

ELABORATING THE PARIS AGREEMENT: COMMUNICATING AND REPORTING ON ADAPTATION



Jennifer Huang, Center for Climate and Energy Solutions

Irene Suarez Perez, Progresum

The Paris Agreement places greater emphasis on adaptation than previous agreements under the UNFCCC. It sets a global adaptation goal, commits parties to undertake adaptation planning and action, commits developed countries to provide adaptation support, and provides for parties to regularly share information related to adaptation.

Parties are encouraged to submit adaptation-related information in two ways: through “adaptation communications” outlining their actions, priorities, needs and efforts; and as part of the information they report under the Agreement’s enhanced transparency framework. Information provided through both channels will serve to inform the agreement’s periodic global stocktake, which is assigned several adaptation-related tasks. The APA, SBI, SBSTA, the Adaptation Committee and other constituted bodies have been assigned roles in elaborating guidance related to adaptation.

This paper provides a brief overview of:

- Existing arrangements on adaptation-related information under the Convention
- Paris provisions related to adaptation-related information
- Key considerations in developing further guidance
- Issues and options for guidance on the adaptation communication and its relationship to other Paris processes.

EXISTING ARRANGEMENTS UNDER THE CONVENTION

A number of existing mechanisms under the Convention provide for the reporting of adaptation-related information, and for assistance to developing countries in developing and implementing adaptation

plans. These include:

National communications: Developed countries are required to report in their national communications on their vulnerability to climate change and their adaptation responses. Developing countries are encouraged to report on strategies and measures, opportunities for and barriers to implementation, and how support programs meet their needs.

National adaptation plans (NAPs): Launched in 2013, the NAP process encourages all parties to develop and implement plans identifying medium- to long-term adaptation needs and outlining strategies to meet them. Bilateral and multilateral support is provided to developing countries to develop and implement their NAPs.

Least Developed Countries Experts Group (LEG): The Marrakech Accords established the LEG, whose mandate includes providing technical guidance and support to least developed countries on their national adaptation plans.

Adaptation Committee: The Cancun Adaptation Framework established the Adaptation Committee as the overall advisory body to the COP on adaptation. The committee considers information communicated by Parties on their monitoring and review of adaptation actions, support provided and received, possible needs and gaps with a view to recommending what further actions may be required.

PARIS PROVISIONS ON ADAPTATION-RELATED INFORMATION

In the lead up to the negotiation of the Paris Agreement, many parties signaled the high priority they attached to adaptation by including adaptation actions in their intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs). As negotiated, the Agreement implicitly allows parties to include such actions in their final, and in subsequent, NDCs.

The core adaptation provisions of the Agreement are contained in Article 7, and include:

- Article 7.1, which establishes the global goal on adaptation of enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change in the context of the Agreement’s temperature goal (Article 2).
- Article 7.3, which states that adaptation efforts of developing countries shall be recognized.
- Article 7.9, which states that each party “shall, as appropriate, engage in adaptation planning processes and the implementation of [adaptation] actions.”

Four provisions of Article 7 address the submission and use of adaptation-related information:

- Article 7.10 says that each party “should, as appropriate, submit and update periodically an adaptation communication,” which may include a party’s priorities, implementation and support needs, plans and actions.
- Article 7.11 says the adaptation communication could be submitted as a component of, or in conjunction with, a party’s NAP, NDC and/or national communication.
- Article 7.12 says that adaptation communications shall be recorded in a public registry maintained by the secretariat.
- Article 7.14 says that the global stocktake to be undertaken every five years under Article 14 shall:
 - Recognize the adaptation efforts of developing countries.
 - Enhance the implementation of adaptation, taking into account adaptation communications.
 - Review the adequacy and effectiveness of adaptation and adaptation support.

- Review overall progress in achieving the global adaptation goal.

In addition, Article 13 addresses the provision and use of adaptation-related information in the context of the Agreement’s enhanced transparency framework:

- Article 13.5 states that the purpose of the framework for transparency of action is to provide a clear understanding of climate change action, including parties’ adaptation actions under Article 7, to inform the global stocktake.
- Article 13.8 states that each party “should” provide information related to climate change impacts and adaptation, “as appropriate.”

KEY CONSIDERATIONS IN DEVELOPING FURTHER GUIDANCE

Articles 7.10 and 13.8 describe in only very general terms the content of, respectively, an adaptation communication (priorities, implementation and support needs, plans and actions), and a party’s adaptation reporting under the transparency framework (impacts and adaptation). The information provided through these channels can, collectively, serve the purposes of:

- Communicating adaptation priorities and needs
- Communicating and/or recognizing adaptation actions
- Informing future adaptation action
- Informing an assessment of adaptation progress.

