

Enhanced collaboration with external experts and organizations, on a voluntary basis

Revised concept note

Recommended action by the Adaptation Committee

The Adaptation Committee (AC), at its 29th meeting, will be invited to consider the information contained in this updated concept note and endorse the guidelines and criteria included in its annex with a view to making them available on the AC's website.

I. Background

1. The AC was established as part of the Cancun Adaptation Framework, which had the objective of enhancing action on adaptation, including through international cooperation and coherent consideration of matters relating to adaptation under the Convention.¹ In this context the AC was mandated to promote the implementation of enhanced action on adaptation in a coherent manner under the Convention, inter alia, through “Promoting synergy and strengthening engagement with national, regional and international organizations, centres and networks, in order to enhance the implementation of adaptation actions, in particular in developing country Parties”.²
2. With the adoption of the Paris Agreement, the AC was tasked to review the work of adaptation-related institutional arrangements under the Convention, with a view to identifying ways to enhance the coherence of their work, as appropriate, in order to respond adequately to the needs of Parties.³ It was then requested, “as necessary and in consultation with relevant adaptation-related institutions, to continue to make recommendations in its annual report on enhancing collaboration and promoting coherence and synergies with a view to addressing Parties’ evolving adaptation-related needs”.⁴
3. With the adoption of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Framework for Global Climate Resilience and its targets, and the expanded nature of the adaptation architecture under the Convention and the Paris Agreement, the need for enhanced coherence and collaboration is growing. This has recently been substantiated by the CMA, which emphasized that the “Baku Adaptation Road Map referred to in paragraph 29 of decision 3/CMA.6 should bring coherence to the UNFCCC adaptation architecture [...] and also emphasized the need for cooperation with regional adaptation networks, the private sector and research institutions in recognition of the important roles played by diverse actors in implementing the United Arab Emirates Framework for Global Climate Resilience”.⁵
4. According to its revised Rules of Procedure (RoP),⁶ the AC may establish subcommittees, panels, thematic advisory groups or task-focused ad hoc working groups, if required, to provide, inter alia, expert advice in different sectors and areas, in order to assist

¹Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 13.

²Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 20 (c).

³Decision 1/CP.21, paragraph 42 (a).

⁴Decision 11/CMA.1, paragraph 6.

⁵Decision 12/CMA.7, paragraph 26.

⁶Available at <https://unfccc.int/documents/271498>.

the AC in performing its functions and achieving its objectives.⁷ Any subcommittee, panel, or advisory or working group shall be composed of an appropriate number of members as determined by the Committee. Members of such subcommittees, panels, or advisory or working groups shall have demonstrated and recognized technical expertise in the relevant field of work.⁸

5. The revised RoP further determine that the AC will engage with, and draw on the expertise of, relevant institutions, organizations, frameworks, networks and centres outside of the Convention, including those at the intergovernmental, regional, national and, through them, subnational levels, where appropriate.⁹ In addition, the AC should seek input from intergovernmental, international, regional, national and subnational organizations, centres and networks, the private sector and civil society, in undertaking its work; and invite advisers drawn from them to participate in its meetings as expert advisers on specific issues as they arise.¹⁰

6. Engagement with external experts and entities is envisaged to take place on a voluntary basis, without prejudice to existing mandates, roles and responsibilities under the Convention and the Paris Agreement.

