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The 15th Durban Forum on capacity-building

Report by the secretariat

Summary

The 15th Durban Forum on capacity-building was held on 9 June 2026 during the sixty-fourth session of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation. The theme of the Forum was capacity-building for holistic investment strategies, bankable projects and stakeholder engagement to strengthen the implementation of nationally determined contributions and national adaptation plans in developing countries, aligned with the focus area of the Paris Committee on Capacity-building for 2025–2026. This report provides information on the organization of the Forum and summarizes the presentations and discussions that took place.



Abbreviations and acronyms

CDKN	Climate and Development Knowledge Network
COP	Conference of the Parties
GCBC	Global Capacity Building Coalition
GGGI	Global Green Growth Institute
LoCAL	Local Climate Adaptive Living
NAP	national adaptation plan
NDC	nationally determined contribution
PCCB	Paris Committee on Capacity-building
SB	sessions of the subsidiary bodies
SBI	Subsidiary Body for Implementation
SCF	Standing Committee on Finance
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund

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 Parties, representatives of the UNFCCC constituted bodies, and relevant experts and practitioners to share experience and exchange ideas, best practices and lessons learned regarding the implementation of capacity-building activities. It also requested the secretariat to prepare a summary report on each meeting of the Durban Forum for consideration by the SBI.¹

2. COP 21 decided that the PCCB will annually focus on an area or theme related to enhancing technical exchange on capacity-building with the purpose of maintaining up-to-date knowledge on the successes and challenges in building capacity effectively in a particular area.² COP 24 requested the SBI to thematically align meetings of the Durban Forum with the annual focus area of the PCCB.³

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. Scope

4. This report provides information in chapter II below on the organization of the 15th Durban Forum, including its objectives and the proceedings, and summarizes in chapter III below the presentations and discussions, including panel discussions, that took place at the Forum.

C. Possible action by the Subsidiary Body for Implementation and the Paris Committee on Capacity-building

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

6. The PCCB may wish to use the information in this report on experience, good practices and lessons learned related to capacity-building as input to its work⁵ and in the preparation of its annual recommendations for the COP and the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement.⁶

II. Organization of the 15th Durban Forum

A. Background and objectives

7. The focus area of the PCCB for 2025–2026 is capacity-building for holistic investment strategies, bankable projects and stakeholder engagement to strengthen the implementation of NDCs and NAPs in developing countries.

8. The PCCB implemented a series of activities in the context of this focus area, including regional workshops, expert consultations and knowledge-sharing sessions, culminating in the 15th Durban Forum, entitled “From climate plans to funded projects:

¹ Decision [2/CP.17](#), paras. 144 and 147.

² Decision [1/CP.21](#), para. 74.

³ Decision [15/CP.24](#), para. 6.

⁴ Decision [10/CP.25](#), para. 11.

⁵ As per decision [1/CP.21](#), para. 79.

⁶ As per decision [12/CP.29](#), annex, para. 3(b).

practical capacity-building support for developing countries”, the theme of which was aligned with the annual focus area of the PCCB as per the request referred to in paragraph 2 above.

9. The objectives of the Forum were to:

(a) Take stock of activities undertaken in the context of the annual PCCB focus area;

(b) Facilitate an exchange of good practices and lessons learned relevant to enhancing the capacity of developing country Parties to access the climate finance needed to implement NDCs and NAPs;

(c) Foster understanding of the landscape of capacity-building actors that are supporting access to and scaling up of climate finance for NDC and NAP implementation;

(d) Examine the capacity-building support needed at the pre-readiness stage of accessing climate finance and identify which actors, instruments and coordination mechanisms are most effective in helping developing countries to build the foundations for enabling their access to climate finance.

B. Proceedings

10. The 15th Durban Forum was held on 9 June 2026 during SBI 64, involving approximately 50 participants. Following the opening remarks provided by a representative of the secretariat, the Forum was divided into four segments, facilitated by another representative of the secretariat.

11. SCF Co-Chair Vicky Noens and PCCB Co-Chair Abzeita Djigma delivered scene-setting presentations.

12. Next, presentations on good practices in capacity-building to support access to climate finance for NDCs and NAPs were made by representatives of GGGI, the Ministry of Environment of Sri Lanka, and UNCDF.

13. Subsequently, a discussion exploring the landscape of capacity-building for accessing climate finance was held among a panel consisting of representatives of CDKN, GCBC, and the Mutirão and Burkindi Coalition Capacity Building Initiative.

14. Finally, the six presenters or panellists were brought together for a closing panel discussion on strengthening coherence across the capacity-building landscape with a view to distilling the findings into actionable and usable outputs.

