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Matters relating to capacity-building

Capacity-building under the Convention

The 10th Durban Forum on capacity-building

Report by the secretariat

Summary

The 10th Durban Forum on capacity-building took place in a virtual setting on 2 June 2021 during the May–June sessional period of the 2021 sessions of the subsidiary bodies under the overarching theme of building capacity for addressing climate and development goals coherently.



Abbreviations and acronyms

COP	Conference of the Parties
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
NAP	national adaptation plan
NDC	nationally determined contribution
PCCB	Paris Committee on Capacity-building
SBI	Subsidiary Body for Implementation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal

I. Introduction

A. Mandate

1. COP 17 requested the SBI to further enhance the monitoring and review of the effectiveness of capacity-building by organizing an annual in-session Durban Forum for sharing experience and exchanging ideas, best practices and lessons learned among relevant stakeholders regarding the implementation of capacity-building activities. It also requested the secretariat to prepare a summary report on the Durban Forum for consideration by the SBI.¹

2. COP 24 requested the SBI to thematically align the meetings of the Durban Forum with the annual focus area of the PCCB,² which for 2021 is building capacity to facilitate coherent implementation of NDCs in the context of national development plans.³ Thus, the lessons learned from and outcomes of the Durban Forum feed directly into the work of the PCCB.

3. COP 25 emphasized the importance of continuing to identify and disseminate lessons learned to enhance the implementation of capacity-building activities through the Durban Forum and the PCCB.⁴

B. Structure of the report

4. Chapter II below presents the outcomes of the 10th Durban Forum, including key messages and information on their subsequent consideration by the PCCB; chapter III below provides information on the organization of the meeting, including its scope and objectives; chapter IV below summarizes the keynote address delivered, the panel discussion and the breakout group discussions; and chapter V below presents conclusions.

C. Possible action by the Subsidiary Body for Implementation

5. The SBI may wish to consider the information contained in this report in its deliberations on capacity-building.

II. Outcomes of the 10th Durban Forum

A. Key messages

6. Countries' sustainable development must be underpinned by decarbonization and resilience plans that include cross-cutting strategies and follow a whole-of-economy approach.

7. Coordinating and interlinking climate action and development planning is crucial to avoiding duplication of work and silo working. The capacity for collaboration of focal points in charge of action in relation to the SDGs and NDCs should be strengthened.

8. Conducting analyses to identify capacity needs and gaps is key to facilitating a better understanding of existing capacity and to assisting stakeholders and practitioners in integrating climate policy instruments into development plans.

9. To be effective, development policies need to involve multiple and diverse actors, including from the private sector, civil society and academia:

¹ Decision 2/CP.17, paras. 144 and 147.

² Decision 15/CP.24, para. 6.

³ PCCB document PCCB/2020/11, para. 52.

⁴ Decision 10/CP.25, para. 11.

(a) The capacity of policy and decision makers to apply scientific evidence in their policy work needs to be strengthened in order to bridge gaps between climate policy research and action. Modelling is key to forecasting development scenarios, while data and effective data management systems (e.g. common data portals and monitoring and evaluation in support of development goals) are needed to fill knowledge gaps. Mapping is useful for identifying entry points for building on and integrating implementation of the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(b) Climate action must be developed in collaboration with relevant ministries, especially those in charge of national planning. This involves building capacity to coordinate action across thematic areas and improving communication and thus understanding in relation to the work of different departments and working groups.

10. Aligning the goals of the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda is key to implementing them. Tools such as NDC-SDG Connections⁵ may be used to identify synergies and pinpoint capacity gaps and needs. The tool also demonstrates the potential co-benefits of coordinating implementation in relation to NDCs and the SDGs and can contribute to raising the ambition of climate and development action.

11. Enhancing country ownership is key to strengthening the commitment of countries to raising the ambition of their climate action. In this regard:

(a) A participatory whole-of-society approach to such action, involving all stakeholders, including State and non-State actors, must be taken;

(b) Capacity-building should target not only experts and technical staff but also high-level decision makers;

(c) Retaining institutional capacity, which is a major challenge for developing countries, is key to coherently enhancing climate action and avoiding loss of knowledge.

12. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted disparities around the world. Green recovery plans should incorporate policies and tools that prioritize climate and development goals.

13. International cooperation, from North–South and South–South cooperation to experience-sharing and regional partnerships, can play an important role in capacity-building. Knowledge management systems can facilitate sharing experience and best practices.

