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Progress on the implementation of decision 1/CP.10

Report on the Latin American regional workshop on adaptation

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document provides a summary of the first regional workshop on adaptation as mandated by decision 1/CP.10, which was held for the Latin America region in Lima, Peru, from 18 to 20 April 2006. Discussions focused on vulnerability and adaptation assessments, adaptation planning and implementation, and regional and international cooperation. This document also includes possible follow-up action relating to specific regional adaptation needs and concerns to address the main outcomes identified at the workshop, for consideration by the Subsidiary Body for Implementation.

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I. Introduction

A. Mandate

1. The Conference of the Parties (COP), by its decision 1/CP.10, requested the secretariat to organize three regional workshops, reflecting regional priorities, and one expert meeting for small island developing States, in order to facilitate information exchange and integrated assessments to assist in identifying specific adaptation needs and concerns. It further requested the secretariat to prepare reports on the outcome of these workshops in order for the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) to consider what further actions may be required by the Conference of the Parties at its thirteenth session.

B. Scope of the note

2. This note provides information on the first regional workshop organized by the secretariat under the guidance of the Chair of the SBI in response to the above mandate. It includes an overview of the proceedings and presents possible follow-up action relating to specific regional adaptation needs and concerns to address the main outcomes identified at the workshop, which are summarized in this note.

C. Possible action by the Subsidiary Body for Implementation

3. The SBI may wish to consider this report together with the reports of subsequent regional workshops and the expert meeting on adaptation at its twenty-sixth session (May 2007) with a view to making recommendations to the COP at its thirteenth session (November 2007).

II. Workshop proceedings

4. The UNFCCC secretariat, in collaboration with the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/ROLAC) and the National Environment Council of Peru (CONAM – Consejo Nacional del Ambiente), organized the Latin American regional workshop on adaptation in Lima, Peru, from 18 to 20 April 2006.¹ Financial support was generously provided by Norway, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland. The workshop was chaired by Mr. Kishan Kumarsingh, Chair of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice, on behalf of Mr. Thomas Becker, Chair of the SBI.

5. The workshop included representatives from the countries of the region and from other interested Parties that provide support to adaptation-related activities in Latin America, as well as representatives of relevant international, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations that are active in the region. The workshop aimed to provide an exchange of experience on vulnerability and adaptation in the Latin America region, as well as to identify gaps, needs and concerns of countries in this regard.

6. The workshop was structured around the following five sessions with a view to facilitating information exchange and integrated assessments to assist in identifying regional adaptation needs and concerns:

- (a) Session 1, Introduction and background: This session set the stage for the objectives of the workshop and included a presentation and discussion of a background paper produced by the secretariat for this event, entitled “Impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change in Latin America”;

¹ The agenda, background paper and expert presentations can be found on the UNFCCC website at: http://unfccc.int/adaptation/adverse_effects_and_response_measures_art_48/items/3719.php.

- (b) Session 2, Vulnerability and adaptation assessments: This session covered technical and institutional aspects of the assessment process. It also included a panel discussion on climate methods and tools, their availability, applicability, accessibility and training opportunities;
- (c) Session 3, Adaptation planning and implementation: This session addressed practical aspects of adaptation in the region, and covered the experience of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and its implementing agencies in supporting adaptation-related action in the region;
- (d) Session 4, Regional collaboration: This session included two round-table discussions, one on South-South collaboration and the other on North-South collaboration. It highlighted the different initiatives under implementation for both types of collaboration;
- (e) Session 5, Outcomes and ways forward: This session was devoted to discussions to facilitate the identification of possible follow-up action addressing specific regional adaptation needs and concerns. The discussions were held by two break-out groups which reported their outcomes to the workshop's final plenary session.

III. Workshop summary

A. Introduction

7. A background paper and associated presentation at the workshop confirmed that issues relating to vulnerability and adaptation in the Latin America region are of great importance and urgency, in particular in the areas of food security, water resources and poverty alleviation. The Latin America region includes much of the world's biological diversity, as well as a wide variety of ecosystems, climatic regions, topographies and land-use patterns. Particularly vulnerable are the water, agriculture and health sectors, the Andean glaciers, the Amazon region and regions vulnerable to extreme climatic events.

8. The region has already been experiencing climate-related changes, particularly those associated with the phenomenon of the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO), which results in drought conditions as well as flood conditions depending on location and timing; and with the frequency and intensity of extreme events.

