



Conceptualizing and Assessing Progress Toward the Global Goal on Adaptation Submission by Perry World House, University of Pennsylvania

The CMA (1/CMA.19, paragraph 37i) decided that submissions from non-Party stakeholders would be among the sources of input for the Global Stocktake. In this submission by the University of Pennsylvania, researchers¹ at Perry World House respond to this call by focusing on how the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) can be further articulated and success towards achieving it can be measured in connection with the Global Stocktake.

Article 7 of the *Paris Agreement* established the “global goal on adaptation of enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change, with a view to contributing to sustainable development and ensuring an adequate adaptation response in the context of the temperature goal referred to in Article 2.” This establishes the goal’s aspiration in terms of sustainable development for all countries. Further work can contribute to identifying elements of the goal, as well as the means of assessing collective progress towards it in the face of unfolding climate change impacts. In this submission, we discuss six approaches to formulating the GGA and how the goal, understood in this way, could be measured.

Formulations of the Global Goal on Adaptation:

- 1. Procedural:** “The Global Goal on Adaptation is for each party to submit an adaptation plan or strategy and to provide data about their progress on implementing this plan.”
- 2. Financial:** “The Global Goal on Adaptation is to secure adequate financing for the adaptation plans and strategies of each party.”
- 3. National Achievement:** “The Global Goal on Adaptation is the successful implementation of each party’s adaptation plan or strategy.”
- 4. Adaptation Capability:** “The Global Goal on Adaptation is for parties to have the capabilities needed in order for them to reduce climate risks in key areas of sustainable development including water, food security, health, and biodiversity protection.”
- 5. Collective Response:** “The Global Goal on Adaptation is for countries to undertake actions collectively that are commensurate with climate risks in key areas of sustainable development including water, food security, health, and biodiversity protection.”
- 6. Transformative:** “The Global Goal on Adaptation is for countries collectively to build a better future by reducing climate risk, achieving sustainable development, and addressing climate injustice.”

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Analysis of GGA formulations

- 1. Procedural:** “The Global Goal on Adaptation is for each party to submit an adaptation plan or strategy and to provide data about their progress on implementing this plan.”

This formulation is based on the approach taken by the UN Environment Program (UNEP) to measure adaptation progress in its *Adaptation Gap* report. Characterized in this way, the goal is for each party to have a plan in place and report on that plan. This formulation of the GGA emphasizes planning and reporting and is in some ways analogous to the *Paris Agreement's* enhanced transparency framework. Unlike the enhanced transparency framework, it does not include constraints on productive reporting.

A benefit of this formulation of the GGA is that it makes success easy to measure. Success means that national adaptation plans or strategies are made, filed, and reported on following agreed upon requirements. However, a drawback is that it would not require plans to be effective or for concrete action to be taken on these plans. In this sense, it does not align with Article 7's guidance that the GGA requires “enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change.”

- 2. Financial:** “The Global Goal on Adaptation is to secure adequate financing for the adaptation plans and strategies of each party.”

Party and non-party stakeholders often implicitly characterize the GGA financially. For example, recent discussions have focused on assuring that when parties reach their goal of \$100 billion per year in climate finance, there is balance between mitigation and adaptation. This approach has a very clear success criterion, and is linked to the means of implementation of adaptation actions.

The primary advantages of this approach are that the goal is relevant and clear, and that success is straightforward to measure. Success is a matter of reaching a set financial target in a given time. However, even ambitious financial targets are likely to become inadequate eventually. UNEP estimates that the current adaptation cost for developing countries is \$70 billion USD per year, and that this figure might quadruple by the end of the decade. An adequate financial target must be based on an understanding of what adaptation actions need to be taken. Setting a financial target without directly linking it to the actions that need funding could lead to the creation of an inadequate goal.

- 3. National Achievement:** “The Global Goal on Adaptation is the successful implementation of each party's adaptation plan or strategy.”

Formulating the GGA as a matter of national achievement links it more explicitly to adaptation success. It requires parties to create and report adaptation plans and strategies, and to actually implement those plans. Achievement of national plans, in the aggregate, is then a measure of progress towards the GGA.

This formulation simultaneously provides a global measure and allows each party to define its own needs and priorities, based on local conditions and national values. Unlike the procedural approach, it is not merely formal, because it measures the fulfillment of national adaptation plans

and strategies. The fact that measurable success indicators are defined at the national level in this approach is both an advantage and a disadvantage. The advantage is that individual parties may be in the best position to determine what constitute successful adaptation actions in their countries. The disadvantage, however, is that parties may, in the aggregate, generate a set of incommensurate indicators of success. In addition, given the emphasis on aggregate national goals, regional and global transboundary adaptation issues will only be addressed if they are prioritized by individual parties in their national plans.

