Adaptation continues to be a high priority, and the delivery on adaptation-related topics and mandates will be integral to achieving a successful outcome at COP26. Adaptation under the Paris Agreement has several important features that together create a system that strengthens national adaptation action and international cooperation and support for adaptation. A particular emerging issue for COP26 is the global goal on adaptation (GGA). This paper provides context and poses questions on defining the GGA.

Box 1: Questions to Consider

- What type of adaptation information is needed to review whether global adaptive capacity is enhanced, resilience is strengthened, and vulnerability reduced?
- What should be the starting point against which progress is compared?
- Do existing adaptation communication modalities cover the information needed to inform progress toward the GGA?
- How can monitoring and evaluation at the national level be put in place in time for the GST to review overall progress toward achieving the GGA?
- What are the procedural options to take forward discussions on the GGA?
- Could Parties connect political and technical discussions, including in such a way that streamlines the number of items on adaptation across agendas?
- How can the Parties encourage the Adaptation Committee to continue its work on the GGA without pre-empting its potential outcomes?

CONTEXT

The African Group of Negotiators (AGN) originally presented the GGA in the run up to the Paris negotiations as a quantitative goal. The submission included that developed countries should bear the burden of developing countries’ adaptation costs, and that the “adaptation costs associated with the long-term (temperature) goal shall constitute the global adaptation goal.” There was no consensus on the submission by the Parties for a variety of technical, political, constitutional, and legal reasons. The outcome of the Paris Agreement does not, therefore, describe a quantitative goal for adaptation but...
establishes the GGA as a shared aspirational goal with political—rather than legal—effect and as a part of the global stocktake (GST).

Since COP21 there has been increasing pressure to further define the GGA. In February 2021, the COP25 and incoming COP26 presidencies held consultations with heads of delegation on adaptation and captured the discussion in a Co-Chairs’ summary. The GGA was discussed, and it was highlighted that further steps were necessary to ensure progress on conceptualizing and understanding the GGA and its review process. The presidencies hosted three informal workshops on the GGA in May, July, and August. These informal workshops posed several discussion questions aiming at crystallizing the understanding of the GGA.

At the July 25–26 Ministerial hosted by the COP26 President Designate in London, the Minister of Forestry and Fisheries and Environmental Affairs of the Republic of South Africa proposed that the aim of the GGA should be to increase the resilience of the global population to climate change by at least 50 percent by 2030 and reduce the portion of the global population that is impacted by the adverse effects of climate change by at least 50 percent by 2050, and by at least 90 percent by 2050. In this regard, focus would be placed on the most vulnerable people and communities; their health and well-being; food and water security; infrastructure and the built environment; and ecosystems and ecosystem services, particularly in Africa, Small Island Developing states and Least Developed Countries.

There are different interpretations of how the GGA fits within the Paris Agreement, and how it should be operationalized. Some Parties have, in response to the South African proposal, pointed toward the need to pay closer attention to the wording of the GGA and how it relates to the adaptation article. (See Annex 1 for a summary of the relevant adaptation paragraphs.)

In addition, it might be helpful to look at how the wording of the GGA in Article 7.1 uses the word “establishing” the GGA as a “global” goal. It does not refer to the “Party” or “Parties,” nor does it use the words “shall,” “should,” “may,” or “could,” which are generally used to convey legal implications. However, the wording nevertheless carries aspirational and political weight. Arguably, national implementation of the GGA is not required. However, Parties could view the GGA as an encouragement to establish political aspirational goals for adaptation in their laws and policies.

It is important to note that the GST is what operationalizes the GGA and puts it into context of the greater structure of the Paris Agreement. The GST Article 7.14 catalyzes the “review” of the “overall progress” made in achieving the GGA. It is therefore of great importance in understanding the overall frame in which the GGA should be discussed.

