



United Nations

FCCC/SBI/2023/12



Framework Convention on
Climate Change

Distr.: General
27 July 2023

Original: English

Subsidiary Body for Implementation

Fifty-ninth session

United Arab Emirates, 30 November to 12 December 2023

The 12th Durban Forum on capacity-building

Report by the secretariat

Summary

The 12th Durban Forum was held on 7 June 2023, during the fifty-eighth session of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation, under the overarching theme of opportunities and challenges for enhancing capacity for formulating and implementing national adaptation plans.



Abbreviations and acronyms

COP	Conference of the Parties
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development
NAP	national adaptation plan
NAP Global Network	National Adaptation Plan Global Network
PCCB	Paris Committee on Capacity-building
SB	sessions of the subsidiary bodies
SBI	Subsidiary Body for Implementation

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 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 2023 is capacity-building support for adaptation with a focus on addressing gaps and needs in relation to formulating and implementing NAPs. 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.³

B. Structure of the report

4. Chapter II below presents the outcomes of the 12th 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 opening remarks delivered at the meeting, the scene-setting presentation, the panel discussion and the various group discussions; and chapter V below presents concluding remarks.

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 12th Durban Forum

A. Key messages

6. Discussions at the Forum focused on opportunities and challenges for enhancing capacity for formulating and implementing NAPs. Under the process to formulate and implement NAPs, established in 2010 under the UNFCCC, countries identify their medium- and long-term adaptation needs and develop and implement solutions for addressing them. The NAP sets out a country's adaptation-related goals and aspirations, thus facilitating the assessment of adaptation outcomes.

7. Formulating and implementing NAPs presents challenges for many developing, including the least developed, countries, owing to persistent gaps and needs in various areas and at different levels, which are hindering efforts to build adaptive capacity and resilience and coherently integrate adaptation plans into national, subnational and sectoral policies and programmes, especially development strategies, plans and budgets.

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

² Decision 15/CP.24, para. 6.

³ Decision 10/CP.25, para. 11.

8. Many developing countries lack the capacity to access financial resources for the process to formulate and implement NAPs. Systemic approaches that engage a wide range of actors, particularly at the local level, are crucial to overcoming these challenges, while decentralized financial systems can help to channel climate finance to local governments and facilitate appropriate investment in adaptation-related community projects that meet local needs. Additionally, aligning procedures for accessing financial resources for the NAP process with existing government procedures for accessing finance and introducing performance-based climate resilience grants would create more transparency throughout the NAP implementation phase. Performance metrics are also key to assessing progress in implementing NAPs and informing related decision-making at both the community and the government level.

9. To enhance their development of NAP implementation strategies, countries need to develop bankable projects and secure financial resources for implementing them. Enhancing capacity in this regard should involve establishing appropriate governance structures, including for monitoring, evaluation and learning. Coordination among different actors involved in the NAP process is vital to facilitate effective adaptation action and more equitable outcomes.

10. It is important to recognize the significance of NAPs for addressing climate change issues and reducing disaster risk. Early warning and preparedness measures should be incorporated into NAPs, which should also be aligned with national commitments under, inter alia, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. To enhance their effectiveness, NAPs should prioritize vulnerable groups, such as by facilitating their participation in community-level climate planning, include gender considerations and empower women, especially Indigenous women in remote areas who may be particularly vulnerable.

11. Ensuring good governance for building climate resilience requires the involvement of both local and national governments in the NAP process as well as tools for evaluating the effectiveness of that governance.

12. Establishing monitoring, evaluation and learning systems in the context of NAPs is challenging. An effective system should enable data to be gathered from various sectors and people from different social strata in order to take into account the cross-cutting nature of adaptation. It is thus important to address current challenges related to the technical capabilities of and resources allocated to such systems.

13. Regarding data governance and reporting related to monitoring, evaluation and learning systems, there are discrepancies in the reporting obligations applicable to different governmental entities in many countries. As such, there is a need to establish partnerships with stakeholders from both the public and the private sector to ensure that consistent and quality data on adaptation are received. Systems for reporting on adaptation matters should be integrated into broader national reporting frameworks, with adaptation efforts aligned with sectoral and national policies.

14. The design and implementation of NAPs so far has shown that related capacity-building activities, such as training, workshops and enhanced access to and use of climate information, should start during the planning rather than the implementation phase. It is important to identify and assess capacity needs throughout the NAP process, including in consultation with stakeholders, so as to be able to determine ways to address them.

15. Countries need to take further action to identify and thus be able to address current challenges in implementing local adaptation action, including with regard to ensuring effective capacity-building and addressing climate risks.

