Submission for SBSTA 41:
Good Practices in and Lessons Learned from National Adaptation Planning

Decision FCCC/SBSTA/2013/5, paragraph 13(b) and FCCC/SBSTA/2014/L.13, paragraph 7 invite Parties and Nairobi Work Programme partner organizations to provide information on good practices in and lessons learned from national adaptation planning. BirdLife International welcomes this opportunity.

BirdLife International is a nature conservation Partnership comprising 122 BirdLife Partners worldwide, 13 million members and supporters, over 7,000 local conservation groups and 7,400 staff. This submission is based on the combined experiences of BirdLife Partners and draws particularly on adaptation projects in East and Central Africa, most notably the Darwin Initiative Project "Ecosystem Conservation for Climate Change in East Africa" and "Enhancing Climate Change Resilience in Great Lakes Region Watersheds: the Lake Kivu Catchment and Rusizi River CRAG" (Climate Resilient Altitudinal Gradient), funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur.

1. **A holistic, cross-sectoral approach to adaptation planning is needed to effectively address the roles and needs of ecosystems in adaptation planning.**
   - Ecosystems provide goods and services important for local livelihoods, such as food and fuel, erosion control and protection against extreme weather events, but they are threatened by climate change. Building ecosystem resilience, and maintaining or enhancing the provision of these services through conservation, sustainable use and restoration, can therefore be an important adaptation response.
   - To realise the full potential of ecosystem based adaptation, the role and needs of ecosystems need to be mainstreamed within and across the different sectors addressed in national adaptation plans, in addition to any discrete ecosystem "sector" adaptation strategy.
   - Mainstreaming ecosystems in adaptation planning is also crucial to minimise the risk that adaptation interventions undermine ecosystem resilience and the provision of ecosystem services. BirdLife's Nigerian Partner, the Nigerian Conservation Foundation, for example, are working with local communities to counter the impacts of mal-adaptation resulting from the construction of dams to provide a more consistent supply of water for agriculture in response to droughts. The dams have disrupted natural flooding regimes resulting in flooding of farms upstream and blocking the flow of water to floodplains and pools upon which downstream communities depend for their livelihoods.
   - A number of messages on mainstreaming ecosystems emerged in consultations and workshops under the Darwin Initiative Project "Ecosystem Conservation for Climate Change Adaptation in East Africa". These include:
     - There is further need to develop awareness among climate change policy makers and sectoral ministries of the role and needs of ecosystems, and to build capacity to address these. The BirdLife Partnership is working to address this through national multi-

stakeholder workshops (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda) and multi-stakeholder working groups.

- Effective government structures and processes are needed for adaptation planning nationally and locally to ensure that all relevant stakeholders (including ecosystem experts) participate in the development and review of adaptation plans, and to address ecosystem information needs.
- Strategic Environmental Assessments, Environmental Impacts and other safeguards can be effective environmental risk management tools.
- While efforts are being taken to strengthen environmental policies and laws, a lack of capacity to implement, monitor and enforce these is undermining socio-ecological resilience and achievement of national adaptation objectives.

2. National Adaptation Planning needs to be coordinated and consistent with other policies, programmes and projects

- Given the links between biodiversity and climate change, it is important to promote policy coherence to harness synergies and avoid potential trade-offs between the achievement of different policy objectives.
- National Adaptation Plans and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) – the principle instruments for implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity at national level – can mutually support each other. While climate change is integrated throughout the CBD Strategic Plan 2020 and Aichi Targets, further work is needed to capture these links nationally.
- BirdLife Partners are supporting the review of NBSAPs nationally and their implementation to ensure adequate integration of climate change issues, while also engaging in the development of national adaptation policies and plans. Multi-stakeholder working groups that include policy makers and experts from both climate and biodiversity disciplines have proved an effective approach for enhancing awareness of biodiversity-climate links, facilitating discussion between focal points of Multi-lateral Environmental Agreements, and promoting a more holistic approach to policy development.
- The links between biodiversity and climate change need to be recognised both in the development and implementation of the policies and plans. Under the Darwin Initiative project “Ecosystem Conservation for Climate Change Adaptation in East Africa”, for example, a number of the adaptation measures proposed in community and municipality adaptation plans in Ruyigi, Burundi, correspond to priority actions identified in the regional action plan for the implementation of the NBSAP, highlighting opportunities to address multiple policy objectives in a cost-effective manner.
- Overlaps between biodiversity and climate change policies, programmes and projects also need to be considered in monitoring and evaluation. Measuring national progress towards Aichi Targets 11, 14, and 15, for example, may be particularly relevant for ecosystem-based adaptation.

