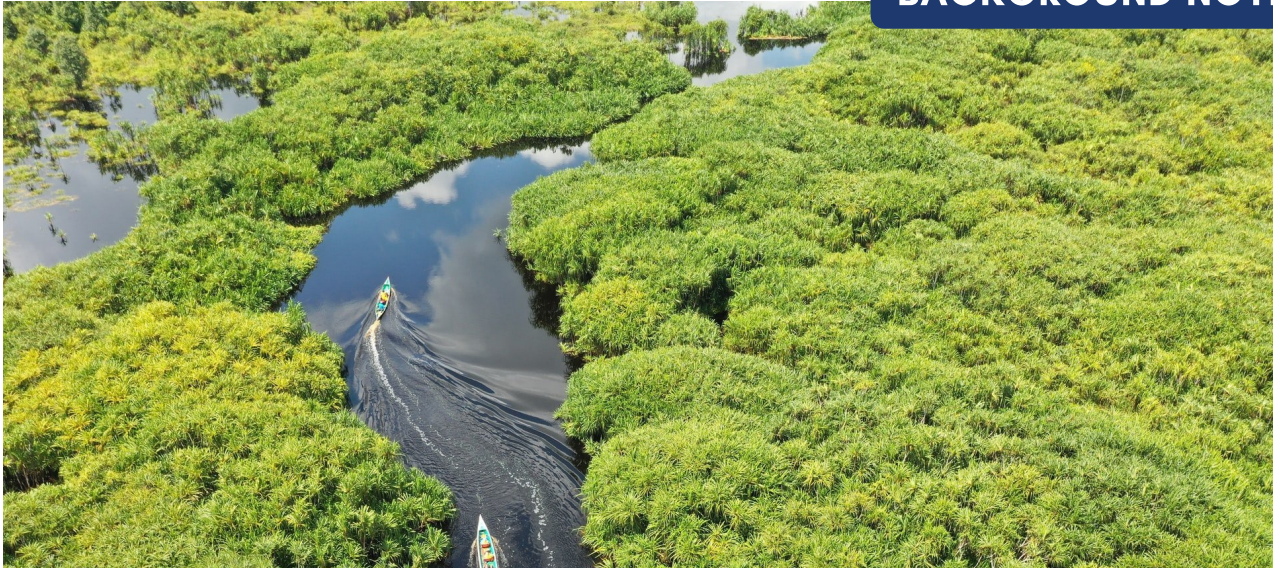


OPERATIONALIZING the GLOBAL GOAL on ADAPTATION

BACKGROUND NOTE



Introduction

The Paris Agreement, adopted in 2015, is an international treaty that aims to strengthen the global response to climate change. It is the result of an international negotiation process that was tasked with addressing all substantive elements of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC): **mitigation, adaptation, finance, technology transfer, and capacity-building**. [1]

To date, discussions under the treaty have largely focused on mitigation and national commitments to control and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. However, the temperature goal in Article 2.1 (a) is only the first of **three subparagraphs that describe distinct but complementary avenues toward achieving the treaty's overall purpose**. The other two are:

- Increasing adaptive capacities, climate resilience, and low-carbon development (Art. 2.1.b);
- Making financial flows consistent with those objectives (2.1.c).

Article 7 of the Paris Agreement provides further guidance on the adaptation efforts that parties are expected to make in pursuit of Art. 2.1.b. In particular, **it establishes a “Global Goal on Adaptation” (GGA) of enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience, and reducing vulnerability to climate change** (Art. 7.1). The adaptation efforts of developing countries shall be “recognized” (7.3). Additional rules on the implementation of the Paris Agreement, subsequently adopted in Katowice in 2018, encourage parties to report on their adaptation efforts. [2]

However, the GGA has not been further defined so far. As a result, parties launched a **two-year Glasgow–Sharm el-Sheikh work programme on the Global Goal on Adaptation** during the 26th meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Glasgow (COP26). [3]

The Glasgow-Sharm el-Sheikh Work Programme

The GGA work programme was established for a period of two years starting immediately after COP26 in Glasgow, with activities to be carried out jointly by the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI). The COP26 decision further invites the subsidiary bodies to carry out the work programme with contributions from the current and incoming Presidencies of the Conference of the Parties, the Adaptation Committee, Working Group II of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and other relevant constituted bodies and experts. [4]