14. Implementation of climate action identified in NDCs and NAPs is hindered by domestic budget constraints and limited access to international finance. Enhancing developing countries' capacity for developing sound project proposals should be prioritized in order to increase their access to funding.

B. Consideration of the key messages by the Paris Committee on Capacity-building

15. COP 21 decided that the inputs to the PCCB include the reports on the Durban Forum.⁶ At its 5th meeting, the PCCB agreed to consider the outcomes of the 10th Durban Forum intersessionally in preparing its annual technical progress report.⁷

III. Organization of the 10th Durban Forum

A. Background

16. The overarching theme of the 10th Durban Forum, namely building capacity for addressing climate and development goals coherently, was selected taking into consideration

⁵ See <https://www.sei.org/projects-and-tools/tools/ndc-sdg-connections>.

⁶ Decision I/CP.21, para. 79.

⁷ See <https://unfccc.int/event/pccb5>.

the mandate referred to in paragraph 2 above. The theme was divided into the following subtopics:

- (a) Building capacity for mainstreaming climate and development goals in policy planning;
- (b) Building capacity for enhancing institutional arrangements and vertical and horizontal coordination;
- (c) Building capacity for aligning national climate and SDG-relevant targets;
- (d) Building capacity for assessing sustainable development co-benefits and impacts of climate action and policy.

17. In line with its overarching theme and subtopics, the meeting was guided by the following objectives:

- (a) Identifying the key capacity gaps and needs impeding the coherent implementation of climate action and development agendas, including those impeding sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 crisis;
- (b) Building capacity for enhancing coordination across ministries, agencies and government levels with regard to the 2030 Agenda and climate action;
- (c) Sharing experience and good practices relevant to building capacity for mainstreaming climate and development goals in policy planning.

18. The concept note for the Forum was prepared and made available on the dedicated Durban Forum web page⁸ well in advance of the meeting to facilitate the discussions.

B. Proceedings

19. The 10th Durban Forum was held in a virtual setting on 2 June 2021 during the May–June sessional period of the 2021 sessions of the subsidiary bodies. The Chair of the SBI, Marianne Karlsen, opened the meeting. The co-facilitators, Shehnaaz Moosa from SouthSouthNorth and Makoto Kato from the Overseas Environmental Cooperation Center, provided introductory remarks.

20. A keynote address on the experience of Costa Rica in implementing its national decarbonization policy was delivered by Agripina Jenkins, advisor to the Climate Change Directorate of Costa Rica. The subsequent discussion panel, moderated by the meeting co-facilitators, consisted of:

- (a) Ms. Jenkins;
- (b) Malle Fofana, representative of the Global Green Growth Institute;
- (c) Vositha Wijenayake, representative of SLYCAN Trust;
- (d) Lena Katzmarski, representative of the German Agency for International Cooperation;
- (e) Clara Brandi, representative of the German Development Institute.

21. The panellists engaged in an interactive discussion on different aspects under the meeting's overarching theme. This was followed by four parallel breakout group discussions dedicated to the four subtopics referred to in paragraph 16 above, facilitated by, respectively:

- (a) Ms. Wijenayake;
- (b) Mr. Fofana and Siddhartha Nauduri, representative of the Global Green Growth Institute;
- (c) Ms. Katzmarski;

⁸ <https://unfccc.int/durbanforum10>.

(d) Daniel Morchain, representative of the International Institute for Sustainable Development.

22. The meeting co-facilitators and a representative of the secretariat provided closing remarks to conclude the meeting.

23. The meeting agenda, presentations, biographies of resource persons, and guiding questions and reports for the breakout group discussions are available on the Durban Forum web pages.

IV. Summary of keynote address and discussions

A. Keynote address

24. The keynote address focused on Costa Rica's experience in aligning its decarbonization policy and development planning. Costa Rica is using decarbonization and resilience-building to transform its development towards a more just and prosperous future.

25. To achieve its decarbonization goals and align its development plans with implementation of the Paris Agreement, Costa Rica has been strengthening its planning capacity and developing new legal and institutional frameworks for climate action.

26. Costa Rica's decarbonization policies aim to build a sustainable economy, inclusive public services and resilient infrastructure. These policies emphasize the potential of nature-based solutions to achieve decarbonization goals:

(a) Government ministries are responsible for policymaking, and workshops are held to develop a pathway to decarbonization that includes actors across the private and public sectors, academia and civil society;

(b) Costa Rica has been focusing on building scientific capacity to enhance knowledge and modelling in order to improve its planning and development scenarios;

(c) Data and scientific information are made public to enhance transparency. An open data strategy ensures more effective monitoring and evaluation of climate action and sustainable development projects and makes information and metrics more widely accessible to decision makers and practitioners.

