

Paris Committee on Capacity-building

Follow-up Webinar to the 10th Durban Forum

Coherently implementing the climate and development agendas: Building capacities for strengthening the science-policy interface

Thursday, 16 September 2021, 15:00-16:30
MS Teams

Follow-up webinar to the
10th Durban Forum on Capacity-building

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Coherently implementing the climate and development agendas:
Building capacities for strengthening the science-policy interface



Moderator Malle Fofana, GGGI



Opening Roberta Ianna, PCCB



Closing Marzena Chodor, PCCB



Panelists

Emilio Sempris
Frm. Minister of Environment of Panama
and Director-General of CATHALAC



Melody Braun
Senior Staff Associate at IRI
Columbia



Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim
President of the Association for
Indigenous Women and Peoples
of Chad (AFPAT)

Event summary

The webinar was opened by **the Paris Committee on Capacity-building (PCCB) co-chair Roberta Ianna** who began by recalling the background and purpose of the event. The PCCB was organizing it as a follow-up event to the 10th Durban Forum on capacity-building, held by the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) on 2 June 2021. The theme of the 10th Durban Forum was “Building capacity for addressing climate and development goals coherently”. This had been chosen following a request from the Conference of the Parties for the Durban Forum to be thematically aligned with the annual focus area of the PCCB, which in 2021 was “building capacities to facilitate coherent implementation of nationally determined contributions in the context of national development plans”.

One of the key topics identified in the discussions at the 10th Durban Forum, as well as in the submissions from stakeholders that the PCCB had issued in early 2021 to inform its work under the focus area, was the importance of building capacities for scientific and evidence-based policymaking and for mainstreaming climate and development goals into policy planning. This webinar was organized to have a dedicated discussion on this particular topic, in order to ensure effective cross-fertilization of ideas and interchange between the discussions at the Durban Forum and the work of the PCCB related

to its annual focus area. It was organized as the first event of its kind, with the intention of establishing Durban Forum follow-up webinars as a recurring event series.

The PCCB's opening statement was followed by a **panel discussion**, moderated by **Mallé Fofana, country representative for Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso at the Global Green Growth Institute**. The discussion focused on capacity-related challenges, gaps and needs in the science-policy interface, as well as on key opportunities and solutions to overcome these. The panelists, who represented government and policymakers, research and universities, and marginalized communities, shared their views and ideas as well as experiences and lessons learned in their own work.

After a quick icebreaker with the digital tool Mentimeter for the audience to participate and get the conversation started, **Emilio Sempris, former Minister of Environment of Panama and Director-General of the Water Center for the Humid Tropics of Latin America and the Caribbean (CATHALAC)** began by presenting what he had observed as the key points for consideration to advance the science-policy integration towards better decision-making at the international as well as the national level. Firstly, Mr. Sempris underscored the importance of adjusting the scale and finetuning the scope of capacity-building. Given that the global science of climate change can be overwhelming and hard to grapple at the local level, it is important to improve the communication with local level policy implementors. Mr. Sempris illustrated with an example of forest fires, which at the global level can be clearly linked to climate change, though this connection may be less obvious at community level. Better science communication with communities is therefore central, in particular concerning many indigenous communities where the language of science itself can constitute a barrier.

Mr. Sempris' second key point concerned how the continuity of government affects the science-policy interface, demonstrating how frequent changes in government have been proven to negatively affect science-policy interaction. This issue is particularly pressing in developing countries. Sharing a story from his own work within the Government of Panama, he described how a project of relocating a vulnerable community due to climate change had taken almost 20 years to complete, given the long time it took to establish a dialogue between the community, policymakers, and scientists. Mr. Sempris' last point focused on highlighting the importance of capacity-building for the sustainable finance sector to enhance its interaction with science and policy to ensure sustainable investments.

Picking up on the point about establishing dialogues across different stakeholders, **Melody Braun, Senior Staff Associate at the International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI)**, elaborated on the lack of functioning collaboration and communication horizontally as well as vertically among actors in the science-policy interface. A recurring issue that she had witnessed was how ministries within the same government sometimes lack the capacities to meaningfully collaborate. The meteorological departments often constituted a particular bottleneck, in many cases both underfunded and underrecognized, tasked with producing good quality climate information but often lacking the bandwidth to interact with the relevant policymakers. From the policymaker perspective, a recurring issue was that most available climate data and science focused on too long timeframes, difficult to integrate into effective climate policy action. Ms. Braun emphasized both the need for scientists to better understand what is happening on the ground to produce more relevant data, but also the crucial role of interdisciplinary dialogue and the importance of intermediary actors, such as policy research institutions, to communicate between science and policy.

Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, president of the Association for Indigenous Women and Peoples of Chad (AFPAT) further elaborated on the importance of on-the-ground perspectives in the context of

involving indigenous peoples into the science-policy interface. Recalling how different indigenous knowledge is from scientific knowledge, Ms. Oumarou Ibrahim underscored the importance of indigenous knowledge having been recognized in the Paris Agreement and in the UNFCCC processes. Both regarding climate change adaptation and mitigation, indigenous knowledge can play a crucial role protecting the environment and restoring biodiversity loss. Giving an example of a good practice of involving indigenous knowledge into the science-policy interface, she described projects that had been set up at community-level in Burkina Faso, Chad and Benin. The projects began by organizing workshops to gather information from indigenous communities, in which the participants could themselves decide what they wanted to share. Subsequently, scientists were involved to provide the communities with early warning systems to help them plan their agriculture and pastoralist movements. Having established this collaboration, policymakers would join to observe what kind of policies could be designed. The community-level projects then joined in a regional dialogue to explore potential upscaling.