7. To date, the AC has made use of the following means of collaborations and engagements with external experts and stakeholders:

(a) Established the NAP task force, composed of representatives of adaptation-related constituted bodies, operating entities of the financial mechanism and the Adaptation Fund, to support the AC's work relating to national adaptation plans (NAPs) ;

(b) Established a joint working group in the context of the mandate to the AC and the Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG), in collaboration with the Standing Committee on Finance (SCF), to contribute to the technical work of developing methodologies for reviewing the adequacy and effectiveness of adaptation and support,¹¹ composed of representatives of the AC, the LEG and the SCF;

(c) Engaged with intergovernmental, regional, and national institutions, organizations, frameworks, networks and centres in its workshop, forums and other events, including through the Nairobi work programme and its partner organizations;

(d) Established a list of regional centres and networks working on adaptation;¹²

(e) Engaged with the IPCC Working Group II and representatives of the Working Group II Technical Support Unit on various COP and CMA mandates, including on a technical paper on methodologies for assessing adaptation needs and their application (published in 2022), the draft supplementary guidance for adaptation communications (published in 2022) and in its 2023 regional engagement workshops;

(f) Collaborated with the NAP Global Network on the development of specific products, including the Toolkit for a gender-responsive process to formulate and implement National Adaptation Plans (2019), the Toolkit for engaging the private sector in National Adaptation Plans (2020)¹³, and the Toolkit for Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning for National Adaptation Plan Processes (2024);

(g) Invited advisers drawn from national organizations to its meetings as expert advisers, including on the topic of monitoring and evaluation, and to draft or peer review some of its technical products, e.g. the technical paper on "Data for adaptation at different spatial and temporal scales";

⁷Para. 18 of its revised RoP, based on decision 2/CP.17, paragraph 113.

⁸Para. 19 of its revised RoP.

⁹Para. 36 of the revised RoP, based on decision 2/CP.17, paragraph 100.

¹⁰Para. 37 of the revised RoP, based on decision 2/CP.17, paragraph 105.

¹¹See decision 11/CMA.1, paragraph 35.

¹²<https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/bodies/constituted-bodies/adaptation-committee-ac/areas-of-work/regional-centres-and-networks>.

¹³<https://unfccc.int/topics/adaptation-and-resilience/workstreams/technical-examination-process-on-adaptation-tep-a>.

(h) Worked with relevant UN agencies and other organizations who took on the organization of technical expert meetings under the technical examination process on adaptation.

8. At AC 26, the AC agreed to further determine how to enhance its collaboration with external experts and organizations, including for the activities related to the mandate to support the implementation of the UAE Framework for global climate resilience (decision 2/CMA.5, paragraph 44) and requested the secretariat to prepare an options paper for consideration by AC 27.

9. At AC 27, the AC considered the options paper and agreed to request the secretariat to include a section on options for collaborating with external experts and organizations in concept notes for relevant workplan activities. It also agreed to request the secretariat to develop a note including criteria for such external collaboration for the AC's consideration at its 28th meeting. This note aims to enhance the transparency and communication of the AC's work.

10. At AC 28 the AC considered the note prepared for this meeting and decided to request the secretariat to further elaborate the criteria for collaborating with external experts and organizations, based on the inputs provided, for consideration during the intersessional period.

II. Preliminary list of activities and types of external contributions

11. At its 27th meeting, the AC considered the following non-exhaustive list of activities of its 2025-2027 flexible workplan to potentially benefit from enhanced collaboration with external experts and organizations:

(a) Activities in the context of supporting the implementation of the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience with technical guidance and training materials (decision 2/CMA.5, para 44), particularly activities in relation to impact, vulnerability and risk as well as adaptive capacity assessments;

(b) Update of the online resource on the landscape of support for the process to formulate and implement national adaptation plans;

(c) Thematic dialogues on accessing adaptation finance and possibly other topics;

(d) Monitoring, evaluation and learning;

(e) Adaptation Forum;

(f) AC's communication strategy and plan.

12. At the same meeting, the AC further discussed that contributions from external experts and organizations could be provided through the following activities among others:

(a) Contributing to specific technical discussions during AC meetings;

(b) Providing inputs to technical products or activities;

(c) Serving as panelists and speakers at AC events.

III. Guidelines for the engagement

13. The annex to this concept note outlines the draft guidelines, including guiding principles, modalities and criteria, for collaborating with external experts and organizations, which, once endorsed by the AC, will be implemented by the secretariat when facilitating such future engagements.

