



Mr. Carlos Fuller  
Chair of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and  
Technological Advice (SBSTA)

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Reference: EXCOM/MK/cma  
Direct line: +49 228 8151168

Dear Mr. Chair,

On behalf of the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts (hereinafter referred to as the Executive Committee) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and in our capacity as its Co-Chairs, we would like to request that you consider slow onset events<sup>1</sup> as a possible topic for the research dialogue to be held at SBSTA 44 or for future research dialogues.

In Doha, Parties highlighted the importance of advancing understanding of, and expertise on, loss and damage, including the risk of slow onset events, and approaches to address them.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, at COP 20 (Lima, 2014),<sup>3</sup> Parties approved the initial two-year workplan of the Executive Committee,<sup>4</sup> which comprises an Action Area 3 (AA3). Specifically, AA3 instructs the Executive Committee to “enhance data on and knowledge of the risks of slow onset events and their impacts, and identify ways forward on approaches to address slow onset events associated with the adverse effects of climate change, with specific focus on potential impacts, within countries and regions”.

Similarly, activity (b) of AA3 of the same workplan is expected to “foster the establishment or strengthening of collaborative channels, building from existing efforts, to strengthen dialogue, coordination, coherence and synergies to enhance, share and manage knowledge and understanding of slow onset events and approaches to address them”.

Further, through activity (c) of AA3, the Executive Committee is to “invite relevant organizations and experts to collaborate with the Executive Committee to facilitate access to information, including through collaborative channels or databases, and technologies to track the impacts, and enable approaches to address loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, including slow onset events”.

In addition, activity (d) of AA3 is to “assess and develop recommendations to improve the state of knowledge to understand, and capacity to address, slow onset events and their impacts, including the capacity of regional agencies”.

It is also worth noting that in pursuing the implementation of the initial two-year workplan, the Executive Committee, as per Action Area 8, is to “complement, draw upon the work of and involve, as appropriate, existing bodies and expert groups under the Convention”.

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<sup>1</sup> Including sea level rise, increasing temperatures, ocean acidification, glacial retreat and related impacts, salinization, land and forest degradation, loss of biodiversity and desertification (Decision 1/CP.16. paragraph 25, footnote 3).

<sup>2</sup> Decision 3/CP.18.

<sup>3</sup> Decision 2/CP.20.

<sup>4</sup> FCCC/SB/2014/4, annex II.



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With regard to all of the foregoing and as outlined in Decision 16/CP.17, the research dialogue presents an excellent opportunity to synergize efforts under the SBSTA, to discuss the needs for climate change research and convey lessons learnt from activities by regional and international research programmes and organizations that are active in climate change research.

Note that under activity (a) of AA3 of its initial two-year workplan, the Executive Committee has initiated the development of a database of institutions working on slow onset events. This database could serve as an initial resource for experts to be invited to a research dialogue on the topic of slow onset events and ways of addressing them.

We are happy to provide further information upon your request.

Thank you kindly for considering this request and we look forward to receiving your reply.

Annex: Information note for the Chair of the SBSTA on slow onset events as a topic for the eighth research dialogue at SBSTA 44 or future research dialogues.

Yours sincerely,

*(Signed by)*

Pepetua Latasi and Shereen D'Souza  
Co-Chairs of the Executive Committee



**Annex: Information note for the Chair of the SBSTA on slow onset events as a topic for the eighth research dialogue at SBSTA 44 or future research dialogues**

The following list provides a rationale for the inclusion of slow onset events as a topic of the eighth research dialogue, as well as specific suggestions about evaluating the impacts of slow onset events at a range of temperature scenarios, including 1.5°C.

**General on the importance of continuous engagement on slow onset events**

- Slow onset events will pose unprecedented challenges to the most vulnerable countries. Of particular concern to many developing countries are the impacts of slow onset events on food security and livelihoods that are dependent on food production (e.g. impacts as a result of temperature rise, sea level rise, ocean acidification, salinization and desertification).
- Information on slow onset events, including the magnitude and timing of impacts, should inform efforts to enhance action and support to address loss and damage.
- Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change have recognized the importance of addressing slow onset events, as reflected in Decision 3/CP.18, paragraph 7; and in the inclusion of slow onset events as a key action area in the initial two-year workplan of the Executive Committee of Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts.
- Past efforts, both within and outside the Convention, to seek to address loss and damage associated with slow onset events, including by enhancing knowledge and understanding, strengthening dialogue and coordination, and enhancing action and support, provide a good basis to further engage on this issue.
- Science on slow onset events is a rapidly emerging field of research, with a number of new findings having become available since the publications of the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.
- Continued engagement with the scientific community on slow onset events is thus key to inform Parties on research findings, lessons learnt and the research and research-related capacity-building needs of developing countries, in order to enhance understanding of, collaboration on and action and support to successfully confront the challenges of slow onset events.
- Moreover, this continued engagement helps fulfil the role of the Convention to enhance knowledge and understanding of comprehensive risk management approaches to address loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, including slow onset impacts; strengthen dialogue, coordination, coherence and synergies among relevant stakeholders; and enhance action and support.

**Evaluating the impacts of slow onset events across a range of temperature scenarios, including 1.5°C**

- In Paris, Parties set a goal of holding the temperature increase to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and to pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.



- Some experts participating in the 2013–2015 Review highlighted the high likelihood of meaningful differences between 1.5°C and 2°C of warming in terms of the level of risk for some systems; while at the same time, identifying important knowledge gaps and noting that, for some systems, the difference between a 1.5°C and a 2°C temperature rise above pre-industrial levels is becoming increasingly difficult to assess; while for other temperature-sensitive systems, significant residual impacts can be expected under 1.5°C warming.
- Dedicating the research dialogue to slow onset events, with a particular focus on projected impacts across a range of temperature scenarios, including 1.5°C and 2°C, serves the timely purpose of helping to identify the needs for research and research-related capacity-building that should continue to be addressed to effectively support the needs of particularly vulnerable developing countries, vulnerable populations and the ecosystems on which they depend.