15. The meeting concluded with remarks by the SBI Chair, Julia Gardiner.

16. The agenda, webcast and presentation slides are available on the event page for the 15th Durban Forum.⁷

III. Summary of the 15th Durban Forum

A. Opening segment

17. Drawing on key findings from the Sixth Biennial Assessment and Overview of Climate Finance Flows⁸ and the second report on the determination of the needs of developing country Parties related to implementing the Convention and the Paris Agreement,⁹ the SCF Co-Chair illustrated in her scene-setting presentation the scale and

⁷ <https://unfccc.int/event/15th-durban-forum-on-capacity-building-from-climate-plans-to-funded-projects-mandated-event>.

⁸ SCF. 2024. *Sixth Biennial Assessment and Overview of Climate Finance Flows*. Bonn: UNFCCC. Available at <https://unfccc.int/topics/climate-finance/resources/biennial-assessment-and-overview-of-climate-finance-flows>.

⁹ SCF. 2024. *Second report on the determination of the needs of developing country Parties related to*

diversity of the capacity-building landscape and the need to better understand which actors, instruments and coordination mechanisms are most effective in supporting capacity-building efforts at the pre-readiness stage of accessing climate finance.

18. With the discussions at the Forum marking the end of the period of the PCCB focus area for 2025–2026, in her scene-setting presentation the PCCB Co-Chair took stock of the progress of the activities undertaken in the context of the focus area, such as launching a related knowledge hub,¹⁰ and of the findings and lessons learned accumulated from the implementation of those activities. She underlined that, within the broader landscape of efforts to build capacity for accessing climate finance, translating climate plans into funded projects is currently the central challenge for developing countries that needs to be addressed.

19. Several key messages emerged from the opening segment:

(a) Capacity-building is essential for climate action and has evolved beyond the provision of training and transfer of knowledge to encompass the strengthening of governance structures, domestic institutions, coordination mechanisms, financial ecosystems and data systems;

(b) The scale of capacity-building needs is significant and well documented across national reporting instruments, including NDCs, NAPs and national communications. The needs identified for effectively implementing climate change measures relate to a wide range of areas, including building institutional and technical capacities for planning investment in climate action, identifying relevant needs, developing financing strategies, developing funding proposals and implementing projects. The cost estimates reported vary significantly depending on the reporting instrument, reflecting differences in reporting approaches, methodologies and the level of detail of capacity-building measures provided;

(c) The landscape of capacity-building support for accessing climate finance is fragmented and difficult to navigate, particularly for the least developed countries and small island developing States, which have repeatedly identified limited systemic, institutional and individual capacities, weak national coordination mechanisms, challenges at the pre-readiness stage of accessing climate finance and language barriers as obstacles to progress in the implementation of NDCs and NAPs;

(d) A clear message that was delivered consistently across the flagship SCF reports referred to in paragraph 17 above and emerged from the implementation of activities in the context of the annual PCCB focus area is that finance alone is not enough for implementing needed climate action: long-term, country-driven capacity-building is needed that is embedded within national institutions rather than delivered through isolated, one-off interventions.

B. Sharing good practices in building capacity for accessing climate finance: perspectives from implementing organizations and country practitioners

20. The aim of this segment was to explore replicable approaches to enhancing the capacity of developing country Parties to access climate finance to support their preparation and implementation of NDCs and NAPs, and to facilitate an exchange of knowledge and good practices in this regard. Three presentations were delivered: two by representatives of organizations providing capacity-building support for climate finance access, namely GGGI and UNCDF, and one by a representative of the Ministry of Environment of Sri Lanka sharing the country's experience as a recipient of such support from GGGI.

21. The representative of GGGI presented the organization's approach of embedding climate finance specialists within the climate finance units of government ministries and institutions as a model for building lasting national capacity. Working day-to-day alongside government staff, these advisors help to build bankable project pipelines, develop networks

implementing the Convention and the Paris Agreement. Bonn: UNFCCC. Available at <https://unfccc.int/topics/climate-finance/workstreams/needs-report>.

¹⁰ <https://unfccc.int/topics/capacity-building/pccb/KnowledgeHub/FocusArea2025-26>.

of relevant specialists and support adaptation planning with a direct focus on leveraging finance.

22. Building on the presentation by GGGI, the representative of the Ministry of Environment of Sri Lanka shared the country's experience as a recipient of capacity-building support for accessing climate finance for developing and implementing its NAP for 2025–2035, which was developed through a highly consultative process that ensured ownership across government, civil society and the private sector. It is costed, sectorally structured and devolved to the subnational level through nine parallel provincial adaptation plans, incorporating gender and social action components. Innovative financial instruments, including thematic bonds issued by private banks, are being piloted for matching adaptation needs with private investment.