14. The main purpose of the guidelines is to enhance the transparency, consistency and effectiveness of future collaboration with external experts and organizations, while ensuring

that such collaboration remains responsive to the needs of Parties and mutually beneficial to all involved partners. The guidelines also aim to provide clarity on the modalities for identifying and engaging external experts and organizations, taking into account considerations such as technical expertise, geographical and gender balance, and the need to ensure transparency and inclusivity in the AC's work.

IV. Next steps

15. Based on the information provided in this concept note, including in its annex, the AC, at its 29th meeting, is invited to:

(a) Consider the use of the term “entities” in place of “organizations” in the context of the guidelines, with a view to ensuring inclusivity of all relevant stakeholders;

(b) Endorse the revised guidelines and criteria for collaboration with external experts and organizations, as outlined in the annex, with a view to making them available on the AC's website;

(c) Request the secretariat to take the guidelines and criteria into account when initiating future collaborations and engagements on behalf of the AC.

Annex

Guidelines for the Adaptation Committee's collaboration and engagement with external experts and entities on a voluntary basis

1. Introduction and scope

1. The AC was established as part of the Cancun Adaptation Framework, which had the objective of enhancing action on adaptation, including through international cooperation and coherent consideration of matters relating to adaptation under the Convention.¹⁴ In this context the AC was mandated to promote the implementation of enhanced action on adaptation in a coherent manner under the Convention, inter alia, through “Promoting synergy and strengthening engagement with national, regional and international organizations, centres and networks, in order to enhance the implementation of adaptation actions, in particular in developing country Parties”.¹⁵

2. With the adoption of the Paris Agreement, the AC was tasked to review the work of adaptation-related institutional arrangements under the Convention, with a view to identifying ways to enhance the coherence of their work, as appropriate, in order to respond adequately to the needs of Parties.¹⁶ It was then requested, “as necessary and in consultation with relevant adaptation-related institutions, to continue to make recommendations in its annual report on enhancing collaboration and promoting coherence and synergies with a view to addressing Parties’ evolving adaptation-related needs”.¹⁷

3. With the adoption of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Framework for Global Climate Resilience and its targets, and the expanded nature of the adaptation architecture under the Convention and the Paris Agreement, the need for enhanced coherence and collaboration is growing. This has recently been substantiated by the CMA, which emphasized that the “Baku Adaptation Road Map referred to in paragraph 29 of decision 3/CMA.6 should bring coherence to the UNFCCC adaptation architecture [...] and also emphasized the need for cooperation with regional adaptation networks, the private sector and research institutions in recognition of the important roles played by diverse actors in implementing the United Arab Emirates Framework for Global Climate Resilience”.¹⁸

4. The objective of these guidelines is to facilitate, in a transparent manner, collaborations and engagements that enhance the AC’s activities, and help it to leverage skills, expertise and other resources that will support and advance its mandate. They draw from the “UNFCCC secretariat guidelines for partnership”¹⁹ and outline the purpose, benefits and guiding principles that will govern such collaborations and engagements as well as the process and criteria for their initiation and conduct.

5. According to its revised Rules of Procedure, the AC will engage with, and draw on the expertise of, relevant institutions, organizations, frameworks, networks and centres, including those at the intergovernmental, regional, national and, through them, subnational levels. Similarly, it should seek input from intergovernmental, international, regional, national and subnational organizations, centres and networks, the private sector and civil society, in undertaking its work; and invite advisers drawn from them to participate in its meetings as expert advisers on specific issues as they arise.²⁰

2. Purpose and form of the collaborations and engagements

6. The overall purpose of the Adaptation Committee’s collaborations and engagements is to enhance the effectiveness, coherence and impact of global adaptation action by

¹⁴ Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 13.

¹⁵ Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 20 (c).

¹⁶ Decision 1/CP.21, paragraph 42 (a).

