



AUSTRALIA

Submission under the Cancun Agreements | August 2011

National Adaptation Plans | SBI

I. Overview

This submission contains the views of the Australian Government on National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), as requested under SBI Conclusion FCCC/SBI/2011/L.16.

Following on from the Cancun Adaptation Framework (1/CP.16), a process was established to enable Least Developed Country (LDC) Parties to formulate and implement NAPs.

This process will build upon the experience of LDCs in preparing and implementing National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs), as a means of identifying their medium and long-term adaptation needs and developing and implementing strategies and programmes to address those needs. Other developing country Parties are also invited to employ the modalities formulated to support NAPs in the elaboration of their own planning efforts.

Australia welcomes the opportunity to submit its views. There is a growing body of knowledge on climate change adaptation planning to work from. Australia draws from *inter alia* the Lessons for Future Action Conference it co-hosted in May 2011. In summary, Australia considers that:

- The initial step is to identify and, where possible, address key information gaps ahead of planning. National priorities are best shaped once risks have been thoroughly assessed.
- International and regional approaches to planning achieve greatest success when they reinforce national planning agendas, and are informed by robust science and analysis.
- NAPs should be integrated within and strengthen existing planning systems and processes. They should not duplicate but add value to existing medium and long-term adaptation plans.
- The development of NAPs or upgrading of existing plans could be guided by a set of principles and guidelines, rather than a strict template.
- Given the limited time until Durban, Australia supports drawing on existing work and the expertise of bodies, including the Least Developed Countries' Expert Group (LEG), which is already considering medium and long-term planning for LDCs under decision 6/CP.16.



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GPO Box 854 Canberra ACT 2601 Tel: 02 6159 7000 www.climatechange.gov.au

II. Building an information and reporting base

Australia welcomed the opportunity to sponsor and facilitate, with the Secretariat for the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, the Lessons for Future Action Conference on climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in Small Island Developing States, held in Samoa from 23-26 May 2011. The outcomes of the Conference, based on current national and regional approaches, are useful to consider when establishing the NAPs process.

Adaptation plans or frameworks must be informed by robust climate change science and broader scenarios for the future. Significant gaps in climate, population, and socio-economic projections need to be identified and, where possible, addressed before countries assess how their options for adapting to climate change relate to their development goals and broader economic objectives. Without this gap analysis, optimal forward planning will not be feasible. However, minor gaps should not stop the commencement of planning that is pragmatic, flexible and capable of integrating emerging science.

Adapting to climate change and disaster risk reduction are long-term agendas that require long-term planning, an iterative process to incorporate new information and evolving assessments of risk. NAPs need to be living documents that are modifiable, dynamic and responsive to changing conditions and the latest information.

Medium and long-term planning may require very difficult decisions in terms of current versus future investments. Parties will need to build in mechanisms for revision of NAPs as new information emerges and circumstances change. The process should help LDCs and other developing countries to make both early choices, taking future risks into account, as well as to take a step-wise ('no regrets') approach to decision-making.

In Australia's view, the adaptation chapter of national communications provides a natural vehicle to reflect on the NAPs process, with the ability for continuous revision through each iteration. NAPs would fit neatly under the section on adaptation measures that includes, *inter alia*, 'appropriate and integrated plans for coastal zone management, water resources and agriculture' (Article 4(1)(e) of the Convention).

III. Using existing frameworks

NAPs should assist developing countries maximise synergies with existing processes and bring greater effectiveness to these. Some developing countries have already developed medium and long-term adaptation plans such as the Joint National Action Plans for Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction (Tonga), Strategic National Action Plans (Maldives) and Climate Change Strategy and Action Plans (Bangladesh). Where these plans are integrated, country-driven and working effectively, they supersede the need for a NAP.

NAPs should have the flexibility to encompass, integrate and add value to existing plans. The development of NAPs or upgrading of existing plans could be guided by a set of principles and guidelines, rather than a strict template. This could enable the NAPs to meet the needs and add



value to each vulnerable country based on its different national circumstances and desire to integrate with regional approaches.

A flexible approach would help integrate medium and long-term climate change adaptation planning into national frameworks. Integrating disaster risk reduction, climate change and environmental considerations into development programs and planning is cost effective in the long term, will result in more sustainable development outcomes and will also aid progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

The NAPs themselves could be used to articulate the processes that lead to integrating adaptation into national development. NAPs could set out country adaptation priorities aligned with other sectoral, development and strategic plans. Understanding of cross-sectoral approaches assists decision-makers to address the trade-offs and linkages that adaptation demands.

Some developing countries, particularly non-LDCs, might already have well-built planning systems and processes that fall just short of comprehensive adaptation plans. NAPs should be flexible enough to assist with these broader and more complex needs. The NAPs Experts' Meeting, scheduled for mid-September in Laos, should allow time to discuss the needs of LDCs and other developing countries in the development of NAPs.

IV. Governance arrangements

The processes, collaboration and national institutional arrangements established to support the NAPs are as important as the plans themselves.

NAPs should be supported by effective and inclusive governance arrangements. The NAPs process could integrate within and strengthen existing arrangements or develop new ones according to developing country circumstances. NAPs could build off the current arrangements for designing and implementing NAPAs in LDCs and factor in the wider range of entities necessary for longer-term planning.

For new arrangements, the process of developing NAPs could be led by national governments and their central ministries, with the active involvement and ownership of a diverse range of community representatives and sub-national governments. Many different institutional frameworks could work, but country ownership – along with a strong agency with influence across government and community – helps drive effective action across sectors and ministries.

A strong and well-integrated governance structure could also assist with coordinating engagement with donors and increase the effectiveness of support. NAP governance arrangements could be integrated within and used to strengthen the delivery of climate change programs and development assistance more broadly. NAP guidelines could also contain criteria to evaluate and prioritise adaptation needs.



V. Using existing expertise

When developing NAPs, LDCs should be able to draw on a range of experts based on their national and local level requirements. This includes existing expertise within the UNFCCC, such as the LEG, which has provided helpful guidance on NAPAs. It is also within the LEG's current mandate under Decision 6/CP.16 to develop guidance on medium and long-term adaptation planning for LDCs.

Australia is pleased that the SBI conclusion from the June Bonn session (FCCC/SBI/2011/L.16) highlights the LEG's current work on the issue. The Consultative Group of Experts on National Communications from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention could also play a role. The expertise it has in the field of vulnerability and adaptation assessments could assist in informing the development of NAPs. Their attendance at the NAPs Experts' Meeting would also be welcome.

National Governments could also usefully draw on the experience of programs and bodies outside the UNFCCC such as the Climate Investment Fund's Pilot Program for Climate Resilience.