**ISSUES TO BE DECIDED AT COP26**

Adaptation will be discussed on each of the four agendas at COP26. Key issues include:

- the consideration and adoption of recommendations from the annual reports of the Adaptation Committee for 2019, 2020, and 2021
- the assessment of progress in the process to formulate and implement national adaptation plans (NAPs)
- matters related to the Adaptation Fund.

In addition, a proposal was received from Gabon on behalf of AGN on August 17, 2021, to include a Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA) item on “matters relating to adaptation” on the agenda for Glasgow, which includes a sub-item on the “global goals [sic] on adaptation.” This item was subsequently placed on the advance CMA provisional agenda.

With respect to the reports of the Adaptation Committee, the CMA had requested the Adaptation Committee consider approaches to review the overall progress made in achieving the GGA and to reflect the outcome of this in its 2021 annual report. The Adaptation Committee was also tasked with the preparation and publication of a technical paper on useful information and methodologies for assessing progress in enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience, and reducing vulnerability in climate change.

The Adaptation Committee’s annual report was published on September 24, 2021, and contains recommendations for consideration at COP26 and CMA3. In short, the report highlights the challenges with creating common metrics/indicators for measuring the GGA. The Committee’s recommendations and observations in relation to the review of the overall progress in achieving...
the GGA include:
• There are methodological, empirical, conceptual, and political challenges tied to the approaches to review the overall progress in achieving the GGA.
• The review of the overall progress in achieving the GGA during the GST will have to manage various trade-offs between key criteria for assessing adaptation progress, such as: between aggregability and sensitivity to national context; between aggregability and coherence; and between feasibility of reviewing overall progress on adaptation, aggregability, and the ability to conduct longitudinal assessments.
• Understanding progress on adaptation requires functional monitoring and evaluation systems at the subnational and/or national level. Parties are encouraged to develop and implement such systems to improve adaptation planning and implementation.
• Parties should consider using a “basket of approaches,” informed by the Adaptation Committee’s technical paper.
• Parties are strongly encouraged to prepare and submit NAPs, reports, and communications regularly and in a timely manner for the GST and to include information that can contribute to the review of the overall progress made in achieving the GGA. Documents should also include information on how Parties have considered the GGA in their national context, consistent with existing guidance on the respective plans, reports, and communications.

The Adaptation Committee’s work provides a substantive contribution to the technical considerations necessary to flesh out the potential for the GGA. The current workstreams of the Committee could also provide context in which to review the GGA.

OPTIONS FOR DEFINING THE GGA

Paris Agreement Parties meeting in Glasgow could give further consideration on how to understand the GGA in the context of Article 7 and the GST.

The GST provides the framework for reviewing the overall progress made in achieving the GGA, while the GGA must define what constitutes progress in achieving, at a global level, “enhanced adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability,” with a view to contributing to sustainable development, and ensuring that the adaptation response is “adequate” in the context of rising temperatures.

Parties could take several approaches, including:
• A simplified approach. The review of the overall progress of the Paris Agreement’s GGA could be fulfilled by Parties reporting along guiding questions, such as: (i) whether the national adaptive capacity is enhanced (ii) whether resilience is strengthened, (iii) whether the vulnerability to climate change reduced, and (iv) whether the adaptation response is adequate in context of the temperature goal.
• A complex approach. Parties could begin to discuss a standardized suite of indicators that could allow for a review of Parties’ progress toward “enhanced adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience, and reducing vulnerability.” These indicators could be used to specify the level of details each Party should provide in its adaptation communication and could eventually lead to a set of universal indicators.
• A target number approach is the approach proposed by the African Group at the July ministerial.
• A medium complex approach, which would go further than the simplified level in that it would introduce some qualitative and quantitative elements that are readily available, closely connected to the wording of Article 7.1, and in line with the requirements of the GST.

A simplified approach would avoid additional burdens on developing country Parties as the information is most likely already provided under the adaptation communications, in particular the NAPs. That further avoids negotiating indicators and enables Parties to input to the GST in a timely manner. Importantly, Parties would need to decide on the point in time progress should be measured against. This approach might not fully facilitate realising the potential in the GGA, as it would provide limited information and would probably lack precision in measuring progress.