16. Capacity-building in the context of formulating and implementing NAPs is a continuous process. Building institutional capacity for the NAP process is important but should not be limited to training at the individual level. Retention of institutional and individual capacity is crucial and ensuring the inclusive engagement of a wide range of stakeholders, including from underrepresented groups, in the NAP process is important.

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

17. COP 21 decided that the inputs to the PCCB include the reports on the Durban Forum.⁴ At its 7th meeting,⁵ the PCCB agreed to consider the outcomes of the 12th Durban Forum intersessionally in preparing its annual technical progress report.

III. Organization of the 12th Durban Forum

A. Background documents

18. The concept note for and information on the structure of the 12th Durban Forum⁶ were prepared and made available well in advance of the meeting to facilitate discussions.

B. Scope and objectives

19. The overarching theme of the 12th Durban Forum, namely opportunities and challenges for enhancing capacity for formulating and implementing NAPs, was selected taking into consideration the request referred to in paragraph 2 above. The theme was divided into subtopics, namely building capacity to:

- (a) Access financial resources for the process to formulate and implement NAPs, including at the local level;
- (b) Develop NAP implementation strategies;
- (c) Align adaptation and disaster risk reduction strategies in the context of NAPs;
- (d) Integrate consideration of gender equality and social inclusion into NAPs;
- (e) Implement monitoring, evaluation and learning systems.

C. Proceedings

20. The 12th Durban Forum was held on 7 June 2023 during SBI 58. The co-facilitators, Pemy Gasela (South Africa) and Makoto Kato (Japan), opened the meeting, after which Simon Stiell, UNFCCC Executive Secretary, and Hana AlHashimi, United Arab Emirates Chief Climate Negotiator for COP 27 and 28, provided opening remarks.

21. A scene-setting presentation was delivered by Roberta Ianna, Co-Chair of the PCCB, followed by discussion, moderated by the co-facilitators, among a panel consisting of:

- (a) Tlou Ramaru, Chief Director of Climate Change Adaptation at the Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment of South Africa;
- (b) Angela Dazé, Director of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion for Resilience at IISD;
- (c) Jannia Samuels, Deputy Director of Resilience for the Municipality of Panama;
- (d) Sophie De Coninck, Global Manager for the Local Climate Adaptive Living Facility.

22. The panellists engaged in a discussion on different aspects of the meeting's overarching theme. This was followed by three parallel group discussions dedicated to the following topics, as voted for by participants during the meeting:

⁴ Decision 1/CP.21, para. 79.

⁵ See <https://unfccc.int/event/7th-meeting-of-the-paris-committee-on-capacity-building>.

⁶ See <https://unfccc.int/event/12th-durban-forum-on-capacity-building-opportunities-and-challenges-for-enhancing-capacities-for>.

(a) Building capacity to develop implementation strategies for NAPs, led by Emilie Beauchamps from the NAP Global Network;

(b) Building capacity to integrate consideration of gender equality and social inclusion into NAPs, led by Angela Dazé from IISD;

(c) Building capacity to facilitate participatory governance and locally led adaptation in the context of NAPs, led by Gregg Walker from Mediators Beyond Borders International.

23. The co-facilitators concluded the meeting with closing remarks.

24. The meeting agenda, webcast, biographies of resource persons and co-facilitators, and guiding questions and topics for the groups are available on the UNFCCC website.

IV. Summary of the 12th Durban Forum

A. Opening remarks

25. In his opening remarks the UNFCCC Executive Secretary emphasized that many countries still require capacity-building for formulating and implementing NAPs. He highlighted the importance of the third and final meeting, which took place at SB 58, of the technical dialogue under the global stocktake, stating that the outputs from the dialogue can be used to strengthen capacity-building interventions through promotion of country ownership, cooperation and retention of capacity at the systemic, institutional and individual level.

26. In her opening remarks the Chief Climate Negotiator for COP 27 and COP 28 recognized the importance of capacity-building for formulating NAPs. She emphasized that capacity should be not only built but also enhanced and retained, also highlighting the importance of engaging local actors, youth and governments in this regard. She concluded that 2023, which will mark the conclusion of the global stocktake, is a decisive year that will see the pivotal role of capacity-building in addressing climate change come to the fore.

B. Scene-setting presentation

27. The scene-setting presentation by the Co-Chair of the PCCB focused on the synthesis⁷ of submissions received on the 2023 focus area of the PCCB, namely capacity-building support for adaptation with a focus on addressing gaps and needs related to formulating and implementing NAPs.