23. The representative of UNCDF presented the LoCAL Facility as a standardized, performance-based mechanism for increasing climate finance at the subnational level, built on the principle that climate resilience is developed locally but can only be scaled up when national systems exist to channel finance downward and accountability upward. Under the Facility, performance-based grants are disbursed to local governments on the basis of assessed capacity to plan and allocate funding to adaptation action, with capacity built simultaneously at the national and local government level to ensure that both ministries and local governments have the tools needed to integrate climate considerations into planning and spending decisions. This is supported by a replicable climate risk and vulnerability assessment, which helps government practitioners to identify local risks and prioritize investment in adaptation action. In addition to providing grants, the Facility is progressively expanding its engagement with domestic financial intermediaries with the aim of scaling up domestic capital and de-risking subnational investment in climate action over the longer term.

24. Several key messages were identified across the presentations and discussion:

(a) Capacity-building for accessing climate finance is most effective when it operates at multiple levels, simultaneously reaching national, subnational and local actors. This was reflected in the presentations by GGGI and UNCDF: the advisors embedded by GGGI work at both the country and the investment platform level, while the LoCAL Facility builds capacity simultaneously at the local and subnational level. The experience of Sri Lanka illustrated what multi-level support can produce in practice, with its NAP devolved to the subnational level through nine parallel provincial adaptation plans;

(b) Embedding capacity-building activities within existing national systems and institutions makes them more durable. This was evident from all presentations, be it through climate finance specialists being embedded within government ministries as presented by GGGI, a highly consultative NAP development process that ensures ownership across government, civil society and the private sector as shown by Sri Lanka, or the performance-based mechanism that channels finance through national systems presented by UNCDF;

(c) Engagement beyond ministries of environment is considered essential. Finance ministries, local governments, private banks and domestic financial intermediaries are critical actors in making climate finance accessible, and capacity-building must reach and connect all of them. The upstream work on regulatory and legal frameworks for accessing climate finance undertaken by GGGI, the piloting of thematic bonds issued by private banks presented by Sri Lanka and the expanding engagement with domestic financial intermediaries shown by UNCDF all reflect the recognition of this;

(d) Capacity-building and financial instrument deployment are most effective when they happen together. Thematic bonds, investment platforms and domestic financial intermediaries were each presented as part of the solution for supporting access to climate finance, reflecting a broader shift towards building the financial ecosystems needed for climate plans to become funded projects. The representative of GGGI highlighted that facilitating access to adaptation finance is as much about identifying and connecting existing facilitative rules and frameworks as it is about creating new ones;

(e) Replicable tools and approaches play an important role in scaling up capacity-building efforts. For example, climate risk and vulnerability assessment tools, designed to help practitioners to identify local risks and prioritize investment in climate action, were

highlighted by UNCDF as a relevant instrument, while the integration of gender and social action components into the provincial adaptation plans of Sri Lanka offers a further approach for ensuring that capacity-building is inclusive and responsive to the needs of all segments of society;

(f) A less visible but important structural challenge is the movement of skilled technical experts away from national Governments towards international and development organizations. This can undermine institutional capacity in ways that are not always captured by formal monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and should be considered in the design of capacity-building approaches.

25. Following the presentations, the floor was opened for questions from participants, which centred on three related topics: bridging the gap in the coordination and delivery of capacity-building support between the national and the local level; ensuring coherence and avoiding silos among capacity-building providers; and understanding what commitments and engagement are required from developing country counterparts, including finance ministries and local financial institutions, for capacity-building initiatives to succeed in enhancing those countries' access to climate finance.

26. In response to questions asked, the representative of GGGI pointed to the climate finance unit model being supported across eight African countries as an approach to addressing the governance gap between the national and subnational level. The model brings together ministries of environment, finance and planning and relevant sectoral bodies, resulting in integrated discussions, a shared understanding of project risks and joint project prioritization. While acknowledging that this model is still maturing, the representative noted that it represents a step towards the kind of integrated institutional coordination that country platforms are aimed at achieving, and that establishing cross-ministerial processes of this kind is an important foundation for channelling finance and support for climate action to the subnational level.

