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Matters relating to the least developed countries

Progress report of the Least Developed Countries Expert Group for the biennium 2004–2005

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document reports on operational and substantive issues relating to the work of the Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG) during the biennium 2004–2005. The document also responds to the mandate given by the Conference of the Parties in decision 4/CP.10, and provides an overview of how the LEG has implemented its programme of work as mandated by decision 9/CP.7.

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I. Introduction

A. Mandate

1. The Conference of the Parties (COP), by its decision 29/CP.7, established the Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG) to advise on the preparation and implementation strategy for national adaptation programmes of action (NAPAs), and adopted the terms of reference of the LEG. According to these terms of reference, the LEG is to convene twice each year, and report on its work to the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) at its subsequent sessions. By its decision 7/CP.9, the COP decided to extend the mandate of the LEG under its original terms of reference and to review the progress, need for continuation and terms of reference of the group at its eleventh session.

2. 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 SBI at its twentieth session. By its decision 4/CP.10, the COP requested the LEG to prepare possible elements to be considered on the role of the group in support of the implementation of NAPAs as a new mandate and to report thereon to the SBI at its twenty-third session. The LEG was also requested, in consultation with least developed country Parties, to include in its report to the twenty-third session of the SBI information on the potential technical and financial difficulties that least developed country (LDC) Parties may have in the implementation of NAPAs.

B. Scope of the note

3. This document summarizes the work of the LEG during its current two-year term, and reports on intersessional work and the four meetings of the LEG in 2004 and 2005, with special emphasis on the results of the eighth meeting of the LEG, held at Tarawa, Kiribati, from 17 to 20 August 2005.

4. Detailed coverage of the first three meetings of the LEG during the current biennium is included in documents FCCC/SBI/2004/3, FCCC/SBI/2004/17 and FCCC/SBI/2005/12.

II. Operational issues

5. The Government of Mozambique hosted the fifth meeting of the LEG (the first meeting in the current biennium) in Maputo, from 22 to 24 March 2004. The Government of the Gambia hosted the sixth meeting in Banjul from 24 to 25 September 2004. The seventh meeting was held in Bonn, Germany, from 4 to 7 April 2005. And the eighth meeting was hosted by the Government of Kiribati in Tarawa from 17 to 20 August 2005. The governments of Canada, Ireland, New Zealand and Sweden provided financial support for the work of the LEG during the biennium 2004–2005.

6. 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 LDC members. At its fifth meeting the group elected Mr. Laavasa Malua (Samoa) as its Chair, Mr. Fred Onduri (Uganda) as Vice-Chair, Ms. Madeleine Diouf (Senegal) as francophone rapporteur, and Mr. Puroshottam Kunwar (Nepal) as anglophone rapporteur. At its seventh meeting, the group elected Mr. Paul Desanker (Malawi) as Chair, Ms Madeleine Diouf (Senegal) as Vice-Chair and francophone rapporteur and Mr. Puroshottam Kunwar (Nepal) as anglophone rapporteur. Due to the language barriers that African Portuguese-speaking LDCs are facing in preparing their NAPAs, the LEG agreed to establish a new post of lusophone rapporteur, to which Mr. Almeida Siteo (Mozambique) was elected.

7. In accordance with paragraph 11 of the terms of reference, the secretariat supported the implementation of LEG activities and facilitated the preparation of the group's reports for consideration by the SBI.

III. Contributions of the Least Developed Countries Expert Group to the national adaptation programme of action process

8. The main objective of the LEG is to advise on the preparation and implementation strategy for NAPAs. In its second term, the LEG continued to provide guidance and advice on the preparation of NAPAs, focusing in particular on the elements which were identified during the previous term to require more work, and initiated the consideration of guidance on the implementation strategy of NAPAs in line with the mandate given by the terms of reference of the LEG.

9. During its second term, the LEG has delivered various products and conducted various activities to this end, including technical papers on a number of issues, surveys on the NAPA process and reviews of draft NAPAs at the request of LDC Parties. The LEG also provided input to a number of workshops and meetings, including the informal consultations on the LDC Fund, which took place in Bonn, Germany, on 13 and 14 May 2005, prior to the twenty-second sessions of the subsidiary bodies. These consultations were seen as a positive step in facilitating the subsequent agreement on further guidance to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) on how to operationalize the LDC Fund.

A. Advice on capacity-building needs

10. The terms of reference of the LEG mandate the LEG to advise on capacity-building needs for the preparation and implementation of NAPAs and to provide recommendations thereon. During its previous term (2002–2003), the LEG supported capacity-building for the preparation of NAPAs through a global workshop and subsequent regional training workshops. During its current term, the group, in cooperation with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), prepared a document titled “Selection of examples and exercises drawn from regional NAPA workshops”, which includes a synthesis of the training material that was provided during the four LEG regional NAPA workshops held during 2003. This publication has been widely disseminated in French and English to the NAPA teams in LDCs.