28. Of the main capacity gaps and needs identified in the submissions, accessing financial support was the area mentioned most often. Other gaps and needs relate to institutional arrangements and coordination; implementation strategies; access to and use of technology; climate change scenarios and scientific information and their application to local contexts; risk and vulnerability assessment and risk management; and monitoring, evaluation and learning.

29. The synthesis report notes that difficulties experienced by developing countries in preparing NAPs may prevent them from receiving the technical assistance and support needed to implement their adaptation strategies. It also notes the following:

(a) Accessing financial resources at the local level is challenging and the important role of local stakeholders, including local governments and communities, in adaptation action is often ignored;

(b) Impacts, risks and vulnerabilities related to climate change differ across sectors and at the subnational and national level;

⁷ Available at <https://unfccc.int/documents/628026>.

(c) Monitoring, evaluation and learning processes are particularly important for tracking progress in relation to adaptation but capacity gaps and needs exist in this regard;

(d) Gender imbalances, poor social inclusion and lack of participation of vulnerable groups, including women, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples and youth, in capacity-building efforts are a major barrier to effective formulation and implementation of NAPs.

30. The following solutions for addressing the challenges identified in the synthesis report were identified:

(a) Encouraging the integration of adaptation action into development planning at the local level, with a view to ensuring sustainability and ownership in relation to adaptation efforts, by implementing targeted capacity-building at the subnational level, strengthening institutional capacity at the provincial, district and municipality level and across sectors and building the capacity of stakeholders affected by climate change to take action;

(b) Tailoring capacity-building to the subnational, national or regional context on the basis of relevant data and information that would need to be generated;

(c) Improving capacity-building at the subnational level by taking into consideration context-specific climate efforts and the limitations of subnational governments and other key stakeholders, such as civil society organizations, informal private sector actors and marginalized groups, in relation to formulating and implementing NAPs;

(d) Designing capacity-building that targets wider audiences at the national level, such as line ministries, the private sector and civil society organizations, including by creating an enabling environment for locally led climate adaptation planning and implementation and thus capacity-building;

(e) Integrating consideration of gender equality and social inclusion into the NAP process;

(f) Bolstering national adaptation efforts through regional coordination, which is important owing to the transboundary nature of climate impacts, the extent of shared natural resources and ecosystems, and common risks faced by territories in the same geographical area.

31. The Co-Chair of the PCCB then provided some general information on the work of the Committee, namely that it engages in activities such as thematic dialogues at regional climate weeks and the forthcoming 5th Capacity-building Hub, at COP 28. The PCCB provides continuous support to countries in planning and implementing NAPs and liaises and collaborates closely with relevant UNFCCC constituted bodies, including the Adaptation Committee, the Adaptation Fund Board secretariat, the Least Developed Countries Expert Group and the Technology Executive Committee, and under relevant UNFCCC processes such as the Nairobi work programme on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change.

C. Panel discussion

32. Addressing the subtopics referred to in paragraph 19 above, the panellists responded to the following questions:

- (a) What are the major challenges faced in enhancing capacity to:
 - (i) Access financial resources for the NAP process, including at the local level;
 - (ii) Develop NAP implementation strategies;
 - (iii) Align adaptation and disaster risk reduction strategies in the context of NAPs;
 - (iv) Integrate consideration of gender equality and social inclusion into NAPs;
 - (v) Implement monitoring, evaluation and learning systems;

(b) What lessons have been learned in relation to enhancing individual, institutional and systemic capacity for formulating and implementing NAPs? Who are the key stakeholders involved in the NAP process and how can they be engaged more effectively?

33. The representative of the Local Climate Adaptive Living Facility mentioned that accessing finance for implementing NAPs, including at the local level, is a challenge driven by (1) the scale of local adaptation action needed and various local actors involved, such as local governments, civil society organizations and communities; (2) the multisectoral nature of local adaptation action; and (3) limited climate information on local climate risks, limited capacity to conduct vulnerability and adaptation assessments, and limited capacity to mainstream adaptation in local development planning and budget processes. Decentralized financial systems can help to channel climate finance to local governments and facilitate appropriate investment in adaptation-related community projects that meet local needs. Moreover, aligning procedures for accessing financial resources for the NAP process with existing government procedures for accessing finance and introducing performance-based climate resilience grants would create more transparency throughout the NAP implementation phase. Performance metrics are also key to assessing progress in implementing NAPs and informing related decision-making at both the community and the government level. Over the past 10 years, the Facility has become a multi-partner, multi-country initiative, with 34 countries having been supported under the Facility as at the end of 2022.

