with global stakeholders to identify key priorities for the water management agenda, and communicate those priorities to decision-makers. GPPN key messages on Water and Climate Change Adaptation, based on broad stakeholder consultation, are available at <http://gppn.stakeholderforum.org>

² The Cooperative Programme on Water and Climate (CPWC), the World Water Council (WWC), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the International Water Association (IWA) jointly prepared the Topic Adaptation to Climate Change and the ministerial process including the inputs for the Ministerial Statement, the Istanbul Water Guide, the High Level Panel and the Ministerial Round Table for the 5th World Water Forum (March 2009, Istanbul, Turkey)

- Ensure **broad stakeholder engagement** and consideration of local needs in the development of water-based adaptation strategies.
- Enhance **sharing of best practice** from sector-based and community-based adaptation, including **adaptive water management techniques**, through the Nairobi Work Programme and through increasing the role and enhancing capacity of regional information centres.
- Develop cooperation and concerted efforts for enhancing **quality, reliability and accessibility of meteorological and hydrological data** to reduce uncertainty and build capacity for assessing and responding to climate impacts, ensuring access to data by poor and vulnerable communities.
- Include an identification of **mountain areas and deltas** as vulnerability ‘hotspots’ and priority areas for adaptation.
- Develop **transboundary water agreements** to deal with long-term climate impacts on water resources, and integrate climate change adaptation into existing agreements.
- Identify **water-based adaptation financing needs** and close the financial gap by disaggregating adaptation funding requirements across sectors – including assessment **of costs for ecosystem-based adaptation** in addition to basic structural needs, the latter currently estimated by the UNFCCC at USD 11 billion annually for the water sector.
- Ensure that funding to meet adaptation needs is **new and additional to ODA** and is easily accessible to **vulnerable countries and communities** through harmonised financial architecture and streamlined disbursement procedures
- Ensure that additional funding for water-based adaptation is also **integrated into existing sectoral financial flows**

Recognizing that adaptation is primarily a local and sectoral responsibility, and acknowledging the principle of subsidiarity, consideration should be given to the supportive and facilitating role of the UNFCCC in relation to the above points.

We also reiterate our support for outcomes and recommendations of the **Danish Dialogue on Climate Change Adaptation for Land and Water Management**: www.landwaterdialogue.um.dk

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Danish Dialogue on Land and Water Management

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