9. Furthermore, climate change in the region is anticipated to have far-reaching effects on Latin America's efforts towards sustainable development and its attainment of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

B. Vulnerability and adaptation assessments

10. Country presentations and ensuing discussions on vulnerability assessments in Latin America reflected a relatively well-advanced process of assessment and use of scenarios/models. However, participants noted a lack of socio-economic assessment, which is an important complement to existing assessments, particularly given that poverty has been recognized as a major factor in vulnerability. Where possible, a quantification of potential losses arising from the adverse effects of climate change was deemed to be useful, including for policy-level decision makers. The use of the MDGs as a backdrop to assessing socio-economic vulnerability was also perceived to be useful in this regard. Argentina, for example, informed participants on its efforts to include an economic assessment of climate change impacts in its second national communication. While impacts could be easily quantified for agricultural products which are traded on international markets, impacts on ecosystems were harder to assess monetarily.

11. A number of countries reported the use of the Adaptation Policy Framework (APF) developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in conducting their adaptation assessments. Participants stressed that the APF provides a robust technical process, though it is relatively work- and data-intensive. Several countries emphasized that the framework was tailored to their specific circumstances. However, the results of these assessments are still at a preliminary stage.

12. The coarse resolution of existing models, and the disparity of their outputs, makes the use of the results as a basis for action very difficult. Some countries, such as Peru, include very different ecosystems (coastal zone, Andean mountainous region and Amazon forest) within a span of just 200 kilometres. Hence the development of higher resolution models is needed. Efforts are under way to produce such higher resolutions in the near future. In addition, the use of multiple models and an analysis of the disparity of their outcomes would help enhance the capacity for reaching informed decisions on vulnerability and adaptation to climate change.

13. To this end, capacity-building and training for model development and use are needed in order to help users understand model logic, inherent assumptions and sources of uncertainty. The Providing REgional Climates for Impacts Studies (PRECIS) initiative was highlighted by participants as useful in this regard. Another initiative started by Brazil involves training on the regional model ETA developed by the Centro de Previsao de Tempo e Estudos Climaticos.

14. A number of countries have developed vulnerability indices for their different regions, based both on exposure and on adaptive capacity. Although the spatial resolution is too coarse for the indices to provide detailed information on vulnerability at a community level, these efforts still provide a useful addition to the information base on vulnerability and adaptation assessment.

15. Observation networks are in need of enhancement, especially in the Andean mountain range, which constitutes a major determinant of the climate systems of the continent. Some participants highlighted that the major constraint is not necessarily that of establishing an observation network but rather of maintaining it and organizing and sharing the resulting data once external funding is terminated.

C. Adaptation planning and implementation

16. Despite all positive efforts in the assessment of vulnerability and adaptation in the region, the movement from adaptation assessment and planning to implementation is not well developed. A number of countries have well-developed adaptation plans or are in the process of finalizing them. There remain resource needs in order for these plans to be fully implemented. For example, the Andean Community of Nations (CAN) developed an adaptation plan in 2004. However, no concrete actions have been taken so far towards its implementation. Yet, despite the uncertainties inherent in the assessment process, participants agreed that there is sufficient information for adaptation action based on current climate variability and extremes.

17. Participants highlighted the importance of traditional adaptation knowledge and noted that more integration of such knowledge should take place in the assessment process, particularly through partnerships with grassroots organizations. There are some initiatives in existence to support this area (e.g. one World Bank project supported by the Netherlands in Peru, and the UNFCCC secretariat's database on local coping strategies available on the UNFCCC website). A number of countries are conducting vulnerability and adaptation assessment through community-level consultations, for example Bolivia, which in addition is using traditional climate observation systems.

18. In a session focusing on support from the GEF and its implementing agencies, information was presented on various adaptation-related projects under the GEF Trust Fund through the Strategic Priority for Adaptation and under the Special Climate Change Fund. Adaptation support is also provided outside

the GEF context, for example the World Bank's Climate Change Implementation Grants in cooperation with the Government of Japan.

19. Participants also acknowledged that mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions is the most effective long-term adaptation measure to climate change.

D. Regional and international cooperation

20. In the context of discussions on South-South cooperation, the importance of catalysing cooperation between agencies in Latin America was underlined, in particular of sharing experience on lessons learned between communities facing similar problems. Existing initiatives include regional initiatives such as the Latin American Forum of Environment Ministers, and subregional initiatives, for example in the context of Mercosur. The Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research was highlighted by participants as a useful channel to strengthen South-South cooperation by enhancing regional capacity-building, for example through creating a pool of southern experts.