34. The IISD representative stressed the importance of involving diverse government and non-government actors in the NAP process in order to address concerns regarding equal participation. NAP projects should not focus exclusively on securing finance, but also be aimed at establishing governance structures or processes needed for implementing adaptation. A systemic approach to capacity-building that considers the human and operational resources needed to facilitate regional coordination on and stakeholder engagement in adaptation efforts would help to overcome key challenges relating to implementing adaptation action. The transition from NAP formulation to implementation should involve actors from different sectors and areas, including subnational governments, women's rights organizations, associations of fishers and farmers and the private sector, so as to ensure equal opportunities to participate in the process.

35. On aligning adaptation and disaster risk reduction strategies in the context of NAPs, the representative of the Municipality of Panama shared her country's experience of embedding disaster risk reduction measures into its NAP. Panama's NAP focuses on areas such as agroforestry, coastal marine systems, sustainable agriculture, resilient human settlements, sustainable infrastructure and the circular economy. The country's national commitments under, inter alia, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework form the basis of specific climate plans developed by it. She stressed the importance of consulting with vulnerable groups, including the elderly, visually and hearing-impaired individuals, persons with disabilities and persons living in poverty, when establishing emergency plans and early warning systems.

36. The representative of the Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment of South Africa highlighted the importance of building a monitoring, evaluation and learning system for adaptation, but stressed that challenges, in relation to technical capabilities, human resources and resource allocation, would need to be addressed. Such a system should be capable of gathering data from various sectors and people from different social strata owing to the cross-cutting nature of adaptation, which could be challenging as most developing countries face difficulties in relation to data governance and reporting, an issue that could be addressed in part by establishing partnerships to ensure the availability of relevant quality data.

37. On the topic of multilevel adaptation planning, the following key points were noted:

(a) Multilevel adaptation planning has been implemented in various countries, with 18 having strategically combined NAP planning and implementation with NAP monitoring and evaluation at the national and subnational level;

(b) Lessons learned from multilevel adaptation planning can be applied when scaling up adaptation efforts from the national level;

(c) The least developed countries can benefit from guidance provided by the Least Developed Countries Expert Group for capacity-building;

(d) Published standards and guidelines are available to support multilevel adaptation planning.

38. On the topic of lessons learned from the NAP process, the following points were highlighted:

(a) Capacity-building activities like workshops and awareness-raising campaigns should be initiated during the planning rather than the implementation phase of NAPs;

(b) Establishing clear linkages between NAP planning and implementation is important for enhancing the effectiveness of capacity-building;

(c) Enhancing the institutional capacity of scientific bodies to support monitoring, evaluation and learning in relation to adaptation is key;

(d) Utilizing the skills and resources of business organizations and private enterprises can aid in developing sustainable monitoring, evaluation and learning systems;

(e) Local governments should be empowered to develop their own strategies for NAP implementation;

(f) Establishing a national system for protection against climate-related risks and disasters to enhance emergency responses and preparedness is vital;

(g) Systemic gaps that can undermine capacity-building efforts need to be addressed;

(h) It is important to take a holistic approach to capacity-building, given the interrelationships between different capacity-building areas.

39. Subsequently, two question and answer sessions were held with the meeting participants:

(a) A representative of Sri Lanka highlighted the importance of integrating capacity-building approaches into NAPs, noting that the country implements its NAP at all levels – from the national to the local level – to ensure that support is provided on the ground. Sri Lanka has in place sustainable institutional frameworks for capacity-building to ensure continuity of adaptation action, and explores the interconnections between capacity-building and, for example, education to maximize the combined impact of efforts in different areas;

(b) A representative of India mentioned a capacity-building approach in the context of NAPs entitled “Life for Environment”, noting that NAP implementation is often driven by institutions or consultants, with public involvement lacking. Emphasis was placed on the importance of participation in NAP development at the grass-roots level and on considering digitalizing capacity-building processes to enhance efficiency and effectiveness, including digitalizing the collection and monitoring of data throughout those processes to accelerate NAP progress and ensure stakeholder accountability during NAP implementation;

(c) A representative of Saudi Arabia pointed out that lack of data and knowledge are challenges for NAP implementation;

(d) A representative of Burundi noted the importance of access to finance for NAPs, stressing the need for improvement in this regard. The representative highlighted that in Africa it is difficult to formulate NAPs, with changes to NAPs requiring the involvement of a variety of stakeholders and experts across different sectors, as well as time and money. In addition, it was mentioned that more efforts are needed by governments and local communities to secure the finance and resources needed for NAP implementation;

(e) On the topic of leadership in the context of NAPs, a representative of the Philippines highlighted that, being the foundation of decision-making, leadership goes hand in hand with capacity-building and should guide the entire NAP process at both the national and the local level. The representative also highlighted the importance of engaging civil

society organizations in the NAP process, noting their limited opportunities in this area at the national and local level.

