

Submission of views on options and ways to advance

Adaptation Committee (AC) and Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG) mandates stemming from decision 1/CP.21

SeaTrust Institute, an admitted NGO to the Convention, welcomes the opportunity provided by Decision 1/CP.21 ('Adoption of the Paris Agreement') to submit views on options and ways to advance the mandates in Article 7, paragraph 3 to recognize adaptation efforts of developing country Parties. As a research and educational NGO with a particular focus on climate and environmental adaptation strategies, we have crafted and piloted climate change adaptation scenario development processes, capacity building and training programs in developing countries and have worked within and beyond the UNFCCC regime to integrate experts and communities through interdisciplinary approaches to both research and practice.

Crafting well-considered decisions about how to measure adaptation in ways that support developing countries in actually achieving adaptation goals on the ground is most important. We have seen instances in the field in which reporting requirements become actual impediments to adaptation action in countries in Africa and Pacific Island states. Whether real or perceived, these impediments can be causes for inaction or even spawn maladaptive responses in an attempt to satisfy global requirements and/or to qualify for funding or assistance. We see this opportunity for the LEG to craft flexible, meaningful adaptation measurements as among the most critical of activities that will influence the ability of least developed countries to successfully implement of NDCs, SDGs and climate plans.

Our primary intention in responding to this request for input for views and observations about adaptation metrics, recognition and support is to suggest that the Committee consider the myriad approaches developing countries take to adaptation with simultaneous attention to the micro level that is reflective of the local cultural values that identify successful adaptation to the people who live in those communities, and to the macro level that engages the most effective universal principles that lead to results that reach beyond coping to transformational adaptation that is to 'change the fundamental attributes of a system in response to climate and its effects' (IPCC 2014, p. 1758). While challenging, it is our belief that both criteria can be met in effectively assessing adaptation practices in developing countries.

1. *Decision 1/CP.21, paragraph 41:*

- What is the range and scope of adaptation efforts? How do you define and document adaptation efforts? Do you encounter any difficulties in terms of data sourcing or completeness?

Adaptation efforts vary tremendously depending upon local capabilities, resources and support requiring an interdisciplinary multiscale approach to adaptation documentation across sectors. For example we observed national water project implementation for increased water supply, sanitation, and health being superseded by local political issues that dictated the location of water bore holes.

Defining and documenting adaptation efforts in relationship to the vulnerabilities and adaptive capacities in the region, country and community with respect to scale include economic, political and social contributors in addition to physical vulnerabilities to specific climate or other natural events. Communities must be co-participants in defining their vulnerabilities in order for them to take ownership of the process in order to develop a “culture of adaptation” that can morph from coping to transformative.

Data is a continuing issue in vulnerability and adaptive capacity assessments. Often the data is simply not kept, such as data on child mortality or disease rate changes. An African doctor with whom we worked did not have a camera to record diseases and impact of treatments. Even where technology is more available unreliable electricity, poor internet and knowledge sharing services impede progress on NDCs and other goals. Lack of baseline data, data alteration, destruction or inappropriately aggregated data all contribute to the problem.

- Could you provide examples or possible modalities of how adaptation efforts of developing countries could be recognized under the Convention?

Community-based processes have been proven to bring benefits; locals are well positioned to determine their needs and should have a strong role in adaptation planning. The expert role is also important but different; many communities cannot undertake adaptation efforts and planning without significant technical expert assistance. The Convention could recognize how that expertise is adopted, used or repurposed by the community, prioritizing local action by the most vulnerable particularly in relation to their NDCs, climate plans and SDGs.

The Convention could also differentiate between coping through adaptation efforts and transformational adaptation. This differentiation could be used by the Convention to recognize transformational adaptation at a higher level than coping-level adaptation.

- Do you foresee any challenges or barriers in recognizing adaptation efforts of developing countries?