21. There are also existing bilateral cooperation initiatives between a number of Latin American countries. Regional adaptation projects (e.g. the GEF-funded project on capacity-building for Stage II adaptation for Central America, Mexico and Cuba) are also manifestations of South-South cooperation. There is a wide disparity of circumstances among countries in Latin America, which presents a challenge for a wider scale of South-South cooperation.

22. The need for a systematic exchange of experience based on particular themes was highlighted. So was the need to engage the ministries of planning and finance in the adaptation effort. Participants stressed that climate change considerations need to be integrated in all aspects of policymaking and throughout priority sectors such as agriculture, health and water resources. Regarding the integration of adaptation and disaster risk reduction, the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, in collaboration with the Vulnerability and Adaptation Resource Group, is undertaking pilot projects in a number of countries, including Mexico, where a stronger institutional integration of disaster and climate change issues is planned.

23. The workshop discussed efforts to promote collaboration among different research institutions, for example through sharing of supercomputers to run climate models at high resolution. There was agreement that this was a gap that needed to be filled in order to enable the formal exchange of experience and lessons learned among different institutions of the region.

24. As for North-South cooperation, relevant initiatives were presented, including the Iberoamerican Network for Climate Change Offices (RIOCC), of which adaptation is an important area of work. At its meeting on 3–7 October 2005, a conclusion of creating an Iberoamerican programmes for adaptation to climate change was adopted. As a first step, identifying priorities, capacities and areas of focus would be undertaken. A template was created to evaluate and prioritize vulnerable sectors and possible adaptation measures. The water resources sector was found to be the highest priority, followed by agriculture, then health.

25. It was noted that the declaration of development and environment ministers of member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development on integrating climate change adaptation into development cooperation, adopted on 4 April 2006, encourages regional initiatives that include common actions on impacts and vulnerability assessment and adaptation options, in order to promote transboundary initiatives, encourage South-South cooperation and avoid duplicated efforts.

26. Another North-South initiative is the Netherlands Climate Assistance Programme, which includes three Latin American countries (Bolivia, Colombia and Guatemala) among others. The

programme seeks to assist the countries in formulating, implementing and evaluating their policies with regard to climate change and in developing a national adaptation plan.

27. Participants emphasized education and public awareness as important catalysts for the success of the vulnerability and adaptation assessment process. These should include policy-level decision makers and other stakeholders affected by climate change. Communication of successes and failures is also in need of enhancement. Participants emphasized short policy cycles as a major constraint in educating and updating decision makers.

IV. Possible follow-up action

A. Vulnerability and adaptation assessments

28. The break-out groups highlighted a number of possible areas for follow-up action with regard to vulnerability and adaptation assessments:

- (a) Data and information:
 - (i) Generating data for socio-economic assessments, and developing indicators and relevant tools for enhancing the use of socio-economic assessment in a way that would be relevant to policy makers and other stakeholders, including ministries of finance and economy;
 - (ii) Preserving indigenous knowledge that is relevant to community-level responses to climatic stimuli;
- (b) Methodologies: Promoting integrated assessments, bottom-up assessments, and the use of the ecosystem approach in the assessment process;
- (c) Capacity-building:
 - (i) Organizing training workshops at the national and regional levels to examine common sectoral case studies. At the same time, climate change and adaptation issues should be included in curricula;
 - (ii) Analysing institutional vulnerabilities in Latin American countries in order to build national capacities in specialized areas, such as modelling;
- (d) Cooperation and mainstreaming:
 - (i) Promoting opportunities for further South-South cooperation in the vulnerability and adaptation assessment process;
 - (ii) Establishing regional centres of excellence for adaptation, and strengthening existing regional research centres and hydrometeorological networks;
 - (iii) Addressing vulnerable sectors, such as the water sector, including by establishing links with the risk management and water management communities and translating adaptation plans into concrete local projects with local stakeholder participation;
 - (iv) Establishing a variety of means for exchanging information on methods and tools used for vulnerability and adaptation assessments, together with the outcomes of these assessments. This could be done through establishing a Latin America-wide scientific journal on climate change research, a website to facilitate

exchange of regional information, and/or by making better use of existing channels of communication.