D. Group discussions

1. Building capacity to develop implementation strategies for national adaptation plans

40. The following questions guided the relevant group discussion:

(a) What specific capacity gaps are countries facing with regard to developing implementation strategies for NAPs and how can they be addressed?

(b) How can climate change issues be taken into account and resource mobilization strategies be developed at different levels of government?

(c) What efforts can be made to facilitate the transition of NAPs from the planning to the implementation phase?

41. The group reported that gaps in capacity for developing implementation strategies for NAPs relate to conflicting or uncoordinated environmental laws and regulations; the absence of multisectoral approaches to NAP implementation; lack of awareness about climate change and related regulations; lack of analysis of NAP priorities; lack of climate change focal points; limited capacity for NAP implementation, even in priority sectors; difficulties in translating research into policy; transitioning from NAP formulation to implementation; and lack of ownership of implementation strategies.

42. Such events as the NAP Expo were considered important for peer-to-peer learning and the sharing of adaptation-related information and best practices.

43. Lack of coordination in designing realistic NAPs and facilitating their implementation at the national level can be resolved through better communication among the government and the public; by designating focal points in various ministries who have the knowledge to plan and implement adaptation strategies; and by developing climate literacy programmes at the government and public level.

2. Building capacity to integrate consideration of gender equality and social inclusion into national adaptation plans

44. The following questions guided the relevant group discussion:

(a) What specific capacity gaps are countries facing with regard to building capacity to integrate consideration of gender equality and social inclusion into NAPs and how can they be addressed?

(b) How can a gender-responsive approach to the NAP process address gender-related differences in adaptation needs and capacities?

(c) How can it be ensured that the NAP process is inclusive and takes into account different perspectives and ideas with a view to identifying transformative and inclusive climate solutions?

45. The group highlighted the lack of a common understanding of the concepts of gender equality and social inclusion, while bearing in mind the need to take into account that perceptions of both concepts are context-specific and may be culturally determined. It is important to overcome those perceptions in order to improve engagement in capacity-building, the NAP process and the implementation of adaptation.

46. Owing to the lack of coherence across gender-related policies applicable to the NAP process at different levels, there is a need to involve different ministries and institutions, including ministries responsible for matters related to gender and human rights organizations, in the NAP process.

47. There is also a need to build capacity to collect gender-related data for the NAP process, and intersectional analyses of these data must be conducted through both a gender and a social lens.

48. The lack of political will and leadership in relation to integrating consideration of gender into the NAP process limits understanding of participatory and gender-inclusive approaches to NAP implementation. Moreover, in many contexts, it is difficult to foster inclusion and stakeholder engagement among vulnerable, including Indigenous, communities, which may have difficulties in understanding the technical language used by governments. There is a need for more inclusive and accessible language so that stakeholders from vulnerable communities can engage more effectively in the NAP process and produce their own materials on the matter.

3. Building capacity to facilitate participatory governance and locally led adaptation in the context of national adaptation plans

49. The following questions guided the relevant group discussion:

(a) What specific capacity gaps are countries facing with regard to building capacity for participatory governance and locally led adaptation in the context of NAPs?

(b) How can the formulation, implementation and monitoring of adaptation policies be more transparent and inclusive?

(c) How can progress in improving participation and transparency in the context of NAPs be assessed?

50. The group reported that investing in climate education is important for improving public awareness and understanding of climate change. Moreover, public consultations can support the design and implementation of NAPs, promote local leadership on related matters and foster enhanced collaboration with local leaders. There is a need to ensure that NAPs make use of adaptation processes that are locally led.

51. An enabling environment is needed to prevent contradictory adaptation-related policies within government institutions at both the national and the local level.

52. Recognizing members of civil society as important stakeholders is key to successful NAP implementation and strengthening climate resilience.

V. Concluding remarks

53. The 12th Durban Forum offered a broad range of Parties and non-Party stakeholders the opportunity to constructively discuss capacity-building for formulating and implementing NAPs and resulted in key messages on important aspects of the theme.

54. The Forum's thematic alignment with the annual focus area of the PCCB helped the PCCB to leverage the outcomes of the Forum effectively. After actively engaging in the Forum, the PCCB took stock of the outcomes at its 7th meeting and agreed to consider them intersessionally.

55. Moreover, the PCCB will consider the findings from the Forum in developing its annual recommendations for the COP and the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement.

56. In addition, the PCCB will conduct a follow-up webinar in the second half of 2023 to discuss the subtopics of the Forum in more detail.

57. Finally, the PCCB will hold a focus area day and disseminate the findings from the Forum at the 5th Capacity-building Hub, at COP 28.