11. The LEG also acted upon the needs expressed by LDC Parties during the 2003 regional workshops, in particular those needs relating to the two NAPA steps of ranking/prioritization and synthesis of available information on the adverse effects of climate change. The group recognized that countries would benefit from having access to a list of experts on ranking and prioritization as well as other steps in the NAPA process in each region. It subsequently identified such experts and disseminated this information to the LDCs through the UNFCCC LDC web page <<http://unfccc.int/ldc>>.

12. In order to assist LDCs in completing the second step of the NAPA process (synthesis of available information), the LEG prepared a technical paper on synthesis of available information on the adverse effects of climate change (FCCC/TP/2005/2). Another LEG publication, the “NAPA primer” <<http://unfccc.int/ldc>>, provides background information on the concept of NAPAs, in particular within the broader framework of adaptation, as well as examples of simulated NAPAs in order to illustrate the application of the different NAPA steps leading to the identification of project profiles for the urgent and immediate adaptation needs of an LDC.

13. During its current term, the group considered the barriers that African Portuguese-speaking LDCs face in preparing their NAPAs and developed an action plan to support Portuguese-speaking countries that are lagging behind in the preparation of their NAPAs. The action plan includes the translation of technical documents, a training workshop in one of the lusophone LDC Parties, and the development of a list of Portuguese-speaking experts on adaptation to climate change who have knowledge relevant to the NAPA process, and who can be made available to assist lusophone LDC Parties. The UNFCCC secretariat also arranged for the translation of the LEG annotated guidelines for the preparation of NAPAs into Portuguese.

14. The LEG is cooperating with UNITAR on the development of an internet-based platform to support LDC Parties in the preparation of their NAPAs. This initiative responds to the LEG mandate to provide technical assistance to LDC Parties, upon request, for their NAPA preparation, and is conducted in cooperation with the GEF implementing agencies and bilateral donors. The platform, available both in French and English,¹ allows for experience sharing among country teams and provides the opportunity for online dialogue between all actors involved in the NAPA process. It also includes a web page where key NAPA information is available to the public.

B. Promotion of synergy

15. The terms of reference of the LEG include a provision on facilitating the exchange of information and on promoting regional synergy, and synergy with other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), in the preparation and implementation strategy of NAPAs.

16. Building upon an earlier paper on synergy with other MEAs, which was included as an appendix to the LEG annotations to the NAPA guidelines, the LEG developed a technical paper (FCCC/TP/2005/3) synthesizing information on synergy among MEAs as included in NAPA proposals, national action programmes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, national biodiversity strategies and action plans under the Convention on Biological Diversity, and poverty reduction strategy papers, as well as in efforts by the GEF and its implementing agencies to promote synergy. The paper also examines barriers to synergy among MEAs within the NAPA process, and possible action by the LEG to promote synergy in accordance with the COP mandate within the LEG terms of reference.

17. The LEG also prepared a technical paper on regional synergy in the context of the NAPA process (FCCC/TP/2005/4). The group agreed to explore synergy with existing regional networks and to revisit the promotion of regional synergy during the NAPA implementation phase once a sufficient number of NAPAs have been finalized.

C. Database on local coping strategies

18. Acknowledging the value of traditional knowledge, the LEG developed a database of local coping strategies.² The database can help countries identify different time-tested adaptation options applied in other countries, and can also serve as an important input into the identification of opportunities for regional synergy during NAPA implementation.

D. Implementation strategy

19. The terms of reference of the LEG include several provisions relating to supporting the implementation strategy of NAPAs (paragraph 9 (a) to (d)). In this context the group developed a technical paper (FCCC/TP/2005/5) covering aspects relating to further prioritization of adaptation activities, securing financial resources, institutional arrangements, monitoring and evaluation and regional synergy.

20. The LEG also initiated efforts towards setting the benchmarks for the NAPA process and adaptation action, with the objective of identifying good practices in the NAPA process, as well as in the selection and implementation of adaptation projects which could be of use to LDCs in the NAPA implementation phase.

¹ Available at <www.cern.ch/napa>.

² The database is accessible from the secretariat web site <www.unfccc.int/ldc>.

E. Review of draft national adaptation programmes of action

21. The LEG initiated a review process of draft NAPA documents, upon request by LDC Parties. To date the LEG has reviewed the draft NAPAs of Bhutan, Cambodia, Malawi and Samoa, with the aim of providing comments and suggestions for further improvement, especially on the prioritization and ranking aspects of the NAPA process.

