

## Potential activities in the area of adaptive capacity assessment

### Concept note

#### Recommended action by the Adaptation Committee

The Adaptation Committee, at its 29<sup>th</sup> meeting, may wish to consider the information contained in this note and provide views and guidance on possible directions, priorities and modalities for future work on adaptive capacity assessment.

### I. Background

1. At its 26<sup>th</sup> meeting (AC 26), the Adaptation Committee (AC) discussed the need to strengthen work in the area of adaptive capacity assessment, acknowledging its foundational role in enabling effective adaptation planning, implementation, and monitoring. As part of its flexible workplan for 2025–2027, under Workstream 1, the AC agreed to continue consideration of draft proposals in this area at AC 27.
2. Adaptive capacity is the potential or ability of a system, region, or community to adapt to the effects or impacts of climate change. Enhancement of adaptive capacity represents a practical means of coping with changes and uncertainties in climate, including variability and extremes. In this way, enhancement of adaptive capacity reduces vulnerabilities and promotes sustainable development (IPCC, 2007).<sup>1</sup> Unlike in vulnerability, impact, and risk assessments, methodologies for assessing adaptive capacity remain less standardized, especially in the context of developing countries and local-level contexts. AC members identified this gap as an urgent area for technical guidance.
3. During an intersessional call held on 8 April 2025, AC members reaffirmed their support for this activity and emphasized the need to clarify the conceptual basis of adaptive capacity, map existing assessment methodologies, and propose feasible and resource-efficient modalities for future work.
4. At its 27<sup>th</sup> meeting, the AC agreed to consider this agenda item at its next meeting.
5. At its 28<sup>th</sup> meeting, the AC considered agenda item on adaptive capacity assessment and requested the secretariat to develop a concise concept note clarifying the concept, role, and application of adaptive capacity assessments as a starting point at AC 29 for discussion and identification of potential deliverables.
6. In parallel, the completion of the State of Adaptation Action (SoA) portal provides, for the first time, a comprehensive and validated dataset based on Party-reported information across the adaptation cycle. This may offer a potential analytical foundation for advancing work on adaptive capacity assessment, including through the identification of patterns, gaps and emerging practices across regions and sectors. This may be particularly relevant in the context of ongoing efforts to operationalize the global goal on adaptation and to strengthen the evidence base for the global stocktake.

<sup>1</sup> See <https://archive.ipcc.ch/ipccreports/tar/wg2/index.php?idp=643#:~:text=Adaptive%20capacity%20is%20the%20potential,or%20impacts%20of%20climate%20change>.

## II. Purpose of the note

7. The present note is intended to:
  - (a) Facilitate a common understanding of adaptive capacity and its key dimensions;
  - (b) Illustrate possible ways in which adaptive capacity assessment could be approached in practice;
  - (c) Highlight potential areas where further technical work could be undertaken;
  - (d) Support the AC in identifying possible next steps, as appropriate.

## III. From concept to application

8. Adaptive capacity is generally understood to encompass multiple, interrelated dimensions, including:
  - (a) Institutional and governance arrangements;
  - (b) Technical and analytical capabilities;
  - (c) Financial resources;
  - (d) Human and social capital;
  - (e) Knowledge systems, including Indigenous and local knowledge.
9. Existing approaches to assessing adaptive capacity vary considerably and may:
  - (a) Focus on individual dimensions rather than system-wide capacity;
  - (b) Differ in terms of indicators, metrics and data sources;
  - (c) Present challenges in linking capacity to observed adaptation outcomes.
10. In this context, it may be useful to consider approaches that draw on observed adaptation processes and system performance, including:
  - (a) The existence and functioning of institutional arrangements;
  - (b) Progression of adaptation actions from planning to implementation;
  - (c) Integration of adaptation into broader policy and development systems;
  - (d) Availability and use of monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems.
11. These elements may provide a basis for exploring more operational and evidence-based approaches to assessing adaptive capacity.

## IV. Possible roles of adaptive capacity assessment

12. Adaptive capacity assessment could be considered in relation to several activities within the adaptation cycle and the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience, including:
  - (a) Understanding system readiness: assessing enabling environments, including institutional arrangements, governance structures and coordination mechanisms.
  - (b) Exploring implementation dynamics: identifying factors that influence the progression of adaptation from planning to implementation, including potential bottlenecks and enabling conditions.
  - (c) Supporting monitoring, evaluation and learning: contributing to the tracking of progress over time and informing iterative learning, policy adjustment and continuous improvement.

- (d) Informing reporting and global-level processes: drawing on available data sources, including national reports, to support broader analysis and enhance the evidence base, including in the context of the global stocktake.

## V. Guiding questions for consideration

13. In considering possible future work in this area, AC members and observers may wish to reflect on:

- (a) Scope and focus: To what extent should future work focus on conceptual clarification, methodological development, or practical application of adaptive capacity assessment?
- (b) Level of standardization: What level of standardization may be appropriate, taking into account the need for flexibility across different national, regional and sectoral contexts?
- (c) Linkages to existing processes: How can adaptive capacity assessment be meaningfully integrated into existing processes, including NAPs, MEL systems and reporting under the Paris Agreement?
- (d) Use of available data: What role could existing data sources, including the SoA portal, play in supporting analysis and informing future guidance?
- (e) Climate context: How can adaptive capacity be assessed in a way that reflects different warming scenarios, including temperature increments between 1.5°C and 2°C?
- (f) Collaboration: What opportunities exist to collaborate with other constituted bodies and relevant organizations, including the LEG, CGE and PCCB, as well as partners such as UNU and UNDRR?

## VI. Potential areas for further work

14. Subject to guidance from the AC, possible areas for further work could include:

- (a) Near-term (analytical and framing work):
- Further analytical work to explore patterns and trends in adaptive capacity using available data sources, including the SoA portal;
  - Development of a conceptual and methodological framing that is flexible and applicable across contexts;
- (b) Medium-term (methodological and practical support):
- Identification of indicative metrics or indicators, as appropriate;
  - Preparation of practical guidance to support integration into national processes, such as NAPs and MEL systems;
- (c) Longer-term (capacity-building and learning):
- Consideration of capacity-building and knowledge-sharing activities, including through existing AC workstreams and events.

## VII. Issues for consideration by the Adaptation Committee

15. The AC may wish to consider:

- (a) Whether and how to further advance work on adaptive capacity assessment, including its scope and level of ambition;
- (b) Possible priorities and sequencing of activities, including near-, medium- and longer-term outputs;

- (c) The role of existing tools and data sources, including the SoA portal, as a potential analytical foundation;
- (d) Opportunities for collaboration and synergies with other constituted bodies and partners;
- (e) Any additional guidance to the secretariat on the preparation of future outputs, including possible resource implications.

**Documentation information**

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0.1.0	5 April 2026	AC 29 This concept note including possible next steps is for consideration by the AC.

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