27. In response to a question on engagement, the representative of GGGI drew on the experience of developing a resilient housing bond with the Government of Ecuador, noting that many facilitative rules and regulations, such as climate-resilient building codes and zoning provisions, were already in place but not yet linked to or leveraged for accessing climate finance. The representative stressed that effective engagement between organizations implementing climate action and country representatives requires communication to be tailored to the interests and priorities of different stakeholders, since finance and environment ministries often have markedly divergent priorities and mandates, and that success depends on connecting different institutional viewpoints around solving a shared underlying problem.

C. Understanding the capacity-building landscape: actors, challenges and opportunities for coordination

28. The aims of the panel discussion were to promote a clear understanding of the landscape of actors working on building capacity for accessing climate finance for NDC and NAP implementation, establish how each actor supports different national stakeholders, and examine lessons learned and the challenges faced in delivering effective support. The three panellists presented their approaches to building capacity for accessing climate finance.

29. The representative of CDKN described an approach centred on using knowledge brokering as a tool for bridging the gap between knowledge and action. Unlike traditional capacity-building models that assume a one-way transfer of expertise from provider to recipient, knowledge brokering starts from the premise that knowledge already exists among diverse actors and seeks to connect those actors to one another. Bringing together governments, practitioners and communities facing similar challenges creates the conditions for innovation, co-creation and durable relationships that outlast one-off training events. The representative illustrated this through the example of embedding local researchers within national NAP processes and convening peer networks around shared challenges, both of which promote the building of ecosystems of local expertise that continue to support governments over time.

30. The representative of GCBC described the organization's role in strengthening capacity-building for accessing climate finance by bringing together practitioners, governments, financial institutions, development partners and funders at both the international and the national level to share knowledge, promote good practices and reduce duplication of capacity-building efforts across a landscape that remains fragmented, difficult to access and unevenly targeted. A concrete output of this work is an open-access knowledge hub¹¹ offering hundreds of multilingual resources on climate finance for enhancing the capacity of those working in the climate finance sector. Noting that GCBC is a core partner of the newly launched Country Platforms Hub,¹² the representative highlighted country platforms as a priority area for GCBC in the scope of its provision of capacity-building support. She noted that translating existing climate strategies and NDC targets into investment pipelines and financed projects remains the central challenge for developing countries in delivering on their climate commitments, and that lessons can be learned from established models of multilateral financing mechanisms such as Just Energy Transition Partnerships.

31. The representative of the Mutirão and Burkindi Coalition Capacity Building Initiative described the aim of the Coalition as being to catalyse investment in capacity-building at the local level by connecting national and international support mechanisms to local communities through traditional leadership structures and bottom-up approaches. Key elements of the Coalition's approach include combining traditional and modern knowledge systems through community-led innovation and locally designed technologies; co-creation and co-design of climate projects with youth; and engagement with local and domestic financial institutions. The representative identified a number of active projects in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, alongside engagement with the African Group and private sector partners.

32. Several key messages emerged across the panel discussion, as detailed below.

33. Peer learning is considered to be more effective when participants share similar barriers, political economic contexts and institutional realities, as this creates a genuine basis for exchange. The representative of CDKN drew on experience from the Needs-based Finance project, where regional economic communities convened member States across different regions to exchange experience and lessons learned and co-design regionally driven capacity-building and implementation programme ideas. Key enabling conditions included the legitimacy conferred by a COP-mandated process and UNFCCC involvement, the convening role of regional economic communities and the participation of multilateral actors. However, a clear limitation was noted: peer learning is effective for nurturing ideas and shared understanding, but for translating those ideas into fundable projects a separate and more intensive period of direct technical support is required.

34. The intermediary space between local communities and national processes represents an area where further investment and support could yield significant results. Community leaders, civil society organizations, youth networks and media organizations play an essential bridging role that is not adequately supported. The representative of CDKN highlighted the potential of active youth networks working with chambers of commerce and young entrepreneurs through co-creation approaches as an example of what this intermediary space can produce, noting the example of two young people in Ghana who conceptualized and developed a programme spanning green business incubation, engagement with chambers of commerce, national media dialogues on climate change, integration of youth perspectives into the NAP process, and the training of young negotiators.

35. Locally led and owned approaches were identified as an important foundation for building collective capacity that lasts. The representative of the Mutirão and Burkindi Coalition Capacity Building Initiative noted that projects for building capacity for accessing climate finance tend to be more effective when they address the specific needs of local communities and stressed the important role of youth as agents of change in this regard, a

¹¹ <https://capacity-building.org/knowledge-hub>.

¹² <https://www.countryplatformshub.org/en>.

view strongly echoed by the representative of CDKN, particularly in the African context given the continent's young population.