Appropriate recognition requires verifying self-reported data and analysis received through National Communication channels. Analysis on the part of the Convention or its designees to ensure that the list and associated reports remains accurate and updated would be needed. While a qualitative overview simply listing countries developing or undertaking adaptation efforts could demonstrate increase in the coverage of adaptation efforts it would not necessarily indicate the scope and the results of these efforts, nor would it differentiate between national and community level effects.

Another issue in reporting comes from inadequate capacity within countries to visit and verify local community adaptation efforts by governmental officials. In some Pacific Island chains, for example, we have seen that national officers may only be able to physically visit outlying islands and villages on a yearly basis at best. This means that, regardless of their best efforts, the reporting of changes will be incomplete or inaccurate.

2. *Decision 1/CP.21, paragraph 45(a):*

- What experiences, including lessons learned and good practices, do you consider valuable in facilitating the mobilization of support for adaptation in developing countries?

Community resilience is promoted through enhancing local ownership, building capacity, and creating networks and communication partnerships that help ordinary people learn and adapt to climate change through revitalizing traditional practices and integrating them with modern, cutting-edge technologies. Integrating local and indigenous knowledge along with contemporary scientific knowledge into the assessment of climate impacts and future climate risks must include all community members or representative stakeholders in order to build an actionable knowledge base.

Avoiding changing messages from the international development community or increased reporting burdens help support adaptation efforts. Sometimes interpreted as the country not having met an obligation, these messages may come from changes in capacity or other development funding that changes the “ground

rules,” or counters other country initiatives. One possible modality that would minimize the administrative burden could be a list of countries engaged in a NAP and/or those communicating their adaptation efforts through other channels together with a summary report that outlines their adaptation activities and the lessons learned.

Revising mechanisms for adaptation support could help ensure that the support, partners and foci provide communities with resources that address actual needs and create real solutions in sync with their culture and way of life. Engaging new partners and service providers whose agendas are more closely aligned with community needs than with maintaining established project and financing schemes would shift incentives that stifle innovation and nimble responses.

- Which steps would be necessary to facilitate the mobilization of support for adaptation in developing countries in the context of the limit to global average temperature increase referred to in Article 2 of the Agreement?

Mobilizing support for adaptation involves iterative learning in order to maximize local benefits of merging climate change and economic development strategies. This may mean making crucial operational changes. Countries need to mobilize and pool funds to achieve economic transformation along with climate resilience. A shift is required from top-down to bottom-up planning in order to enhance resilience and well-being at the local levels.

Key steps include:

- Making decisions based on the health of their citizens and communities, e.g. Spreading and escalating diseases, air pollution, and human displacement.
- Understanding and planning within the context of local development requirements e.g. food, water security that are country and region specific,
- Providing access to global information through assisting developing countries with basic technology, telephony and affordable data availability
- Engage in clean technologies that are embedded local cultural and indigenous context

- What methodologies can be used to take the above necessary steps?

Cultural ownership of support systems and technologies is proving crucial for stimulating innovative approaches that ensure climate change is mainstreamed into governance and development; therefore, support systems for adaptation need to develop new ways of working with countries. A new approach is needed for the steps to be effective. Some of these include engaging new actors including NGOs that

are working across sectors by not only asking for good practices but by opening multilateral mechanisms to those from whom the Convention seeks advice and good practice examples. These mechanisms include communications, funding and partnership facilitation to ensure that the best ideas that are community focused and reflect community values are fully integrated into adaptation approaches at every stage, including planning and monitoring and evaluation.

Monitoring, reporting, and verification procedures should be iterative, assessing early investments, and incorporating adaptation into national development planning in a parallel process to mitigation MRV but with the modifications that account for the differences required to produce usable adaptation metrics. Without measuring support through outcomes on basic health, secure water and food, and affordable access to data, knowledge and global communication, adaptation support becomes prohibitively expensive to maintain and can in fact damage the recipient instead of creating resilience and strength.

