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Implementation of Article 4, paragraphs 8 and 9, of the Convention
Matters relating to the least developed countries

Progress report of the Least Developed Countries Expert Group

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The seventh meeting of the Least Developed Countries Expert Group was held in Bonn, Germany, from 4 to 7 April 2005. Members of the group reviewed intersessional progress in the implementation of the work programme for the biennium 2004–2005, revised working papers, and assigned tasks for the next intersessional period.

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I. Introduction

A. Mandate

1. The Conference of the Parties (COP), by its decision 7/CP.9, extended the mandate of the Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG) under the terms of reference adopted by decision 29/CP.7, which stipulate that the LEG shall meet twice each year. The work programme for the second term of the LEG (2004–2005) was developed at the fifth meeting of the group, and was endorsed by the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) at its twentieth session.

B. Scope of the note

2. The seventh meeting of the group was held in Bonn, Germany, from 4 to 7 April 2005. The meeting included a series of closed sessions followed by an open session with representatives from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and two implementing agencies. This note summarizes the proceedings and outcome of the seventh meeting of the LEG and follow-up action thereon.

II. Operational issues

3. In accordance with paragraph 5 of the LEG terms of reference, the LEG is to elect annually a Chair, a Vice-Chair and two rapporteurs from among its least developed country (LDC) members. Because of the language barriers that African Portuguese-speaking LDCs are facing in preparing their national adaptation programmes of action (NAPAs), the LEG agreed to establish a new post of Lusophone Rapporteur. At the seventh meeting of the LEG, the following officers were elected for a term of one year:

- (a) Mr. Paul Desanker: Chair
- (b) Ms. Madeleine Diouf: Vice-Chair and Francophone Rapporteur
- (c) Mr. Puroshottam Kunwar: Anglophone Rapporteur
- (d) Mr. Almeida Siteo: Lusophone Rapporteur.

4. The group discussed the process of selecting venues for LEG meetings. In the past, meetings in some LDCs proved to be difficult because of the high travel costs or visa problems. The group therefore decided to develop criteria for choosing meeting locations. These include: level of difficulty in reaching the destination (availability of travel nodes and travel time), regional balance, visa issues including transit visas, level of key officials expected to open/close the meeting, avoidance of repetition, and uniqueness of host-country circumstances. The group also agreed that while it is preferable to hold LEG meetings in LDCs, a meeting need not necessarily be organized in an LDC Party if it is more appropriate and effective to conduct it elsewhere.

5. The group reviewed intersessional activities and outputs by the LEG. Consistent with the conclusions of the sixth meeting of the LEG, the following papers were prepared by the LEG and the secretariat for consideration at this meeting:

- (a) Technical paper: Synergy among multilateral environmental agreements in the context of NAPAs (see section IV.A)
- (b) Technical paper: Regional synergy in the context of NAPAs (see section IV.A)

- (c) Working paper 1: Recommendations for LEG support to Portuguese-speaking countries (see section IV.B)
- (d) Working paper 2: Cooperation between expert groups under the UNFCCC (see section IV.C)
- (e) Working paper 3: Update on developments on LDC issues at COP 10
- (f) Working paper 4: List of experts (see section IV.B)
- (g) Working paper 5: Results of the follow-up questionnaire on the status of NAPA preparation (see chapter III)
- (h) Working paper 6: NAPA implementation strategies (see section IV.D).

6. The group was updated on decisions adopted at the tenth session of the COP relevant to the LDCs and the LEG and on efforts towards coordination among the different expert groups in the UNFCCC intergovernmental process, namely the Consultative Group of Experts on National Communications from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention (CGE), the Expert Group on Technology Transfer (EGTT), and the LEG.

7. In this regard the CGE, through the secretariat, invited LEG members to provide feedback on the training material developed for the CGE hands-on training workshop on vulnerability and adaptation assessments for the Africa region, held in April 2005 in Maputo, Mozambique. The EGTT, through the secretariat, invited the LEG to be represented at the seminar on development and transfer of environmentally sound technologies for adaptation to climate change, held in June 2005 in Tobago, Trinidad and Tobago, and to provide the secretariat with names of potential experts who could make a presentation at the seminar. The LEG was subsequently represented in both events.

III. Feedback from the least developed countries on the national adaptation programme of action process

8. On the margins of the twenty-first sessions of the subsidiary bodies and the tenth session of the COP, the coordinator of the LDC Group, with support from the secretariat, circulated to the LDC delegates attending the session a questionnaire on the status of their NAPA preparation. The purpose of this questionnaire was to monitor the evolution of NAPA preparation by LDC Parties and to get an overview on their concerns, needs and experiences while preparing their NAPAs. The questionnaire was intended to be a follow-up to the first survey conducted six months earlier at the twentieth sessions of the subsidiary bodies, and to provide feedback to all actors involved in supporting the NAPA process.

