



BRIEFING

Adaptation Communications Balancing utility and flexibility

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The Paris Agreement boosts focus on adaptation in the climate regime by recognising adaptation as a global challenge, and adopting a global goal for adaptation (GGA). The Agreement calls for adaptation planning and implementation at all levels; strengthened international cooperation; and, in Article 7.10, the submission and updating of Adaptation Communications periodically.

These Adaptation Communications can play an important role in contributing to an “ambition mechanism” for adaptation. The Communications can raise the profile of adaptation at all levels (national and global); serve to increase global cooperation on adaptation; and provide valuable input to the global stocktake. According to Article 7.10, the Adaptation Communications should communicate national priorities, plans, actions, and implementation and support needs. As such, they can also play a central role in the identification of national needs and international follow-up, while informing future action and driving ambition.

While the elements listed in Article 7.10 should form the basis for further guidance for the Communications, which is currently being developed, additional clarity is necessary – including on form, purpose, structure, and additional elements. The Paris Agreement is not very clear in communicating the purpose of the Adaptation Communications, partially because of the consensus-based nature of the Agreement which has to accommodate different views, but also because of the need for flexibility by countries with limited capacities.

Article 7.11 of the Paris Agreement states that Adaptation Communications need not constitute a separate, new reporting process, and can be submitted “*as a component of or in conjunction with other communications or documents, including a national adaptation plan, a nationally determined contribution and a national communication*”. The Communications are likely to share common elements with these other reporting requirements of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement, and also have linkages with other UNFCCC negotiation streams, including the global stocktake, the Enhanced Transparency Framework, and the Adaptation Registry.

Further guidance for the Communications should therefore also take these other reports and processes into account, to minimise duplication of efforts; avoid placing an additional burden on developing countries; ensure coherence across

the architecture of the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement; and enhance the effectiveness and usefulness of the Communications.

Parties must also consider how the Adaptation Communications can contribute to the global stocktake and strengthen the review of the adequacy and effectiveness of support for adaptation; assess progress made in achieving the GGA; and maximise synergies with other complementary global agreements and processes such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Parties should ensure that Adaptation Communications are consistent, irrespective of the choice of the reporting vehicle, while allowing for the comparability of information, where required and as appropriate.

In keeping with the objectives described above, the following are a set of recommendations for Parties as they continue their work on developing guidance for the Communications at COP23:

- Parties must find the **right balance between common elements and consistent approaches, and the flexibility which is clearly enshrined in the Paris Agreement**. Otherwise they risk either being locked into a rigid approach, or producing information that is so diverse that it fails to provide an adequate basis for the global stocktake and an assessment of progress towards achieving the GGA. Moreover, the burden on countries will be higher if guidance is not clear, or if there is duplication in reporting requirements across the Convention and Agreement. Ways of achieving this balance could include distinguishing clearly between an overarching set of common elements and a flexible lower-order set of elements; making a clear distinction between opt-in/opt-out elements; differentiating treatment by type of vehicle etc. The Adaptation Communications will evolve with experience, and guidance can be adapted over time.
- Many Parties have highlighted the need for guidance that can serve multiple purposes, and be easily integrated with existing reporting tools. Towards this end, a **simple overarching definition of the purpose of Adaptation Communications, along with elaborated guidelines on how they can be integrated in existing reporting requirement** is recommended. The focus should be on National Communications and NDCs, as NAPs serve a different purpose (as a national forward-looking planning instrument rather than a communication tool).
- Parties should consider how the periodic submission of Adaptation Communications can be **synchronised with the five-year cycles of the global stocktake, and with the NDCs**. Where there is a lack of synchronisation in reporting cycles among the various reporting streams, Parties may wish to consider agreeing on methods for achieving comparability of information and data, where required. One option may include a shift to a five-year time frame for the National Communications, with flexibility for countries that need it.
- Guidance for the Adaptation Communications should **aim for coherence with other negotiation streams of the Paris Agreement work programme, including the global stocktake, the Enhanced Transparency Framework and with the Adaptation Registry**, while taking into account aspects that have already been agreed, such as those contained in Article 7.5. These linkages are necessary to avoid duplication of efforts, and an unnecessary burden on countries.
- It is important that the negotiations **make progress on providing further guidance for the Adaptation Communications**. The negotiations should not be stalled or distracted by questions on whether mitigation negotiations are making similar progress. Political parity should be based on substance and action, not on negotiating time or speed. Parties must conclude work on the Adaptation Communications in time to allow for the operationalisation of the adaptation provisions of the Paris Agreement.

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