¹⁷ Decision 11/CMA.1, paragraph 6.

¹⁸ Decision 12/CMA.7, paragraph 26.

¹⁹ Available at <https://unfccc.int/documents/311209>.

²⁰ See <https://unfccc.int/documents/271498>.

facilitating targeted technical exchange, promoting alignment and complementarity across adaptation-related processes and institutions, and leveraging synergies among relevant entities under and outside the Convention and the Paris Agreement, while systematically drawing upon the expertise and knowledge of a broad range of stakeholders and experts.

7. The collaborations and engagements in the context of these guidelines are between the Adaptation Committee and one or more experts or partner entities in which participants will collaborate to achieve a common purpose or undertake a specific task and contribute in-kind and/or knowledge resources at their own cost. The collaborations and engagements are not for the purpose of establishing a commercial relationship or for commercial or private gain. The collaborations and engagements are non-exclusive and are open to multiple entities at any time.

8. The collaborations and engagements between the AC and external experts or entities may take, but are not limited to, the following forms:

(a) Contributing to specific technical discussions during AC meetings in an advisory role;

(b) Providing inputs to technical products and activities of the AC;

(c) Serving as panelists and speakers at AC events;

(d) Providing specific expertise in subcommittees, panels, thematic advisory groups or task-focused ad hoc working groups established by the AC.

9. Collaboration with the AC excludes any role of the collaborating expert or entity in the AC's governance or decision-making processes or any right to influence its policies.

3. Guiding principles

10. The following guiding principles are set out in order to facilitate collaborations and engagements and to mitigate potential political and reputational risk and any conflict of interest associated with entering into the collaborations and engagements.

(a) Integrity

11. Prior to undertaking any collaborations, the AC will assess, on the basis of publicly available information, whether the collaboration may compromise its integrity, independence and impartiality. The AC will give particular consideration to the following to support the principle of integrity in its collaborations:

(a) The objectives of the collaborations and engagements should be clearly defined and must advance the objectives of the Convention and the Paris Agreement.

(b) The AC seeks to engage in collaborations and engagements with experts and entities that share the values and principles enshrined in the Convention²¹ and the Paris Agreement.²²

(c) The AC will select its collaborating partners on a case-by-case basis applying the process and criteria as outlined in section 4 below.

(d) Every expert or entity that meets the established criteria for entering into a collaboration or engagement with the AC is welcome to make a proposal for collaboration to the AC, within the parameters of these guidelines. However, a collaboration or engagement does not imply exclusivity therein, or that the AC endorses or has a preference for a particular partner or its activities, products, services, views or opinions, as applicable.

(b) Transparency

12. Collaborations with external experts and entities must be transparent. This includes the open and transparent identification of the respective expert(s) or entity(ies) and making their names and contributions publicly available.

²¹See https://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/background_publications_htmlpdf/application/pdf/conveng.pdf.

²²See https://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf.

(c) Confidentiality

13. Experts and entities shall respect the confidentiality of information received from the AC and marked as confidential; likewise, the AC shall respect the confidentiality of information received from its partners.

4. Process and criteria for the collaborations and engagements

14. The AC decides on the appropriate form of collaboration or engagement (see paragraph 2.8 above) for each individual activity or product of its flexible workplan, where appropriate.

15. The process and criteria outlined in this section aim to ensure that collaborations and engagements are initiated and conducted in a fair, transparent and replicable manner.

(a) Initiation

16. To mobilize external expertise and initiate a collaboration or engagement, the AC makes use of one or a combination of the following steps:

(a) Proactively screening of existing experts and/or entities as available in adaptation-related Constituted Bodies or entities under the Convention or the Paris Agreement or in dedicated rosters of experts and/or networks established by them;

(b) Proactively reaching out to experts or entities proposed by AC members, other adaptation-related Constituted Bodies, UNFCCC Regional Collaboration Centres, Adaptation Contact Points, nominated adaptation champions, or the secretariat, as appropriate;

(c) Issuing open calls for expressions of interest for collaboration or engagement published on the AC's website, social media and through relevant networks;

(d) Considering expressions of interest for collaboration or engagement received in response to the open calls or on an expert's or entity's own initiative and as received during meetings, events or via the AC's official contacts and social media channels. Such expressions of interest should demonstrate compliance with the principles and criteria outline in these guidelines.