9. The questionnaire was completed by 36 LDC representatives. Responses revealed the positive progress made so far by all involved in the NAPA process. Although 11 LDC Parties have not yet formed a national multidisciplinary NAPA team, 14 LDCs are engaging in more advanced steps of the NAPA process. The funds released by the GEF and its implementing agencies have enabled LDC Parties to start the NAPA preparation phase, and this has contributed considerably to this progress.

10. However, some difficulties in preparing the NAPAs still remain. Obtaining approval for the NAPA proposal continues to be a slow process. This is evidenced by the fact that since June 2004, as many as 17 LDCs have had to revise their estimate of the date of NAPA completion. Of these, only three are expected to finalize their NAPAs earlier than planned, and 14 have had to postpone the completion date. Other obstacles include slow disbursement of funds, administrative procedures of implementing agencies and lack of staff, time and capacity of national teams to deal with all the NAPA steps.

IV. Completed and ongoing work under the work programme of the Least Developed Countries Expert Group

A. Promoting synergy among multilateral environmental agreements, and regional synergy

11. Paragraph 9 (d) of the LEG terms of reference mandates the group to promote synergy among multilateral environmental agreements. In response to a decision by the group at its sixth meeting, a paper on the promotion of synergy in the context of the work programme of the LEG was finalized.

12. Based on the paper's recommendation to enhance cooperation, including with expert groups outside the UNFCCC system, in particular the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Biodiversity and Climate Change (focussing on adaptation) under the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Group of Experts under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the group considered a number of possible options, such as a regular exchange of work plans and information through linked web sites, joint meetings, and even joint implementation of similar activities. In addition, the group agreed to investigate possibilities for its members to attend workshops on synergy and to establish contacts, for example under the United Nations University interlinkages initiative, which could provide valuable insights for the work of the LEG and the NAPA process as a whole. The group agreed to disseminate the document as a technical paper (FCCC/TP/2005/3) for reference by LDCs, other Parties and agencies that may be willing to support efforts by the LEG in this regard.

13. Paragraph 9 (d) of the LEG terms of reference also mandates the LEG to promote regional synergy. In response to a decision by the group at its sixth meeting, a revised paper was prepared on regional synergy in the context of the NAPA process. The group agreed to revisit the promotion of regional synergy during the NAPA implementation phase once sufficient NAPAs have been finalized. As to exploring synergy with existing regional networks, the group will pursue such collaboration under its new activities relating to capacity-building (see section IV.B). The group agreed to disseminate the document as a technical paper (FCCC/TP/2005/4) for reference by LDCs, other Parties and agencies.

B. Capacity-building

14. Paragraphs 1 and 9 (c) of the LEG terms of reference mandate the group to advise on capacity-building needs for LDCs for the preparation of NAPAs, and to provide recommendations thereon. During the sixth meeting, the group had agreed to consider the barriers that African Portuguese-speaking countries face in preparing their NAPAs. Subsequently a paper was prepared on ways to support Portuguese-speaking LDCs. In addition, the group was approached by the World Bank (which, as a GEF implementing agency, is supporting the NAPA of São Tomé and Príncipe), which requested LEG support in identifying a trainer and additional Portuguese-speaking experts to help launch and later support the NAPA process in São Tomé and Príncipe. The group responded to this request and also requested the secretariat to translate the LEG's annotations to the NAPA guidelines into Portuguese, and agreed to consider as a next step the possibility of holding a NAPA workshop for lusophone countries.

15. The group had agreed at its fifth meeting to develop a list of local/regional experts on ranking and prioritization, as part of the LEG's capacity-building efforts, for dissemination to the LDCs in support of their NAPAs, and an initial list was prepared. The group requested the secretariat to ask the proposed experts about their willingness to be included in such a list of experts and to request them to provide their curricula vitae and elaborate on their thematic and regional expertise for NAPA preparation and implementation. After compiling this information, the secretariat is requested to make the amended list available to the LDCs.

C. Cooperation between expert groups

16. At SBSTA 21, the SBSTA Chair invited the chairs of the three UNFCCC expert groups to report to him at SBSTA 22 on the progress made in enhancing their cooperation. In response, a paper was prepared describing possible areas for future collaboration, including on issues relating to capacity-building, technical advice, synergy and adaptation.