In the complex approach, the number of obstacles and trade-offs required to find common indicators could limit its usefulness. The process would take time, resources, and focus that could be used on other agenda items. It could lead to an increased reporting burden
for developing country Parties, with unclear benefits for the most vulnerable to climate change. This option could also be politically challenging to negotiate, and it is questionable whether this approach is in line with Parties’ intentions under the Paris Agreement. On the other hand, proponents of this option would point to the potential it holds in providing a rich and detailed picture of the status of adaptation on a global level. Working on implementing this option might also encourage further scientific research and lead to a more coherent understanding of definitions and indicators across the globe.

The target number approach could face challenges given the nature of adaptation and the blurred lines between adaptation and development. More information is needed about how the proposal follows mandates and guidance from the Paris Agreement, incorporates existing adaptation finance structures, and addresses the balance between national responsibility and global cooperation and support under Article 7. The proponents of this option would point toward its potential for generating the necessary support for adaptation finance.

A mid- or medium complex approach could be more flexible in using a range of methodologies. It would not create an additional reporting burden on developing country Parties while enabling the assessment of the direction of travel for the GGA and the review of the overall progress made in achieving it. Rather than negotiating standardized indicators, Parties could address other key adaptation-related issues, such as how the GST can enhance the implementation of adaptation action (see Article 7.14(c) in the Paris Agreement). The drawback of this option is that it may not be agreeable to the proponents of the target number approach. In addition, it may not necessarily lead to greater scientific efforts on establishing shared global indicators for adaptation.

Key considerations for COP26:

- How the different elements of adaptation fit within the broader framework established under the Paris Agreement, including the GST.
- The tension between understanding global progress on adaptation and the ability of Parties to tell their own story of adaptation and strengthening resilience. Understanding strengthened resilience at the global level should not detract from or impair the strengthening of Parties’ national and local adaptation processes and their implementation.

- The Adaptation Committee is developing draft supplementary guidance documents for the adaptation communication for consideration at COP27. In addition, the Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG) and the Adaptation Committee have been requested to assist the secretariat in its synthesis report on recognition of the adaptation efforts of developing country parties (due to be published in 2022). Finally, the LEG, Adaptation Committee, and Standing Committee on Finance is currently working on compiling existing methodologies for reviewing the adequacy and effectiveness of adaptation and support.

- A number of ongoing assessments can be drawn upon to provide either qualitative or quantitative measures. For example, synthesizing Party inputs like adaptation communications can provide a qualitative review, while the number of NAPs submitted and the number of countries reporting vulnerability assessments could provide quantitative indicators. The LEG already periodically assesses the progress of developing countries in undertaking adaptation planning processes under the NAPs process. Existing quantitative and qualitative data from the Sustainable Development Goals, Sendai Framework, and other relevant international sources could also be used.

FORUM & PROCESS

There are several options for the forum and process to undertake further deliberations on the GGA at and beyond Glasgow, including:

- Informal consultations, political or technical
- A roadmap or work program to facilitate progress toward the GGA, closely tied to Article 7 and in line with the GST requirements
- A process to enable the GST to understand progress on adaptation, both in terms of information needed and the process of collecting and evaluating the information
- A dedicated agenda item on the GGA (CMA provisional agenda item 16 “Matters relating to adaptation”)
- To give the Adaptation Committee more time and space to further develop its work on the GGA, with a
particular view to ascertain how the GGA relates to the other processes established under Article 7.

If Parties choose to continue high-level consultations with the presidencies, could the COP enable productive engagement on the GGA at Glasgow and beyond? One option would be for the COP26 Presidency to convene ministerial discussions specifically at COP26 to seek political guidance.

Parties have broadly supported work on a roadmap or work program to facilitate progress toward the GGA. Such a roadmap could provide a useful direction of travel and begin to provide coherence across adaptation mandates and agenda items. Glasgow could give political and technical guidance on the form of a roadmap or work program to deliberate on the GGA, including key milestones and alignment with the timetable for the GST. Such a roadmap or work program could be established through existing agenda items or could be established by a new agenda item.