27. To decarbonize its economy, Costa Rica needs to adapt its development model and catalyse change through strategies that cut across education, culture, employment and just transition, inclusion and respect for human rights, and gender equality.

B. Panel discussion

28. Addressing the subtopics referred to in paragraph 16 above, the panellists responded to the following questions:

(a) What major challenges and constraints are countries facing in addressing climate and development goals more coherently? How can capacity-building help to overcome them?

(b) How can countries identify the capacities needed for better integrating climate policy instruments with SDG-related action?

(c) How can peer-to-peer learning and international cooperation contribute to identifying best practices for coherently implementing the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda in developing countries?

29. In relation to capacity-building for addressing climate and development goals more coherently, NDC-SDG Connections, an interactive online tool that enables users to visualize the numerous linkages between the SDGs and NDCs, was presented. Such capacity-building is crucial. The tool offers opportunities for identifying synergies and untapped potential for more ambitious action. The aim is to use the tool to build capacity by:

(a) Fostering dialogue on interlinking implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement;

(b) Making use of synergies and co-benefits to avoid duplication of efforts and amplify the beneficial effects of climate action and sustainable development policies;

(c) Promoting relevant learning and partnerships across countries and raising ambition of climate and development action.

30. On challenges and constraints in this regard, country ownership is necessary to ensure receivers of capacity-building can retain knowledge and expertise in the long term. This could be accomplished through a national flagship programme or green growth strategy, for example, developed collectively by decision makers across government entities.

31. The panellists discussed extensively the need to link and coordinate climate action and development strategies to avoid duplication of work and silo working. They underlined the need for vertical and horizontal integration to enhance cooperation across government levels.

32. It was mentioned that high staff turnover and the resulting lack of retention of skills and knowledge within the public sector could hamper long-term capacity-building efforts and slow down progress towards climate and development goals.

33. The panellists underlined the need for data monitoring systems and technical expertise to build capacity for integrating climate policy instruments with SDG-related action. One recommended mapping entry points for building on existing capacity and linking countries' climate risks and vulnerabilities with their development needs. Efforts to help countries assess progress and improve planning and implementation should include monitoring and evaluation. Another panellist described the role of modelling and cost-benefit analysis in providing information to decision makers relevant to development planning and achieving climate goals.

34. With the COVID-19 pandemic resulting in many activities being carried out in a virtual setting, disparities in countries' effective access to the Internet have been highlighted. Plans for green recovery from the pandemic should incorporate policies and tools that prioritize climate and development goals.

35. The panellists also responded to questions from meeting participants:

(a) On ensuring international cooperation, the need for international development agencies to understand visions and policies already in place when providing their services to countries was emphasized;

(b) On peer-to-peer learning in relation to NAPs, identifying economic priorities and policies as well as key actors and practitioners is necessary to strengthen peer learning and implement evidence-based actions. Peer learning is crucial to interlinking climate action and sustainable development agendas through SDGs, NDCs and NAPs;

(c) On the most important lessons learned in overcoming challenges, the need for a whole-of-society approach to implementing climate action and sustainable development goals that involves all stakeholders, including State and non-State actors, was highlighted;

(d) On the link between the NDC-SDG Connections tool and capacity-building, the importance of capacity-building for increasing cooperation and coordination across ministries and government levels was emphasized;

(e) On supporting countries in implementing NDCs and mainstreaming climate action, the importance of building capacity for mainstreaming was highlighted.

C. Breakout group discussions

1. Building capacity for mainstreaming climate and development goals in policy planning

36. The following questions guided the discussion:

(a) How can climate change science be integrated into national policies and what role should academia and research institutions play?

(b) Which capacity gaps and needs exist in relation to formulating climate policies that apply to a range of economic sectors?

(c) How can capacity-building create inclusive and participatory processes, engage the private sector and increase national ownership of climate action?

37. Connections between universities and policymakers should be established with a view to mainstreaming climate change issues, developing a common agenda and prioritizing addressing climate change in the national context. This can be done by enhancing policymakers' communication on climate change and the need for climate action through common language. Academia and researchers can contribute to the scientific aspects and should be engaged in relevant national processes.