3. Decision 1/CP.21, paragraph 45(b):

• **What information/data or metrics are needed for the review of adequacy and effectiveness of adaptation and support for adaptation?**

Adaptation metrics can be categorized as outcome based, preparedness, process, and policy-based. While outcome based metrics can be used to directly measure progress and effectiveness in avoiding or lessening climate change impacts, the other approaches assess and analyze adaptation readiness, policies and programmatic approaches, and change in vulnerability.

Accurate assessments of vulnerability and adaptive capability are required to have a baseline from which to assess adaptation adequacy and effectiveness. Support should be reviewed and modified as necessary based upon the criteria that emerge from those assessments and the relative changes measured in key vulnerable areas after adaptation interventions such as those below:

- Capacity and trust building (by listening at least as much as by giving information)
- Using human health as the metric that shows success in adaptation efforts. Ecological health such as clean water has an enormous impact on human health
- Measuring the move from ideas to solutions, including incremental progress and resulting incremental solutions for all areas of adaptation
- Emphasize the country's strengths and ensure that support for a developing country does not take advantage of it culturally

- Motivating developing country to actively do their part in the adaptation efforts and removing incentives to do nothing or engage in maladaptive actions

• Which lessons learned, good practices, challenges and barriers have been encountered in such reviews?

Active inclusion of civil society and vulnerable groups in establishing, revising and working with adaptation metrics

Oxfam's 2012 analysis of adaptation financing in Pacific LDCs and SIDS stresses the need to build capacity and strengthen the inclusion of civil society and vulnerable groups into decisions regarding and monitoring of adaptation finance. The same holds true for adaptation metrics. But there are also barriers to this inclusion. Among the key issues is whether and how adaptation-related information can most efficiently be identified and collated by countries in order to meet their national needs, as well as reported to the international community.

Continuing attention to the attenuation of local and national scale data, strategies, and reporting

In examining the contribution of specific interventions to the overall country strategy, a complementary analysis of individual project and program evaluations with overall assessments of trends in the country's vulnerability to climate change is required. Creating a flexible and culturally sensitive framework for linking individual assessments with national level assessments could help to broaden the focus from measuring only the means of achieving outcomes (individual interventions) to the measuring desired end result (countries' becoming less vulnerable to climate change). By doing so, the combination of country-level monitoring and project level M&E should expose limitations and incidences of insufficient overall action, changes in vulnerability distribution, and the most effective composition of adaptation interventions for the specific place, vulnerabilities and adaptive capabilities.

LDGs are unable or unwilling to engage in or continue with effective adaptation efforts when the communication process and/or reporting burden is too high

One way to minimize administrative burden on LDCs adaptation communications could be to engage existing reporting tools e.g. National Communications (NC). More effective local communications and conduits between those and the NC would need to be developed.

• What methods can be used to review the adequacy and effectiveness of adaptation and support for adaptation?

Adaptation takes place across multiple scales. Challenges and potential obstacles to the identification, collection and reporting of adaptation related information can be addressed through linking standardized, context-specific and more loosely linked assessments such as through national communications and informal dialogues across different scales.

Reviewing the adequacy and effectiveness of adaptation and support for adaptation is challenging due to factors including the ambiguous definitions of adaptation, the identification of targets and the choice of indicators used to monitor performance. These challenges call for mixed qualitative and quantitative approaches that borrow elements from successful programs such as development interventions, modified to address the specifics of adaptation to climate change. RBM and Logical Framework Approach for example are common adaptation M&E approaches that require clear and measurable indicators. These need to be certain to include the cultural components that will enable the results to be sustainable and account for changes in the physical and social environments.

Appropriate indicators needs to be a combination of national and subnational indicators such as those in some (I)NDCs and other documents that capture local lessons, qualitative assessments assessing policy and governance and quantitative indicators showing changes from interventions to climate change. On its own, any single category of indicator is not enough. A larger conceptual indicator like human health can serve to normalize interim and more tightly focused measurements. Significant challenges remain in relation to dealing with shifting baselines, attribution and time lags between interventions and outcomes.

SeaTrust Institute, an admitted NGO to the UNFCCC, is available to further discuss any concepts offered in this document. Thank you for this opportunity.