There are various options to take forward the work of the GGA, including:

- the CMA provisional agenda item 16 “Matters relating to adaptation,” which consists of the following:
  - (provisional) The global goals [sic] on adaptation
  - (provisional) Enhancing the implementation of adaptation action taking into account the adaptation communication referred to in Article 7, paragraph 10.

- the SBI
  - under the agenda item 4 “Report of the Adaptation Committee,” as the Committee will report on its work with the GGA
  - under a new agenda item to be decided by the Parties.

- the SBSTA.
  - under the agenda item 4 “Report of the Adaptation Committee,” as the Committee will report on its work with the GGA
  - under a new agenda item to be decided by the Parties.

The COP agenda item “All matters of adaptation” would probably not be a relevant forum as the GGA was first established in the Paris Agreement.

For all options it will be necessary to tie closely together the GGA with the rest of the adaptation for GST elements under Article 7.14, and to ensure that it is in line with the rest of the GST process as there are several workstreams and ongoing discussions in the adaptation room that are linked to the GST.

A final consideration is how to ensure that the Adaptation Committee can continue its work on the GGA and that Parties do not pre-emptively make decisions without having received the benefits from the Committees finished work.
Article 7 of the Paris Agreement recognizes "that adaptation is a global challenge faced by all with local, subnational, national, regional, and international dimensions," and it is "a key component of and makes a contribution to the long-term global response to climate change to protect people, livelihoods, and ecosystems."  

Article 7.1 of the Paris Agreement established, for the first time, a *global goal on adaptation* aimed at:  
- enhancing adaptive capacity  
- strengthening resilience  
- reduce vulnerability, with a view to contributing to sustainable development  
- ensure an adequate adaption response in the context of the temperature goal of holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 degrees C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit it below 1.5 degrees C.  

Article 7.5 outlines the principles that adaptation action should follow (i.e., *how* adaptation planning processes and implementation should be undertaken). Adaptation action should follow a country-driven, gender-responsive, participatory, and fully transparent approach, taking into consideration vulnerable groups, communities, and ecosystems. It should be based on and guided by best available science and traditional, indigenous peoples, and local knowledge systems. It should also integrate adaptation into socioeconomic and environmental policies and actions.  

Article 7.9 gives a non-exhaustive list of the different adaptation planning processes and implementation actions parties should engage in. Thus, it explains *what* the Parties should do to implement the adaptation article. This includes:  
- implementation of adaptation actions, undertakings, and/or efforts  
- the process to formulate and implement national adaptation plans  
- climate change impacts and vulnerability assessments, to formulate nationally determined prioritized actions, taking into account vulnerable people, places and ecosystems  
- monitoring and evaluating and learning from adaptation plans, policies, programs, and actions  
- building the resilience of socioeconomic and ecological systems, including through economic diversification and sustainable management of natural resources.  

In addition, Article 7 states that the adaptation efforts of developing countries shall be recognized (Art 7.3); that Parties should strengthen their cooperation on enhancing action on adaptation (Art 7.7); that each Party should, as appropriate, periodically submit and update adaptation communications (Art 7.10); and, that continuous and enhanced international support shall be provided to developing country parties for the implementation of paragraphs 7, 9, 10, and 11.  

Finally, Article 7.14 sets out that the global stocktake shall:  
- recognize adaptation efforts of developing country Parties  
- enhance the implementation of adaptation action taking into account the adaptation communication  
- review the adequacy and effectiveness of adaptation and support provided for adaptation  
- review the overall progress made in achieving the GGA.  