(b) Selection

17. When the AC initiates a collaboration or engagement as per paragraph 16 above, the secretariat compiles a shortlist of suitable candidate experts or entities on the basis of the criteria included in paragraph 19 below or as otherwise decided by the AC on a case-by-case basis. A review sub-committee of the AC, composed of at least two members from developing country Parties and two members from developed country Parties, screens the shortlist and recommends the final expert(s) or entity(ies) to the AC for approval.

18. In conducting the selection process, the secretariat and the AC shall review the information and documentation provided by the prospective expert(s) or entitie(s) in cases where those have responded to a call for expressions of interests, any information available within the United Nations system, and general information publicly available through the media, the Internet or any other relevant source.

19. The following criteria are applied for the shortlisting and final decision:

(a) **Technical or regional expertise:** Prospective experts and entities must possess internationally or regionally recognized expertise on climate change adaptation and/or the specific topic under consideration, which can include transdisciplinary or regional expertise. This expertise may be demonstrated via e.g. publications in white literature, high-level speaking engagements in relevant international or regional events, previous engagement under the UNFCCC process, among others.

(b) **Support of UN values:** Prospective experts and entities shall demonstrate support of the core values and the principles of sustainable development and those enshrined in the Convention and the Paris Agreement.

(c) **Support of climate, environmental and/or social causes:** Prospective experts and entities shall demonstrate active engagement in partnerships and initiatives with United Nations, intergovernmental, national, subnational, industry or sectoral, non-governmental and other related organizations in support of climate, environmental and/or social causes.

(d) **Conflict of interest:** The AC may choose not to engage with experts or entities whose role may lead to conflicts of interest within the context of the international climate negotiations.

(e) **Balanced representation:** When selecting experts and entities the AC will strive to ensure balanced representation across regions, sectors, gender, administrative level, type of entity, and developed vs. developing country Party, both within and across its collaborations and engagements.

(c) **Agreements with the external experts and entities****Error! Reference source not found.****5 below2.8(d)2.8(a)2.8(c)**

20. Before partaking in any activity referred to in paragraph 8 above, and in cases where these activities are foreseen to result in a joint technical product, upon the Adaptation Committee's request, the UNFCCC secretariat will conclude the necessary agreement with the external expert or entity on behalf of the Adaptation Committee and in line with the administrative instructions AI/2024/4 (Voluntary contributions from and partnerships with non-State entities) and AI/2024/3 (Due diligence process - voluntary contributions and partnerships with non-State entities).²³

21. Such agreements will ensure the protection of the UNFCCC secretariat's interests as well as its privileges and immunities, and provide, among others, for the scope of collaboration, roles and responsibilities, including inter alia compliance of each external expert or entity with the criteria set out in section 5, measurable outputs and timelines, the vesting of intellectual property rights in the UNFCCC secretariat, and dispute resolution.

5. Approval of products and activities

22. Products and activities developed in collaboration with external experts and/or entities will be approved by the AC and are subject to its guidance, unless otherwise decided by the Committee.

6. Review of the guidelines

23. The AC will review these guidelines regularly on the basis of experience acquired and to reflect lessons learned and best practices. The most up-to-date version of the guidelines will be made available on the AC's website.²⁴

²³ For a general overview of the partnership process and respective due diligence of the UNFCCC secretariat see https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/UNFCCC_Partnerships_2024.pdf.

²⁴ Accessible at <https://unfccc.int/Adaptation-Committee>.