In serving these or other objectives, the two reporting channels must fit within a broader architecture that includes existing elements under the Convention and new processes established by the Paris Agreement, including the global stocktake. Careful design can help ensure that these reporting mechanisms effectively serve the needs of both individual parties (by enhancing adaptation action) and the regime as a whole. Important considerations include:

- Balancing consistency of reporting (for a clear understanding of actions, needs and progress) with the flexibility needed by parties in light of their individual capacities and circumstances
- Avoiding additional burdens on parties and the regime, including by minimizing duplication of information and effort

- Providing parties the opportunity to communicate both backward-looking information (e.g., to recognize adaptation actions and enable an assessment of progress) and forward-looking information (e.g., to inform actors at all levels of adaptation needs and priorities)
- Establishing mechanisms to effectively distill the information provided by individual parties as a basis for assessing collective progress.

ISSUES AND OPTIONS

EA number of issues arise in considering CMA guidance on the information to be provided and considered under Articles 7, 13 and 14.

VEHICLE(S) FOR THE ADAPTATION COMMUNICATION

Article 7.11 neither prescribes nor excludes any particular vehicle for an adaptation communication; nor does it appear to envision it as an additional, stand-alone instrument. Options for the vehicle or form of a party's adaptation communication (including those referenced in Article 7.11) include a party's:

- National communication
- NAP
- A-NDC (where adaptation is a component of a Party's NDC)
- Biennial transparency report (BTR)
- A combination of these.

Among these vehicles, the national communication and BTR would inherently provide a more retrospective picture of action and support to date, while the A-NDC and NAP would provide a more forward-looking perspective on a party's priorities, plans and needs.

One question is whether the CMA's guidance should apply generally across all potential vehicles for the adaptation communications, or whether it should also include guidance specific to particular vehicles.

CONTENT OF THE ADAPTATION COMMUNICATION

The specific content of parties' adaptation communications will vary widely given the inherently context-specific nature of their adaptation challenges and responses. In providing guidance to parties, the

CMA must consider: how detailed to be in elaborating the types of information to be communicated; and the expectation it wants to set that parties will adhere to this guidance (i.e., "should" vs. "may").

Article 7.10 already identifies some potential informational elements; it says the communication "may" include a party's priorities, implementation and support needs, plans and actions. As a fuller set of options, the communication could include information on:

- National circumstances
- Impacts, vulnerabilities and risk assessments
- Adaptation priorities, policies, plans, actions, strategies and/or programmes
- Adaptation support needs of developing country parties
- Adaptation efforts of developing countries (for recognition)
- Adaptation actions that contribute to economic diversification and/or result in mitigation co-benefits
- Cooperative action at the national, regional and/or international levels
- Progress on implementing adaptation actions and plans
- Legal framework and institutional arrangements
- Monitoring and evaluation.

To promote consistency while retaining flexibility, the guidance could identify certain common elements that parties "should" include in their communications and other optional elements they "may" include at their discretion.

REGISTRY

Article 7.12 requires that adaptation communications be recorded in a public registry maintained by the secretariat. Options include:

- Adding adaptation communications to the existing NDC registry
- Creating a separate, new adaptation-only registry
- Creating a hybrid registry that combines the NDC registry required under Article 4.12 with the adaptation registry required under Article 7.12.

Parties may wish to consider how these options

facilitate the visibility of and access to the adaptation communications; contribute to the recognition of developing countries' adaptation efforts; and affect the secretariat's workload.

RELATIONSHIP TO ARTICLE 13

The adaptation communication intersects with the Article 13 transparency framework in, potentially, two respects.

Under Article 13.8, parties "should" provide adaptation information, as appropriate, presumably via the BTR envisioned in Decision 1.CP/21. As the purpose of this reporting is to provide a clear understanding of action and to help track progress, the information is inherently retrospective.

The CMA guidance could treat the Article 13.8 reporting and the adaptation communication as independent of one another. Or it could, as noted earlier, allow a party to provide its adaptation communication, in part or in full, through its BTR. (Given the non-binding nature of both provisions, parties also could choose to fulfill only one provision, or neither.)

A party's reporting under Article 13.8 is not within the scope of the review processes established by Article 13.11 – the technical expert review and the facilitative, multilateral consideration of progress. The latter process, however, is to consider a party's "implementation and achievement" of its NDC. The question could arise whether this would include any adaptation component a party chooses to include in its NDC.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE GLOBAL STOCKTAKE

The global stocktake is assigned very specific tasks with respect to adaptation: recognizing developing countries' actions; enhancing implementation; reviewing the adequacy and effectiveness of support; and reviewing overall progress.

The Agreement specifies that the global stocktake is to be informed both by parties' adaptation communications and by the transparency framework. Decision 1/CP.21 also requests the constituted bodies to recommend methodologies for reviewing the adequacy and effectiveness of adaptation and support.

Additional mechanisms may be needed to channel input to the GST and to execute its adaptation-related functions. Potential inputs or mechanisms, which could serve more than one function, include:

- A synthesis report by the secretariat based on parties' adaptation communications and on information reported through the transparency framework
- A report by the Adaptation Committee, possibly informed by the synthesis report, highlighting collective needs and priorities and evaluating collective progress and the adequacy of support
- A report (possibly one of the above) recognizing developing countries' actions
- A high-level event recognizing developing countries' actions; and/or
- GST conclusions, adopted by the CMA, addressing all of the GST's adaptation-related functions.



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