F. Outreach

22. The LEG organized a side event at the tenth session of the COP in which a number of presentations were given by LDC Parties at different stages of NAPA preparation, to update participants on the status of preparation of NAPAs and on LEG support thereon. A LEG side event is also planned for the eleventh session of the COP, covering the work of the LEG since its inception, including on different aspects of NAPA preparation and implementation.

23. The LEG was represented at a number of workshops and meetings throughout the biennium, in which awareness was enhanced on the work of the LEG and on the support and elaboration it has been providing to Parties on the use of the NAPA methodology.

24. In conjunction with its regular meetings, the LEG has conducted interactive sessions with national NAPA teams of host countries. During the current biennium this has taken place with the teams of Gambia, Kiribati and Mozambique. Prior to its eighth meeting, the LEG also provided technical guidance and advice to NAPA teams from Pacific LDCs that were represented at the subregional workshop on NAPA preparation in Tarawa, Kiribati.

IV. Cooperation with other groups under the Convention process

25. As a follow-up to the provisions of paragraph 2 (a) of decision 10/CP.8, meetings among the chairs of the three expert groups have been held regularly during the sessions of the subsidiary bodies, under the guidance of the chairs of the subsidiary bodies.

26. In response to a request by the Chair of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) at that body's twenty-first session, the LEG reported at the subsequent session on possible areas for future collaboration with other expert groups, including on issues relating to capacity-building, technical advice, synergy and adaptation (see FCCC/SB/2005/12 para. 17).

27. At the meeting between the chairs of the subsidiary bodies and the chairs of the three expert groups held on the margins of the twenty-second sessions of the subsidiary bodies, the three expert group chairs agreed to explore the possibility of organizing a joint meeting in 2006 on adaptation to climate change, which seems to be the main common ground for collaboration among the groups, including vulnerability assessments under the Consultative Group of Experts on National Communications from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention (CGE), adaptation technologies under the Expert Group on Technology Transfer (EGTT) and the NAPA process under the LEG. At its eighth meeting, the LEG identified the following topics as possible areas for discussion should such a joint workshop take place:

- (a) Local coping strategies
- (b) Integrating work on NAPAs into second national communications
- (c) Benchmarking of adaptation
- (d) Adaptation technologies

- (e) Methodological work
- (f) Capacity-building needs during NAPA implementation
- (g) Funding constraints faced by LDCs.

28. In the context of cooperation among expert groups, the LEG was represented at the following two workshops organized by the other expert groups under the UNFCCC: the hands-on training workshop on vulnerability and adaptation for the Africa region, held in Maputo, Mozambique, from 18 to 22 April 2005 by the CGE, where participating LEG members provided input into possible links between the NAPA process and that of preparation of national communications; and the seminar on the development and transfer of environmentally sound technologies for adaptation to climate change, held in Trinidad, Trinidad and Tobago, from 14 to 16 June 2005 by the EGTT, during which the LEG presented the work of the group on endogenous coping strategies and technologies, and provided examples of adaptation-technology needs identified in draft NAPAs.

V. Feedback from the least developed countries on the national adaptation programme of action process and on support from the Least Developed Countries Expert Group

29. At the beginning of its second term, the LEG agreed to seek feedback from the LDCs on their NAPA preparation process, particularly in order to identify any difficulties encountered in the use of the NAPA guidelines and to direct LEG efforts towards meeting their needs thereon. Under an initiative by the coordinator of the group of least developed countries, a first questionnaire on the NAPA preparation process was circulated at the twentieth sessions of the subsidiary bodies among representatives of the LDCs. Responses revealed that the problems encountered by countries in preparing their NAPAs were mostly logistical, in particular relating to the timely provision of funding. Respondents identified the following main areas where capacities could be enhanced to improve the NAPA preparation process: technical training, funding, vulnerability assessment, information exchange, information technology equipment, criteria development for ranking and prioritization of projects, and project formulation.

30. A follow-up questionnaire was administered to LDC delegates on the margins of the twenty-first sessions of the subsidiary bodies and the tenth session of the COP. Responses revealed the positive progress made so far by all actors involved in the NAPA process, which can be seen in the fact that most LDC Parties are engaging in more advanced steps of the NAPA process. One country had already submitted its NAPA.

31. Responding to a mandate from decision 4/CP.10, the LEG conducted a survey during the twenty-second sessions of the subsidiary bodies mainly focused on issues relating to the upcoming implementation phase of NAPAs. The results of this survey are addressed in the following chapter.

VI. Potential technical and financial difficulties faced by least developed country Parties in implementing their national adaptation programmes of action

32. Decision 4/CP.10, paragraph 2, requested the LEG, in consultation with LDC Parties, to include in its report to the SBI at its twenty-third session 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 the twenty-second sessions of the subsidiary bodies, inquiring about their expected technical and financial difficulties with regards to implementation.