The Katowice COP text adopted guidance for adaptation communications and defined the sources of input that will inform the GST on the state of adaptation efforts, support, experience, and priorities: national adaptation plans, adaptation communications, and information on adaptation provided through a Party’s biennial transparency report.
ANNEX 2: ADAPTATION-RELATED MANDATES IN THE GLASGOW AGENDAS

Given the delay in formal meetings, there are a large number of adaptation-related mandates and items on the agendas in Glasgow:

SBSTA
- Mandates-issues that were to be considered in 2020:
  - Nairobi work programme on impacts, vulnerability, and adaptation to climate change\textsuperscript{15}
  - Report of the Adaptation Committee (2019 and 2020).\textsuperscript{16}
- Mandates-additional issues to be considered in 2021:
  - Report of the Adaptation Committee (2021).\textsuperscript{17}
- Agenda items:\textsuperscript{18}
  - Nairobi work programme on impacts, vulnerability, and adaptation to climate change
  - Report of the Adaptation Committee (for 2019, 2020, and 2021)
  - Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform.

SBI
- Mandates-issues that were to be considered in 2020:\textsuperscript{19}
  - Report of the Adaptation Committee (2019 and 2020)\textsuperscript{20}
  - Work of the Least Developed Countries Expert Group\textsuperscript{21}
  - Review of the Least Developed Countries Expert Group\textsuperscript{22}
  - Accessibility and transparency of meetings of the LDC Expert Group\textsuperscript{23}
  - Gaps and needs and the implementation of national adaptation plans\textsuperscript{24}
  - Membership of the Adaptation Fund Board\textsuperscript{25}
  - Fourth review of the Adaptation Fund.\textsuperscript{26}
- Mandates-additional issues to be considered in 2021:\textsuperscript{27}
  - Report of the Adaptation Committee (2021)
  - Assessment of progress in the process to formulate and implement NAPs.\textsuperscript{28}
- Agenda items:\textsuperscript{29}

- National adaptation plans
- Matters relating to the Adaptation Fund:
  (a) Membership of the Adaptation Fund Board
  (b) Fourth review of the Adaptation Fund.

COP (PROVISIONAL) AGENDA ITEMS:\textsuperscript{30}
- Report of the Adaptation Committee (for 2019, 2020, and 2021)
- All matters of adaptation.

CMP (PROVISIONAL) AGENDA ITEM:\textsuperscript{31}
- Matters relating to the Adaptation Fund:
  (a) Report of the Adaptation Fund Board (for 2020 and 2021)
  (b) Fourth review of the Adaptation Fund.

CMA (PROVISIONAL) AGENDA ITEMS:\textsuperscript{32}
- Report of the Adaptation Committee (for 2019, 2020 and 2021)
- Public registries under the Paris Agreement: (b) Modalities and procedures for the operation and use of a public registry referred to in Article 7, paragraph 12, of the Paris Agreement
- Matters related to finance:
  (b) Guidance to the Green Climate Fund
  (c) Guidance to the Global Environment Facility
  (d) Matters relating to the Adaptation Fund
- Matters relating to adaptation:
  (a) Reports of the Adaptation Committee (2019, 2020, and 2021 and review of the Adaptation Committee)
  (b) The global goals [sic] on adaptation
  (c) Recognition of adaptation efforts of developing country Parties
  (d) Enhancing the implementation of adaptation action taking into account the adaptation communication referred to in Article 7, paragraph 10
  (e) The adequacy and effectiveness of adaptation and support provided for adaptation.
THE GLOBAL GOAL ON ADAPTATION: ISSUES FOR COP26

ENDNOTES

1  This paper does not address adaptation finance.


6  For more details on the adaptation-related mandates on the Glasgow agendas, please see Annex 2 to this paper.

7  UNFCCC, African Group, Request for new agenda items on the provisional agenda of the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 26) Glasgow, 31 October-12 November 2021 (Aug. 16, 2021), https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/AGN%20request%20for%20new%20agenda%20items.pdf; See also, UNFCCC, Provisional agenda and annotations (Advance version), Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement Third session, FCCC/PA/CMA/2021/1 (Sept. 3, 2021), https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2021_01_adv.pdf [CMA provisional agenda].