On the topic of community-based projects, Ms. Braun shared information on one of IRI's ongoing initiatives, the Academies for Climate Services, in which IRI and local partners create interdisciplinary spaces for exchange, identification of capacity gaps, and to build programs tailored to the communities involved. They also produced curriculums to be hosted at local universities which help retain and develop the local knowledge. Recalling the point Mr. Sempris had made about the issue of political continuity, Ms. Braun emphasized universities as key partners, since are able to stay on beyond the end of a project or change in government.

Mr. Sempris agreed in emphasizing the importance of creating interdisciplinary spaces and of adopting a whole-of-society approach:

“No matter what you do, when you are training individuals, make sure you are training individuals from all sectors, from academia, associations, private sector... Try to build a community of local knowledge. This community will eventually turn into a living entity, and it will enhance its capacity beyond the resources that are allocated to it.”

Lastly, Ms. Oumarou Ibrahim shared another best practice from the local level in Chad in which meteorological scientists had been collaborating with pastoralist communities to create a technological application which could share land-related information via cell phones to show land currently suitable for agriculture, helping the communities plan their movements. She moreover highlighted how discussions between indigenous communities and decisionmakers were ongoing and would continue at the upcoming COP26 in Glasgow.

The panel discussion was followed by an **open plenary session** moderated by Mr. Fofana. During the webinar, the audience had been able to post questions to the panelists using the digital tool Padlet. Firstly, Mr. Sempris responded to a question concerning the role of finance in creating sustainability. Clarifying what he had said in his initial statement regarding sustainable finance, in which he wanted to shed light on the increasing inflow of capital from the private to the public sector, he underscored the need for capacity-building programs to train finance actors controlling these resources to make them climate conscious.

The next question concerned political continuity and how to bridge planning horizons between politicians, who think in election cycles, and issues that require sustained attention, like addressing climate change. Mr. Sempris responded:

“When you talk to politicians and high-ranking officials, talk to them in terms of legacy. Don’t talk to them about what you want in the immediate personal or the near future. Talk to them about what they would want to do, so that in 20 years, they would be proud of what they did. That is the only hope. Send the big picture, and turn them into visionaries.”

On a question on how scientists should better communicate climate information to policymakers, Mr. Sempris underscored the importance of taking advantage of timing. Relatedly, on a question regarding why it is hard for policymakers to understand scientific reports, Mr. Sempris shared that as Minister of Environment, he had been in charge of 85 multilateral environmental agreements, and having to be in decision-making mode around the clock, your attention span becomes reduced and you will not have time to spend hours on one single matter.

Responding to the same question, Ms. Braun agreed with Mr. Sempris, underscoring how the busy schedules of policymakers hinder their science uptake. Even though many scientific reports include a summary for policymakers, there might not be enough time to read and consider them to the extent needed. Melody continued:

“We are in a crisis, so we really need to be able to use all the climate information out there. We need everything we have and everything we can get. There is an interest for policymakers to understand the science but they don’t necessarily have the time and they don’t necessarily view it as their mandate. Which brings us back to the importance of interdisciplinary in-person meetings and dialogues, like the ones lifted by Hindou for instance.”

Another question directed to Ms. Braun concerned the role of gender in the scientific context. On the one hand, she emphasized the need for more female scientists in the male-dominated field of climate science. In the larger picture, she moreover emphasized the importance of taking into account the fact that the needs for climate science and policy differ between men and women on the ground. This must be accounted for in both the scientific and the policy side of the interface, not the least by bringing in the voices of local women, who commonly are sidelined in dialogues compared to men who most often are the landowners.

A question directed to Ms. Oumarou Ibrahim concerned who between the policymaker and the scientist may efficiently share climate information with local communities, considering that communities sometimes need to have a certain level of education to understand some climate concepts. Ms. Oumarou Ibrahim responded:

“I think it is the opposite. It is not the scientist who can inform the indigenous peoples, not the policymaker who can inform the indigenous peoples, about climate change. It is the indigenous peoples, who live and experience climate change every second of the day, of their lives, who should inform the scientists and the policymakers. Which is why we have to change the system. It is not that because we went to school, we are more informed, and should inform the communities. We need to listen to the communities. And when we listen to them, we can build better policies and science. Let us think in the opposite to the system that has never worked.”

Responding to a question concerning the role and the capacity needs of youth, Ms. Braun acknowledged how youth were prominent in almost every sector of climate action. Demonstrating a strong focus on interdisciplinarity, she believed they could become agents for unification of different sectors. Regarding their capacity needs, she emphasized the role of science- and policy professionals to integrate youth in capacity-building for the forefront communities, as well as to include youth interested in a career in any part of the interface. Here, we should start early on, developing education programs and giving them access to tables.

On a question concerning the capacity needs of indigenous communities to share and retain information beyond the written word, Ms. Oumarou Ibrahim highlighted the role of technology innovation, for instance mapping tools which allowed indigenous communities to map and capture knowledge digitally. But most importantly, she emphasized that the resources should be allocated to the communities for them to develop their own projects.

At the end of the session, Mr. Fofana asked the panelists to summarize their key takeaways. Mr. Sempris emphasized the pivotal role of women as the primary agents of change, particularly at the local level. Ms. Oumarou Ibrahim highlighted the importance of strong partnerships based on learning between policymakers, scientists and indigenous people. Ms. Braun underscored how we must make use of the vast amounts of information that exist and break the silos to forge interdisciplinary dialogues, from the ground to the governments.

In concluding the event, **PCCB member Marzena Chodor** thanked the panelists for their views, remarks and ideas, highlighting that the PCCB looks forward to further engage on the topics discussed in the webinar. She also thanked the audience for their active participation, encouraging them to join future events, including at the upcoming 3rd Capacity-building Hub at COP26 in Glasgow, as well as to become members of the PCCB Network, to continue the discussion.