

Significant differences remain in adaptation talks

Bonn, 7 June (Chee Yoke Ling and Hilary Chiew) – While there is agreement on the urgency of adaptation actions, there are still significant differences among Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

In the adaptation contact group of the Ad-hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention (AWG-LCA) that met on 5 June, the issue of the inclusion of actions to deal with the economic and social consequences of response measures to mitigate climate change within the scope of adaptation remained unresolved.

Developing countries support the establishment of an Adaptation Committee under the UNFCCC as a new institutional arrangement for enhanced action on adaptation but developed country Parties prefer to strengthen existing institutions/mechanisms.

Several developing countries also cautioned against the introduction of a new category of “most vulnerable” developing countries.

To guide the discussion, the Chair of the Ad-hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention (AWG-LCA), Margaret Mukhahanana Sangarwe had posed four questions based on paragraphs 5 and 6 of Chapter I (A shared vision for long-term cooperative action) and on Chapter II (Enhanced action on adaptation) of the Chair’s facilitating text:

- (1) What should be the scope of enhanced action on adaptation; should it only encompass the adverse effects of climate change or also the impact of the implementation of response measures (in relation to Paragraph 5 of Chapter I and Paragraph I of Chapter II);
- (2) What should be the functions of any institutional arrangements for adaptation under the Convention (in relation to Paragraph 7 of Chapter II);

- (3) How should loss and damage associated with climate change impacts in developing countries that are particularly vulnerable be addressed (in relation to Paragraph 8 of Chapter II); and
- (4) How should adaptation action be matched with support (in relation to Paragraph 6 of Chapter II).

Maldives, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China stressed that adaptation is critical for all developing countries. The core issue in adaptation is funding that has to be new and additional to official development assistance (ODA), grant-based, predictable and sustained. It said country-driven adaptation consistent with financial provision in long-term cooperative action is vital.

On institutional arrangement, it said the Group favoured Option 1 of Paragraph 7 in Chapter II on the establishment of an Adaptation Committee under the Convention and that the Adaptation Fund under the Kyoto Protocol could be a good reference to apply.

It supports the establishment of an international mechanism to address loss and damage associated with climate change impacts including impacts related to extreme weather events and slow onset events, through risk management, insurance, compensation and rehabilitation.

It emphasised that the fundamental issue in adaptation is long term financing and adaptation actions must be supported by developed country Parties, be country-driven, adding that it had to be coherent to meet adaptation needs with a strong focus on adaptation implementation.

Bangladesh, on behalf of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) said all LDCs are on the frontline or at ground zero. On adaptation to the impacts from the implementation of response measures, it said this was captured in Chapter VII.

(Chapter VII addresses the implementation of response measures to mitigate climate change that may result in negative economic and social consequences for other Parties.)

On the establishment of an Adaptation Committee, it suggested that the footnote to paragraph 7 Option 1 be incorporated into the text so that Parties have a holistic view of the Committee, its functions and roles.

(The footnote says the Adaptation Committee shall consist of 32 members nominated by Parties, with 20 members from Parties not included in Annex I of the Convention. The members of the Committee shall serve in their personal capacities.)

It also said it would like to see some small brackets removed from the text (paragraph 7 Option 1) so the Committee is clear about its functions and roles to address all the adaptation needs of LDCs and all developing countries.

Bangladesh also welcomed the establishment of regional centres and networks which will help promote adaptation at the country and regional level as well as the formation of an international centre to enhance adaptation research and coordination.

It picked Option 1 of Paragraph 8 in Chapter II for Parties to elaborate modalities and procedures for the international mechanism to address loss and damage, for adoption by the Conference of Parties at its 16th session.

Adaptation, it stressed, is important and very dear to countries on ground zero and the frontline of climate change.

Cook Islands, on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) said enhanced actions on adaptation is badly needed as these countries faced capacity constraint in finance, their adaptation projects are small scale and have high transaction costs.

It said the scope should not include actions related to the impact from implementation of response measures. That should be dealt with separately under mitigation in Chapter VII.

Current institutional arrangements, it said, are lacking and fragmented and incoherent; they pale in comparison to the mitigation efforts.

The Group called for some balance between mitigation and adaptation efforts. It said AOSIS has

long called for the establishment of an international mechanism to address loss and damage arising from climate change and underpinned by risk reduction and management.

AOSIS also said small island developing states and LDCs face serious cost-effectiveness challenge in mitigation and adaptation activities as their insurance market are under-developed, to address climate change.

It stressed that adaptation finance must be country-driven and not based on preferences of financing partners so as not to repeat the mistakes of National Action Plans on Adaptation (NAPAs) where there were detailed planning that is not implemented and that lack adequate linkage with financing resources.

Ghana, on behalf of the African Group said enhanced actions on adaptation is urgently required by developing countries, in particular Africa, least developed countries and small island developing states, and taking into consideration vulnerable group, communities, gender-sensitivity, ecosystems and traditional knowledge. It called for enhancing of cooperation at all levels where appropriate.