3. **Adaptation planning must be participatory and informed by the needs of vulnerable communities and the ecosystems upon which they depend**

- BirdLife's experience shows that supporting the application of local knowledge and community engagement and action is essential for building the resilience of natural and societal systems, and delivering locally appropriate solutions to help communities, countries and economies adapt.
- Under the Darwin Initiative project "Ecosystem Conservation for Climate Change Adaptation in East Africa", Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) tools were used to enable communities to analyse their own vulnerability and adaptation options, and to empower them to take action. In Burundi, community adaptation plans were used to inform the integration of ecosystem based adaptation into the Ruyigi municipal development plan (PCDC). This approach is helping ensure that the needs identified by communities are addressed in policy and promoting alignment of adaptation plans at different scales. Participation of local stakeholders in national dialogue, through national multi-stakeholder working groups and workshops, has also been facilitated.
- While Participatory Learning and Action approaches can be an effective approach to empower and enhance participation of communities, this will only be achieved where there is sufficient capacity to effectively facilitate a PLA process and analyse the outputs, and where there is ongoing engagement with the communities; without these, PLA can become a data extraction exercise without delivering benefits to the community.

4. **Adopting a landscape approach and ecosystem services perspective can greatly enhance the effectiveness of adaptation responses**

- Ecosystems are complex systems that interact with social and environmental systems at different scales. Ecosystem resilience and ecosystem services are eroded by the interaction of climatic and non-climatic stressors. A holistic, systems perspective should therefore be taken in vulnerability assessments, selection and implementation of adaptation measures and monitoring and evaluation (e.g. by using the CBD's response-pressure-state-benefits framework). In the Darwin project, for example, many of the priority adaptation options that have been identified involve addressing non-climatic stressors on ecosystems – the underlying causes of vulnerability.
- Ecosystem service assessment or valuation can be an important tool to help understand the dependency of communities on ecosystem services, and to assess the quality, quantity and

benefits of these services. In the Darwin Initiative project, information generated through BirdLife's Toolkit for Ecosystem Service Sitebased Assessment (TESSA) – a relatively accessible and resource-light ecosystem valuation approach – was combined with PLA to help understand communities' vulnerability and identify appropriate adaptation options. The assessment facilitated communication to communities and policy-makers of the importance of ecosystems and the implications of alternative land-uses. Ecosystem service valuation can also help to engage sectoral ministries and the private sector, and may highlight opportunities for payments for ecosystem services schemes for adaptation.

- Adopting a landscape approach can help ensure that adaptation interventions take into account the functional scale of ecosystems and the systems with which they interact. For example, BirdLife's project "Enhancing Climate Change Resilience in Great Lakes Region Watersheds" operates at landscape units called Climate Resilient Altitudinal Gradient (CRAGs), which have a minimum altitudinal range of 1,000 metres set to allow for upward shifts in distribution of species and habitats, while another BirdLife project operates at a watershed level (Lake Victoria Basin).
- Tools such as Geographic Information Systems and species distribution maps linked with climate modelling can provide important insights on issues of scale. However, considerations of landscapes and ecosystem services can and should also be integrated into PLA approaches for vulnerability assessment.
- A landscape approach requires structures to coordinate adaptation across political and administrative borders (e.g. Lake Victoria Basin Commission spanning four countries).

5. Knowledge-sharing networks and peer-to-peer learning should continue to be enhanced

- Multi-stakeholder working groups and knowledge platforms have been effectively used under the BirdLife project to build capacity and awareness, promote coordination, share experiences and facilitate adaptive management. Where possible, existing working groups and knowledge platforms should be used and enhanced to avoid redundancy and improve cost-effectiveness.
- Knowledge-sharing is most-effective when it spans multiple scales and disciplines, engaging policy- makers and also those making decisions on the ground. In Kenya, for example, 22 Site Support Groups (community groups) come together twice a year to discuss climate change issues and their experiences with EbA, among other conservation and livelihood issues. The wealth of local knowledge shared among communities is captured by Nature Kenya, who shares it with national multi-stakeholder working groups and uses it to inform local and national policy decisions. The information is passed on to the Secretariat of the BirdLife Africa Partnership, who disseminates it throughout the region and to the BirdLife Global Secretariat.