B. Adaptation planning and implementation

29. Areas where follow-up action relating to adaptation planning and implementation were identified as follows:

- (a) Data and information:
 - (i) Disseminating the workshop's outcomes within and beyond the UNFCCC process;
 - (ii) Elaborating a communication strategy on adaptation needs, focusing on actors ranging from grassroots organizations to decision makers; and establishing communication strategies with other actors and sectors, using appropriate language. This communication strategy could include the preparation of a global awareness campaign on climate change, including video messages in different languages;
- (b) Methodologies:
 - (i) Revising the APF's technical documents and enriching them with case studies from countries active in the area of adaptation;
 - (ii) Enhancing efforts to quantify the costs of climate change impacts;
- (c) Capacity-building:
 - (i) Identifying financial options for enhancing meteorological observation networks, as a means to enhance availability and accessibility of relevant data;
 - (ii) Analysing financial needs to strengthen information systems;
 - (iii) Strengthening the national communications process to serve as an important source of information on vulnerability and adaptation;
- (d) Cooperation and mainstreaming:
 - (i) Identifying implementation strategies for action plans arising from adaptation assessments, and integrating these into local, national and regional development policies and plans, taking account of the link between adaptation and the attainment of the MDGs, both of which share many developmental objectives and concerns;
 - (ii) Promoting the exchange of information between experts from key sensitive sectors (e.g. agriculture, water resources and health), while avoiding duplication of efforts and enhancing coherence among actors; as well as coordinating activities with other partners associated with national development programmes and projects to integrate adaptation concerns into these programmes and integrating climate change considerations into national development policies;
 - (iii) Strengthening South-South cooperation in adaptation planning and implementation through identifying and applying means to operationalize this process, such as through interregional exchange of experts and identifying and

promoting joint regional themes, such as glacial lake outburst floods in the Andean community;

- (iv) Enhancing coordination between regional specialized centres;
- (v) Taking advantage of existing regional coordination arrangements (e.g. the Forum of Ministers) to include climate change as a regional priority;
- (vi) Optimizing resources associated with North-South cooperation, promoting synergy with sources of funding external to the process, and integrating climate change considerations in the work of regional and international financial entities;
- (vii) Coordinating activities relating to risk and adaptation management (including through the RIOCC meeting of June 2006) and establishing links with the disaster risk management community.

V. Main outcomes

30. A number of outcomes emerged from the discussions at the workshop, including from the break-out groups, particularly in relation to the needs and gaps on vulnerability and adaptation assessments, and on adaptation planning and implementation.

A. Vulnerability and adaptation assessments

31. Participants emphasized that a high degree of uncertainty still exists in assessing vulnerability and adaptation options. There is a need for better tools for managing and communicating uncertainties. However, it was noted that such uncertainties should not impede progress in conducting assessments nor in identifying adaptation options. Other specific outcomes included the following:

- (a) **Data and information:** The information required to run climate models is either unavailable or sparse, and it is difficult to use it for scenario development. It has been observed that there is also a lack of consistency between models and scenarios, and that more downscaling is needed to reflect the situation of the region;
- (b) **Methodologies:**
 - (i) There are many methodologies for vulnerability and adaptation assessment and currently the APF of UNDP, which has been tailored to national circumstances by a number of countries, is widely used in the region for adaptation assessment;
 - (ii) Socio-economic scenarios are needed to help conduct integrated assessments of vulnerability and adaptation;
 - (iii) Expertise is needed to run and interpret complex models. For models to be effectively applied and used for assessments at the national or regional level, training and capacity-building are needed.

B. Adaptation planning and implementation

32. In general, participants agreed that the region faces difficulties in bridging adaptation assessment and planning with the implementation of concrete adaptation action. This was identified as being due to a lack of resources and institutional capacities and a lack of integration of climate change concerns in national policies.

33. Participants also underlined the MDGs as an important backdrop to development policy and implementation, as well as the importance of integrating adaptation policies in efforts to enhance food security, water availability and poverty alleviation in the context of these goals.
34. Other specific outcomes included the following:
- (a) Data and information: In most countries there is sufficient information and knowledge to assess climate variability and implement adaptation activities;
 - (b) Capacity-building:
 - (i) Institutional capacity is vital for promoting action by national and local governments. Institutions, environmental and sectoral, need to be strengthened in order to be able to address the complexities of addressing and coordinating the implementation of adaptation action;
 - (ii) Strengthening institutional capacity for adaptation planning should include the incorporation of climate change into national development plans and the creation of intersectoral committees to be engaged in the formulation of these plans;
 - (iii) Procedures for accessing existing financial resources for adaptation remain complex and lengthy, thus there is a need for information to facilitate greater accessibility of funding;
 - (iv) Most of the material available to experts on adaptation planning and implementation continues to be mainly in English. There is a need to enhance the availability of technical documentation in Spanish for experts in the region to fully participate in the adaptation process;
 - (c) Cooperation: Given that many countries may experience similar effects from climate change, sharing experience can broaden knowledge on how to address the adaptation challenges. In this regard, South-South and North-South cooperation on adaptation is an effective instrument for promoting the implementation of adaptation measures.