11  UNFCCC, Adaptation Committee, Draft supplementary guidance for voluntary use by Parties in communicating information in accordance with the possible elements of an adaptation communication, AC20/GUID/5B (Aug. 30, 2021), https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/ac20_5b_adcomms.pdf.

12  “Paris Agreement,” Art 7.2.

13  “Paris Agreement,” Art 7.1 and Art. 2.1(a).

14  UNFCCC, Further guidance in relation to the adaptation communication, including, inter alia, as a component of nationally determined contributions, referred to in Article 7, paragraphs 10 and 11, of the Paris Agreement, Decision 9/CMA.1 (Mar. 19, 2019); UNFCCC, Matters relating to Article 14 of the Paris Agreement and paragraphs 99–101 of decision 1/CP.21, Decision 19/CMA.1 ¶ 36(c) (Mar. 19, 2019).

15  UNFCCC, Report of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice on the first part of its forty-eighth
session, held in Bonn from 30 April to 10 May 2018, FCCC/SBSTA/2018/4 (July 3, 2018); UNFCCC, Report of the 
Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice on its fifty-first session, held in Madrid from 2 to 9 December 

16 UNFCCC, Outcome of the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the 
Convention, Decision 2/CP.17, ¶ 96 (Mar. 15, 2012); UNFCCC, Report of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and 
Technological Advice on its fifty-first session, held in Madrid from 2 to 9 December 2019, FCCC/SBSTA/2019/5, ¶ 10 
(Mar. 16, 2020).

17 UNFCCC, Decision 2/CP.17, ¶ 96.

18 UNFCCC, Provisional agenda and annotations (Advance version), Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological 
Advice Fifty-second to fifty-fifth session, FCCC/SBSTA/2021/2 (Sept. 3, 2021), https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/
resource/sbsta2021_02_adv.pdf.


20 UNFCCC, Decision 2/CP.17, ¶ 96; UNFCCC, Report of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation on its fifty-first ses-
sion, held in Madrid from 2 to 9 December 2019, FCCC/SBI/2019/20, ¶ 38 (Mar. 16, 2020) [SBSTA 55 report].

21 UNFCCC, Decision 6/CP.16, Extension of the mandate of the Least Developed Countries Expert Group, ¶ 3 (Mar. 
15, 2011).

22 UNFCCC, Extension of the mandate of the Least Developed Countries Expert Group, Decision 19/CP. 21 ¶¶ 4.13 
(Jan. 29, 2016).

23 UNFCCC, SBSTA 55 report ¶ 50.

24 UNFCCC, National adaptation plans, Decision 7/CP.25, ¶ 11.

25 UNFCCC, Matters relating to the Adaptation Fund, Decision 1/CMP.14, ¶¶ 4, 5; UNFCCC, Report of the Subsidiary 
Body for Implementation on its fifty-first session, held in Madrid from 2 to 9 December 2019, FCCC/SBI/2019/20, ¶ 74 
(Mar. 16, 2020).

26 UNFCCC, Third review of the Adaptation Fund, Decision 2/CMP.13, ¶ 9 (Feb. 8, 2018).


28 UNFCCC, National adaptation plans, Decision 8/CP.24, ¶ 19 (Mar. 19, 2019).

29 UNFCCC, Provisional agenda and annotations (Advance version), Subsidiary Body for Implementation Fifty-second 
adv_0.pdf.

30 UNFCCC, Provisional agenda and annotations (Advance version), Conference of the Parties Twenty-sixth session, 

31 UNFCCC, Provisional agenda and annotations (Advance version), Conference of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol Sixteenth session, FCCC/KP/CMP/2021/1 (Sept. 5, 2021), 

32 CMA provisional agenda.
Other C2ES Resources:


Outcomes of the UN Climate Change Conference in Madrid, December 2019.


*Essential Elements of the Paris ‘Rulebook,’* November 2018.

*Elaborating the Paris Agreement: Transparency of Finance,* August 2018.