- 4. Adaptation Capability:** “The Global Goal on Adaptation is for parties to have the capabilities needed in order for them to reduce climate risks in key areas of sustainable development including water, food security, health, and biodiversity protection.”

A capabilities approach to the GGA draws on the text of Article 7.1 which speaks of “enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change, with a view to contributing to sustainable development and ensuring an adequate adaptation response ...” In this approach, the GGA is assessed by evaluating whether each party has a spectrum of adaptation enabling conditions, including formal planning, finance, technical assistance, and so forth.

Successful achievement of the GGA, when characterized in terms of capabilities, means that each party has the ability to ensure clean water, adequate food, and other aspects of sustainable development that are threatened by climate change. Framing the GGA this way aligns the goal with many other UN processes and benchmarks that emphasize sustainable human development. Although further research will be required to develop an appropriate set of indicators, prior work on the connection between sustainable development and climate risk reduction can guide parties in developing these measurements. What the adaptive capabilities approach cannot deliver, however, is an assurance that these risks to key areas of sustainable development will actually be reduced. While capabilities are required for action, they do not ensure action. Moreover, since a capabilities approach to the GGA is developed globally, the global goal will not necessarily align with country-specific interests and goals.

- 5. Collective Response:** “The Global Goal on Adaptation is for countries to undertake actions collectively that are commensurate with climate risks in key areas of sustainable development including water, food security, health, and biodiversity protection.”

The Collective Response formulation of the GGA more directly connects the adaptation goal to global climate risk reduction. Successfully achieving the GGA, understood in this way, means objectively reducing climate risks that challenge sustainable development priorities. It explicitly and dynamically links the GGA to “an adequate adaptation response in the context of the temperature goal referred to in Article 2.” As the global mean temperature increases, climate risks to sustainable development will become more critical and adaptation responses must become more intensive.

This option for defining the GGA has the advantage of dealing explicitly with cross-boundary issues requiring multilevel cooperation, and tying the goal to maintaining the type of society humans hope to live in, as defined by international goals of sustainable development. This comes at the cost of easy measurability; much research is still required in order to link adaptation actions directly to climate risk reduction and the enhancement of sustainable development in key areas,

as noted by Working Group II of the IPCC in their contribution to the *Sixth Assessment Report*. As in the capabilities approach, goals developed as a collective response will not necessarily align with country-specific interests and priorities, even if they fair better in addressing cross-boundary adaptation issues.

- 6. Transformative:** “The Global Goal on Adaptation is for countries collectively to build a better future by reducing climate risk, achieving sustainable development, and addressing climate injustice.”

A transformative formulation of the GGA ties adaptation progress not only to climate risk reduction and sustainable development, but also to creating a just and equitable future. Understood this way, the ultimate goal of adaptation is to increase the planet’s adaptive capacity in a way that promotes sustainable development and also addresses past, present, and future climate injustice.

The transformative formulation of the GGA is the most ambitious formulation, and also the most complex to articulate in detail. It requires not only transformative action, but also resolving profound questions about justice. The advantage of this approach is that it ties the GGA to demands for climate justice arising from civil society and the most vulnerable countries, especially Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries. The disadvantage is that it requires substantial agreement about the nature of climate justice, and a way to measure progress towards this goal.

Elements from these Formulations Can be Productively Combined

Although we have given six distinct formulations of the GGA, elements of these formulations may be productively combined into a single goal. Some may advocate for formulating the goal solely in terms of finance or in terms of a formal procedure, for example, but these elements would be necessary to any global goal. One way to combine elements of many of these formulations is as follows:

The Global Goal on Adaptation is for countries collectively to undertake adaptation actions that are commensurate with climate change impacts in order to maintain water, food security, health, and biodiversity protection, and address climate injustice. The GGA may be assessed in the Global Stocktake through analyzing information on reduced climate risks and impacts, as well as data about adaptation implementation and finance submitted by Parties.

Another might be:

The Global Goal on Adaptation is for parties to have the capabilities needed to maintain water, food security, health, and biodiversity protection commensurate with climate change impacts. The GGA may be assessed in the Global Stocktake through analyzing information on reduced climate risks and impacts, as well as data about adaptation implementation and finance submitted by Parties.

Perry World House would be happy to initiate a series of dialogues on the formulations of the GGA and its measurement, emphasizing south-south knowledge transfer and exchange, to continue refining formulations of this goal in support of the Global Stocktake.