A. Technical difficulties

33. LDC Parties and the LEG identified the following areas as posing potential technical difficulties for NAPA implementation:

- (a) Data availability:
 - (i) Lack of adequate, reliable and consistent environmental and socioeconomic data
 - (ii) Scattered, limited, discontinued and insufficient data
 - (iii) Institutional constraints in accessing and sharing data
- (b) Institutional and human capacity
 - (i) Institutional capacity, including limitations in:
 - Accessibility of project sites due to climatic, geographic and infrastructural conditions (inappropriate vehicles, bad roads, etc.);
 - Socio-economic data and technical tools (e.g. access to and execution of biophysical and socio-economic models);
 - Capacity of institutions holding and managing databases;
 - Scientific, technical and institutional capacity to implement projects.
 - (ii) Human capacity, including the need for:
 - Support to the entity entrusted with the coordination and monitoring of the implementation of NAPAs;
 - Technical capacity-building to transform NAPA project profiles into detailed projects, including development of implementation strategies and plans;
 - Support for the engagement of international and local experts for the implementation of NAPAs;
 - Adequate understanding of climate change issues and sufficient expertise at the national level for the implementation of adaptation measures, including NAPA activities.

B. Financial difficulties

34. LDC Parties and the LEG identified the following areas as posing potential financial difficulties for NAPA implementation:

- (a) Ensuring equity, such that neither the first nor the last LDC Parties to finish their NAPAs is penalized. In addition, special consideration should be given to LDC Parties that have recently evolved from conflict situations
- (b) Uncertainties regarding:
 - (i) The level and availability of funds to cover all NAPA projects;
 - (ii) The range of funding sources;

- (iii) The possibility of access to other funds for NAPA projects (eg. the Special Climate Change Fund and the Strategic Priority on Adaptation);
 - (iv) Whether the timing of the disbursement of funds would cause distortions in the national planning cycle, undermining credibility of future environmental projects.
- (c) Funding modalities, including opportunities for securing co-financing and determining the adaptation component of each NAPA project
 - (d) Measuring urgency, e.g. potential increase in costs, including in terms of human impact and loss of life, and in terms of irreversible changes and damage if a reduction in key vulnerabilities is not addressed immediately
 - (e) Capacity to identify potential funding sources
 - (f) Mismatch between national planning cycles and donor fiscal cycles in the implementation of NAPAs, which slows implementation
 - (g) Inability to accurately budget for NAPA activities due to potential price fluctuations
 - (h) Budgeting for multisectoral NAPA activities
 - (i) Funding of national climate change focal points to ensure effective coordination and monitoring for the implementation of NAPA projects.

C. Other constraints

35. LDC Parties identified a number of additional factors that are relevant to the effective coordination of NAPA implementation across sectors and institutions, including:

- (a) Institutional and legal frameworks
- (b) Political situation in the country
- (c) Institutional arrangements for those adaptation activities involving many stakeholders
- (d) Level of synergy between the projects and state structures
- (e) Commitment of implementing agencies
- (f) Commitment of stakeholders
- (g) Organizational capacity to provide benefits to targeted population
- (h) Implementing capacity at the community level
- (i) Cultural factors.

VII. Possible elements of a new mandate for the Least Developed Countries Expert Group

36. Pursuant to the mandate included in decision 4/CP.10, paragraph 1, the group considered possible elements on the role of the LEG in supporting NAPA implementation. Based on inputs from LDC Parties, the experience gained throughout its current two-year mandate, and the fact that the

majority of LDC Parties are still preparing their NAPAs, the LEG identified the following possible elements for its future mandate for consideration by the SBI:

- (a) To provide technical guidance and advice on the implementation of NAPAs, including the identification of possible sources of data, and the formulation of detailed NAPA project proposals
- (b) To serve in an advisory capacity to the LDCs, for the preparation and implementation of NAPAs through, inter alia, workshops, individual assistance to LDC Parties and review of draft NAPAs, upon request by LDC Parties
- (c) To advise on capacity-building needs for the preparation and implementation of NAPAs and to provide recommendations, as appropriate, taking into account relevant capacity-building initiatives
- (d) To facilitate the exchange of information among LDC Parties, e.g. on good practices that are relevant to NAPA implementation
- (e) To promote regional synergy, and synergy with other multilateral environmental conventions in the preparation and implementation of NAPAs
- (f) To advise on the mainstreaming of NAPAs into regular development planning in the context of national strategies for sustainable development
- (g) To serve in an advisory capacity to LDC Parties on different funding options, including funds under the GEF and other multilateral and bilateral sources
- (h) To advise on, and facilitate, the effective participation of LDC Parties in different aspects of the Convention and its instruments.