38. Technical expertise to convince policymakers to allocate sufficient budget were identified as capacity needs for implementing climate policies across economic sectors. Climate modelling is important for predicting future impacts of climate change in different economic sectors and for resilience-building.

39. Raising stakeholder awareness on climate action and sustainable development goals, promoting stakeholder networks, encouraging action taken by the private sector and setting up a regulatory body so that governments can urgently scale up capacity-building are key to ensuring that capacity-building processes are inclusive and participatory.

2. Building capacity for enhancing institutional arrangements and vertical and horizontal coordination

40. The following questions guided the discussion:

(a) What role does capacity-building play in relation to strengthening institutional systems and incorporating climate action into national development plans?

(b) Which capacity gaps exist at the subnational and local level in relation to implementing climate policy?

(c) Are high levels of staff turnover impeding the retention of knowledge within public institutions? How can institutional capacity be retained?

41. Decision-making capacity needs to be strengthened and robust coordination between decision makers and relevant technicians established in order to strengthen policies and plans. Framing climate change as a development, rather than an environmental, issue would reduce institutional fragmentation and facilitate collaboration among ministries and other government bodies.

42. There is evidence of a disconnect between the national and the subnational and local level on account of lack of education and language barriers. Hence, capacity is required at the national level to consult stakeholders at the subnational and local level to ensure that they are taken into consideration, drawing on academic resources, existing national networks and case studies of best practices.

43. High levels of staff turnover make retaining knowledge within institutions challenging, but this can be avoided by building the capacity of new staff and establishing a handover process.

3. Building capacity for aligning national climate and development targets

44. The following questions guided the discussion:

(a) How can capacity-building and peer-to-peer learning contribute to finding synergies between climate and SDG-related action?

(b) Which capacity gaps need to be overcome to ensure coherent monitoring and evaluation?

(c) How can cooperative learning be enhanced among decision makers in charge of implementing climate action and sustainable development?

45. Peer-to-peer learning can contribute to identifying synergies between climate action and action towards SDG targets by creating a space for countries to exchange similar national experience and consequently develop innovative solutions, work together on common objectives and retain capacity at the institutional and international level. It is critical to build individual, institutional and systemic capacity and apply a whole-of-society approach to linking climate action and sustainable development agendas.

46. Capacity gaps related to technical expertise, funding, peer-to-peer learning and lack of government mobilization at the regional and local level can hinder the effective monitoring and evaluation of climate policies and development plans. A coherent monitoring and evaluation process using data management and measurement, reporting and verification systems can be promoted. However, there is a need for a systemic approach to monitoring and evaluation that includes capacity-building at all levels to ensure the participation of non-State actors at the municipal level across different sectors.

47. Vertical and horizontal alignment of governments at the global level is necessary for boosting cooperative learning among decision makers. Cooperative learning is useful not only for preparing and implementing NDCs, investment planning and budgeting for climate mitigation action, but also for adaptation and sustainable development activities, and different methods, platforms and instruments should be shared and scaled up across countries.

4. Building capacity for assessing sustainable development co-benefits and impacts of climate action and policy

48. The following questions guided the discussion:

- (a) Which knowledge gaps are impeding progress towards achieving the SDGs?
- (b) Which lessons learned are advancing progress towards achieving the SDGs?
- (c) What can we learn from action and policies that lead to co-benefits in terms of both development and climate objectives?

49. Climate change knowledge tends to be overly technical and not easily understood at the grass-roots level. Knowledge must be presented taking into account local and indigenous peoples' knowledge needs in order to understand which gaps are blocking progress towards delivering sustainable development co-benefits and achieving the SDGs.

50. In terms of lessons learned, aligning public and private finance flows should not just address climate action but also consider advancing sustainable development goals such as creating jobs and reducing poverty.

51. Climate action co-benefits can be achieved by integrating knowledge from science, social science and the humanities to ensure policies to integrate climate action and sustainable development goals secure a just transition and sustainable development.

V. Conclusions

52. The 10th Durban Forum offered a broad range of Parties and non-Party stakeholders an opportunity to constructively discuss building capacity for addressing climate and development goals coherently, and key messages on important aspects thereof were delivered.

53. The thematic alignment with the annual focus area of the PCCB helped it to leverage the outcomes of the Forum effectively. After actively engaging in the Forum, the PCCB took stock of the outcomes at its 5th meeting and agreed to consider them intersessionally.