36. The representative of GCBC identified several structural drivers for the fragmentation across the capacity-building ecosystem that remains a systemic issue: project-by-project funding cycles that reduce consistency of support over time; metrics of the success of and performance achieved as a result of capacity-building support being evaluated at the project level rather than at the system level; poor visibility for countries of activities undertaken by capacity-building providers; chronic underfunding of local providers relative to international ones; and few incentives for providers to collaborate or share lessons with each other. To address these barriers, the representative suggested needs for, *inter alia*, more centralized and publicly accessible information on available capacity-building support and activities of capacity-building providers, greater visibility for existing capacity-building initiatives and the results they are achieving, stronger peer learning among providers, more systematic partnerships between international and local providers, and a sharper focus on actual country demand for capacity-building support rather than on donor-driven mandates.

37. Three key lessons were learned from the first cohort of initiatives supported under the GCBC Accelerator:¹³ (1) capacity-building support that is tailored to the specific needs of beneficiaries and driven by country demand is more effective in enhancing access to climate finance; (2) its effectiveness is further enhanced when it is connected to concrete financial transactions and project preparation facilities, with one supported organization noting that 80 per cent of climate finance for Africa is received by organizations not based in Africa, underscoring the need to build local capacity to access funds directly; and (3) engaging stakeholders across the full project investment chain, including financial institutions, governments and development partners, in a coordinated manner is essential. For the second cohort of initiatives, GCBC plans to place stronger emphasis on supporting organizations working at the intersection of investment pipeline development and mobilization of finance.

D. Strengthening coherence across the capacity-building landscape

38. In the closing panel discussion, the speakers were invited to reflect on how the different levels of capacity-building for accessing climate finance (individual, institutional and systemic) can be better connected to strengthen coherence across the landscape. The following common themes emerged:

(a) There was broad agreement that viewing capacity-building as a long-term, system-level investment is essential to achieving lasting impact. For sustainability, capacity-building support must be embedded within existing national and institutional systems from the outset, rather than delivered through parallel donor- or implementer-led channels, including by identifying and strengthening existing channels and capacities within those systems. When capacity-building is embedded within national systems and financing reaches budget lines at the municipal level, the results are more likely to outlast individual projects and funding cycles;

(b) Building capacity at both the individual and the institutional level was identified as an important factor for enabling meaningful institutional change: at the individual level through day-to-day support and mentoring that actually helps to build skills, and at the institutional level through mechanisms that bring ministries of finance, planning and environment into shared processes. Entry points such as green bonds and budget tagging can help to open up cross-ministerial conversation on climate finance and adaptation planning, as illustrated by the challenge of costing a NAP with a ministry of finance that has no prior experience of adaptation planning;

(c) Working within the scope of existing governance and institutional arrangements is an essential starting point for locally led approaches. The degree of decentralization of government decision-making and allocation of finance varies significantly across countries, and entry points must be identified within each specific context. Kenya's devolved climate finance architecture, where county climate funds

¹³ <https://capacity-building.org/accelerator>.

supported through the Financing Locally Led Climate Action programme funded by the World Bank have created a functioning channel for connecting national to local finance flows, was highlighted as an example, with the caution that highly devolved models may not be directly replicable in more centralized country contexts;

(d) South-South learning was identified as an underutilized opportunity for capacity-building. Peer exchange between countries facing similar challenges and institutional contexts is considerably more powerful than the provision of generic global guidance. A GCBC-facilitated exchange between the Brazilian and Malaysia Development Banks on country platform development was offered as a concrete example of the value of ongoing, trust-based peer learning.

39. In the closing discussion, a number of opportunities were identified in relation to strengthening the provision of capacity-building support to developing countries for accessing climate finance for the implementation of their NDCs and NAPs:

(a) There is value in taking a longer-term view of how capacity-building is resourced. Where capacity is rooted in locally owned systems and community channels, it is more likely to endure beyond individual project cycles, and legal and financial frameworks for accessing climate finance can play an important role in creating space for new actors and people-centred approaches to capacity-building;

(b) There is potential to extend such capacity-building support to the subnational private ecosystem, including micro-entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized enterprises with locally grounded ideas that need support to develop bankable climate investment projects, as well as financial intermediaries that need support to recognize and help to bring those projects to funding stage;

(c) Greater attention could be paid to how effectiveness of capacity-building programmes is defined and measured, drawing on the priorities of both funders and the communities most affected by climate change, which could help to ensure that such programmes remain responsive to local needs and priorities.

E. Closing

40. In her closing remarks, the SBI Chair recalled that the gap between climate ambition and climate finance is fundamentally a capacity gap, and that strong institutional capacity is needed to move from plans and strategies to implementation of NDCs and NAPs.