It said the proposed Adaptation Committee could provide technical support, research and development, conduct vulnerability assessment, early warning system, build climate-resilient economies and promote cooperation.

It believed that particularly in situations where adaptation is no longer possible, an international mechanism to look into environmental, economic and social loss and damage should be established.

In executing matching adaptation actions, Parties need to implement short, mid- and long term plans and projects at local, regional and sub-regional level at different systems and addressing barriers and providing technical assessment to the financial mechanism.

It said there should also be assessment of whether support is delivered in a simplified manner with direct access and whether it is new and additional grant-based primarily from developed countries' public resources and accompanied by technology transfer.

China reiterated that all developing countries are victims of climate change. Developed countries

should provide adequate funding that is new and additional to ODA for short, mid- and long-term finance.

It said that in the past mitigation and adaptation were not treated equally because of the lack of an adaptation body under the UNFCCC. It also supported the creation of an Adaptation Committee to give greater support to adaptation efforts.

It was also in favour of risk reduction and management, and insurance to address loss and damage caused by climate change.

Pakistan disagreed with the distinction of “most vulnerable” category of developing countries found in many documents, saying that it is inconsistent with the UNFCCC and that it is important to have a scientifically- established criteria.

On institutional arrangements, Pakistan said there are two strands of opinion that focus on the need for a new institution or strengthening existing institutions. However, it said, we are not looking at the existing Adaptation Fund that was set up by Parties themselves, and there are lessons for the bigger financial mechanism. It expressed concern that any fund will take time to establish.

Micronesia said that for SIDS, adaptation is really about our survival. It supported an Adaptation Committee to deal with the fragmented work.

Guatemala said it was a particularly vulnerable country and proposed the consideration of social and human development indicators.

Grenada said there is no need for a new definition of vulnerability if Parties follow the Bali Action Plan as has been decided. It said that it has been stated on the floor (of the contact group) that there is need to clarify who is more vulnerable. Grenada said, however, that we should not reclassify developing countries.

It said vulnerability refers to large scale, systematic and near catastrophe and Parties need to recognise that definition.

[Paragraph 1 (c) of the Bali Action Plan in relation to enhanced adaptation refers to “International cooperation to support urgent implementation of adaptation actions, including through vulnerability assessments, ... and other ways to enable climate-resilient development and reduce vulnerability of all Parties, taking into account the urgent and immediate

needs of developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, especially the least developed countries and small island developing States, and further taking into account the needs of countries in Africa affected by drought, desertification and floods”.

It also calls for “Disaster reduction strategies and means to address loss and damage associated with climate change impacts in developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change”.]

Nicaragua said it is necessary to adopt urgent adaptation strategies and measures to prevent, reduce or minimise the adverse effect of climate change on vulnerable regions of Mother Earth, particularly in vulnerable developing countries like LDCs, SIDS and African countries affected by droughts and the poorest and most vulnerable populations of other developing countries.

It stressed that developed countries should provide financial and technological resources to developing countries to cover all the agreed full costs from the development of national adaptation programmes.

Financial resources must be adequate, predictable and sustained, and additional in character, therefore, different from ODA. It said it is necessary to define which aspects of vulnerability must be addressed by domestic development efforts and assisted in the case of developing countries by ODA and what are the incremental costs for adaptation to be fully covered by the Convention’s financial mechanism.

It also said adaptation measures should be addressed in the context of national development policies and poverty eradication strategies, which is the fundamental cause of vulnerability.

The Adaptation Fund, it added, should aim at facilitating the financing for the implementation of the commitments set by the Convention and should be from contributions from developed countries and other funding sources consistent with principles and provisions of the Convention.

Saudi Arabia called for a comprehensive approach to damage caused by climate change as well as from implementation of response measures to mitigate climate change. It said that the impact of response measures is very important for many developing countries and these are totally different from mitigation.

It said that in Copenhagen leaders, including leaders from AOSIS and LDCs agreed to the notion that the impact of response measures is an important part of adaptation.

It stressed that Article 4.8 of the UNFCCC recognised that the group of countries that are economically vulnerable has to adapt.

On institutions, Saudi Arabia said that current institutions are insufficient and a new financial window for adaptation will help developing countries to adapt to changes in climate and to impacts of response measures.

It stressed that for a group of countries, economic diversification is very important for those developing countries that are highly dependent on export of fossil fuel. It said that fossil fuels will be one of the victims of climate change.

Algeria supported this saying that “if you want us to survive and not disappear we will need to deal with adverse effects of response measure at the same time as adaptation”.

Bolivia stressed that adaptation should be seen in a more holistic manner. Another dimension has to do with international policies and rules, and the ways of life of people in the world and Mother Earth.

It said that we cannot solve this problem (of climate change) only through money. In the World Conference in Cochabamba it was agreed that people in the South cannot keep adapting and it was recognised that if there is no adaptation of consumption and way of life there is no end to adaptation.