17. Based on the paper, the group developed a number of recommendations as a response to the SBSTA request, including the following:

- (a) Regarding cooperation with the CGE, to provide input (i.e. documents, oral report, LEG publications, vulnerability sections of first completed NAPAs) to the April 2005 CGE meeting in Maputo
- (b) To organize a back-to-back meeting with the CGE in line with the LEG's terms of reference and to establish a link on adaptation issues. This could include conducting joint meetings and/or workshops and the participation of individual LEG members in CGE workshops
- (c) To promote the integration of NAPAs (outcomes/results) into second national communications, for example through promoting the inclusion of members of the NAPA teams into the teams preparing the second national communications
- (d) Regarding cooperation with the EGTT, to enhance collaboration on adaptation technologies, for example through establishing a formal link between the EGTT and the LEG (similar to the CGE link) when reviewing the LEG mandate
- (e) To link the LEG web site with the CGE and the EGTT web sites on issues relating to adaptation, to enhance information sharing
- (f) To identify actions and activities suited for future collaboration when reviewing the work programmes of the expert groups. Activities could include cooperating on authoring technical papers on adaptation technologies and participating in the preparation of a handbook or manual for the assessment and development of project proposals for funding.

D. Strategy for implementation of national adaptation programmes of action

18. In response to the LEG terms of reference, the group had decided at its fifth meeting to prepare a scoping paper to lay out elements for a NAPA implementation strategy. The paper was presented and considered at the sixth meeting of the group. A revised version of the paper was discussed at the seventh meeting, covering securing financial resources, institutional arrangements, further prioritization, monitoring and impact measurement of proposed activities, and mainstreaming. The group agreed that a presentation would be made at the informal LDC Fund consultations prior to SBI 22 and that feedback from these consultations and from SBI 22 would be used to finalize the document as a technical paper (FCCC/TP/2005/5). The Chair of the LEG presented the LEG's approach towards the implementation of NAPAs as input to the informal pre-sessional LDC Fund consultations, which took place in Bonn, Germany, on 13 and 14 May 2005. These consultations were seen by many participants as a positive step in facilitating agreement on further guidance to the GEF on how to operationalize the LDC Fund.

19. The LEG has initiated a review of draft NAPA documents, at the request of LDC Parties. To date, the LEG has been requested to review the draft NAPAs of Samoa, Cambodia and Malawi with the aim of providing comments and suggestions for further improvement.

20. In an effort to enhance synergy between the NAPA process and efforts towards disaster risk reduction, the Chair of the LEG participated in a video conference of the Interagency Working Group on Disaster Risk Reduction during SBI 22. The working group agreed to develop a paper in cooperation with the LEG to explore how to encourage synergy during the NAPA implementation phase, at the community level, using a country case study.

E. Documentation of existing coping strategies

21. At its sixth meeting, the LEG agreed that work be initiated on developing a database on local coping strategies, noting the importance of disseminating information on experience in using indigenous knowledge to support the identification of adaptation options by LDCs which share similar climatic conditions. The secretariat updated the group on its work so far. The group requested the secretariat to continue its work and intensify its cooperation with other relevant entities such as IUCN – The World Conservation Union, which is developing a similar database but with a focus on nature conservation. Strategies included in this database will help countries identify different adaptation options in the implementation phase of NAPAs, and will also serve as an important input into the identification of opportunities for regional synergy during NAPA implementation.

V. New activities

A. Further recommendations on capacity-building needs for preparation and implementation of national adaptation programmes of action

22. Building upon previous efforts by the LEG to identify capacity-building needs for NAPA preparation, and on its current capacity-building activities to support the NAPA teams, the group identified additional areas of work which could be helpful in supporting the preparation and implementation of NAPAs and which will be initiated after the seventh meeting. These include:

- (a) Collaboration with regional entities
- (b) Developing standards and benchmarking for adaptation projects, which could support the LDCs during the implementation phase in identifying best practices
- (c) Adaptation workshop(s) in the context of NAPAs.

B. Implementing decision 4/CP.10

23. Pursuant to the mandate included in paragraph 1 of decision 4/CP.10, the group initiated its consideration of possible elements on the role of the LEG in supporting NAPA implementation. First recommendations include synthesizing project proposals and sharing best practices, identifying regional synergy, providing facilitation platforms between implementing agencies and NAPA teams, providing advice and guidance to bilateral donors on NAPA implementation, and considering a joint meeting with the EGTT and the CGE to explore issues relating to implementation. The group agreed to further discuss this item at its eighth meeting and to prepare a scoping note.

24. Decision 4/CP.10, paragraph 2, requested the LEG, in consultation with LDC Parties, to include in its report to SBI 23 information on the potential technical and financial difficulties that LDC Parties may have in the implementation of NAPAs. In response, the group, supported by the secretariat, developed and conducted a survey among LDC focal points at SBI 22, inquiring about expected technical and financial difficulties with regards to implementation.