Bolivia also raised the issue of migration, saying that if a neighbour’s house burns, we would take them in – so Parties need to consider this.

It stressed the importance of human rights, including indigenous peoples rights as well as Mother Earth’s rights, the issue of climate debt, and the link between financial resources and this debt.

It said that a climate justice and environmental tribunal is needed to ensure that commitments are met.

Philippines emphasised that in matching adaptation with support, it has to be country-driven and domestically determined so as not to be subjected to externally imposed conditions.

Barbados said that even with the best response measures to the climate change crisis, the signs are clear that impacts will increase. Therefore, Parties need a variety of tools including insurance and private sector involvement but acknowledged that it should be undertaken in a transparent manner.

It noted that Annex I Parties have made many new elaborate institutional arrangements for mitigation and believed that the same is needed for adaptation.

On the issue of scope of enhanced adaptation, it fully agreed that Parties must resolve the issue of the impact of response measures in a comprehensive manner but that this should be dealt with under the mitigation building block of the Bali Action Plan.

It said that if there are two patients seeking medical treatment – one with a common cold and another in a serious and critical condition – a different kind of attention must be given to the one with a serious illness even though both needs treatment.

New Zealand agreed with Cook Islands (AOSIS) on the scope issue and was firmly of the view that enhanced adaptation actions does not include adaptation to the impacts of response measures. It noted that Paragraph 3 of the Copenhagen Accord acknowledged “adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change and the potential impacts of response measures” but it does not spell out how this is to be done and the chair’s text does it right (placing it in the mitigation chapter).

It said an international mechanism under the UNFCCC to address loss and damage from climate change is an inappropriate function for the UNFCCC as it is difficult to prove which climate change event is linked with a specific extreme event. Instead, it suggests enhancing the role of the Adaptation Fund to be a fund under the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol.

Norway said it considers adaptation to be fundamental in the implementation of the Convention. It said that adaptation to adverse impacts of climate change and adaptation to impacts from the implementation of response measure to climate change are separate issues and should be addressed separately.

Canada said climate change affects all countries but especially poor countries. It said that enhancement of adaptation actions should deal exclusively with building resilience especially among the most

vulnerable countries and the idea of a new institution should only be deliberated when there's clearly a need to do so.

Mexico said adaptation deserves an equal level of treatment as mitigation. It said there must be clear, sufficient provisions to help developing countries and to also include those with particular vulnerabilities as recognised in the UNFCCC. It said that vulnerable regions and vulnerable sectors of economy are also worthy of adaptation treatment.

It supported the creation of regional centres and networks to support adaptation and utilising available institutions and advocated South-South cooperation and adoption of traditional knowledge.

Australia said it is determined to see a strong outcome on adaptation this year and that the distribution of fast-start funding under the Copenhagen Accord reflected commitment.

It also recognised that there may be a role for insurance especially for poor developing countries that are vulnerable as no one mechanism can work for all situations.

Spain, speaking for the European Union, supported equal treatment of mitigation and adaptation. It also supported fast-start funding particularly for vulnerable countries.

On scope, it said that response measures should be addressed under mitigation. It said adaptation should be guided by country-led strategies and Parties should look at how greater coherence can be achieved by institutions inside and outside of the Convention to determine if there is a need for a new institution. It preferred to have loss and damage from climate change to be addressed at the national level.

Japan said that response measures have been dealt with in mitigation and to avoid duplication. Since impacts from climate change differ so much, it is not in favour of an international mechanism to address loss and damage, adding that existing institutional arrangements should be used in a more coordinated manner.

Switzerland said that there should be prioritization of support for the most vulnerable.

The United States said all countries face adaptation challenges. It said that, "our leaders agreed in the Copenhagen Accord that we would deal with response measures but not how".

It said that an insurance mechanism is not appropriate to deal with loss and damage and asked Parties to look at other mechanisms such as a suite of risk management procedures and mechanisms. It preferred Option 2 of Paragraph 7 (enhancing and better utilising existing institutional arrangements) but could consider several functions listed in the Option 1 favoured by developing countries (establishing as Adaptation Committee).

Afghanistan and Tajikistan called for greater attention to adaptation in the mountainous ecosystems as per Article 4.8 of the UNFCCC.

[Article 4.8 addresses "the specific needs and concerns of developing country Parties arising from the adverse effects of climate change and/or the impact of the implementation of response measures" and highlights the following: Small island countries; Countries with low-lying coastal areas; Countries with arid and semi-arid areas, forested areas and areas liable to forest decay; Countries with areas prone to natural disasters; Countries with areas liable to drought and desertification; Countries with areas of high urban atmospheric pollution; Countries with areas with fragile ecosystems, including mountainous ecosystems; Countries whose economies are highly dependent on income generated from the production, processing and export, and/or on consumption of fossil fuels and associated energy-intensive products; and Landlocked and transit countries.]

Afghanistan said as the Adaptation Fund is under the Kyoto Protocol, it should either be brought under the scope of the Convention or a new adaptation mechanism be established.