The work programme will include **four workshops per year, comprising two virtual intersessional workshops and two workshops in conjunction with the sessions of the subsidiary bodies**, starting with their 56th session (SB56) in Bonn in June 2022. The objectives of the work programme are described in detail and include:

- Enabling the full and sustained implementation of the Paris Agreement, towards achieving the GGA, with a view to enhancing adaptation action and support;
- Enhancing understanding of the GGA, including of the methodologies, indicators, data and metrics, and support needed for assessing progress towards it;
- Contributing to reviewing the overall progress made in achieving the GGA as part of the Global Stocktake referred to in Article 7, paragraph 14, and Article 14 of the Paris Agreement with a view to informing the first and subsequent global stocktakes;
- Enhancing national planning and implementation of adaptation actions through the process to formulate and implement National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and through Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and Adaptation Communications (AdComms);

- Enabling Parties to better communicate their adaptation priorities, implementation and support needs, plans and actions, including through AdComms and NDCs;
- Facilitating the establishment of robust, nationally appropriate systems for monitoring and evaluating adaptation actions;
- Strengthening implementation of adaptation actions in vulnerable developing countries;
- Enhancing understanding of how communication and reporting instruments established under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement related to adaptation can complement each other in order to avoid duplication of efforts.

The decision on the work programme notes the importance of **not adding additional burdens on developing countries**. Activities under the work programme “should build on the work of the Adaptation Committee related to the GGA, draw on a variety of sources and inputs, including NAPs and AdComms, take into account traditional knowledge, knowledge of Indigenous peoples and local knowledge systems, and be gender-responsive.” To ensure inclusiveness, the work programme should be **implemented on the basis of equitable geographic representation and involve observers, relevant constituted bodies under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, organizations, experts, and practitioners, as appropriate**.

The decision recalls the “country-driven, gender-responsive, participatory, and fully transparent approach of adaptation action,” as well as the need for “taking into consideration vulnerable groups, communities, and ecosystems.” It refers to the need for adaptation action being guided by the best available science and, as appropriate, traditional knowledge, knowledge of Indigenous peoples, and local knowledge

systems. In addition, the decision stresses **the need for promoting and considering obligations on human rights in the implementation of climate action**. This includes the right to health, the rights of Indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities, and people in vulnerable situations, and the right to development.

The decision also refers to a **technical paper by the Adaptation Committee on approaches to review the overall progress made in achieving the GGA**. It was published in April 2021 to inform discussions on the GGA with a view towards the Global Stocktake and provides a comprehensive overview of information, approaches, and methodologies for assessing progress in enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience, and reducing vulnerability to climate change based on the existing literature. [5]

Approaches to defining the Global Goal on Adaptation

The Adaptation Committee's technical paper focuses on information and methodologies for assessing progress in enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience, and reducing vulnerability to climate change. It finds that **assessing adaptation progress is critical for understanding whether and how vulnerability is changing over time and how adaptation interventions can influence such changes**. An enhanced understanding of these changes will not only help decision-makers to develop their plans and priorities but also improve estimates of the costs of adaptation and allows to precision-channel adaptation finance to where it is needed most.

The technical paper identifies **several possible approaches to further specify the content of the GGA in relation to adaptive capacities, resilience, and vulnerability**. Potential approaches include, inter alia, a common indicator and criteria system, the aggregation of empirical data and/or

national targets, quantitative and/or qualitative assessments of risks (in different sectors of the economy and local, regional, or nation-wide), a metric of common denominators, national "scoreboards," a collation of successful case studies, or identification of lessons learnt. The paper also reviews the **indicator systems used in other international fora** such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, or the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), acknowledging the benefits and limitations of all these approaches.

Similar to the formulation of the long-term temperature goal, **the GGA requires further elaboration and concretization** that can focus the efforts of international communities, capture a vision that mobilizes engagement across all sectors, and build solidarity as well as lasting ambition. As a result of the country-driven nature of adaptation efforts, it would, however, present a systematic challenge to streamline activities, implement homogenous programmes, or introduce common metrics and indicators for the purpose of further defining a global goal or monitoring progress towards it.



Drawing on the plans and communications of developing country parties as well as other reports and studies, the UNFCCC Secretariat (under the guidance of the Adaptation Fund and the Least Developed Countries Expert Group) should be able to **identify common strands, subject areas, activities, themes, strategies, needs, or concerns** during the preparation of the synthesis reports on adaptation efforts in developing countries, lessons learnt, and good practices.

While the Secretariat—or possibly another institution—would have to “aggregate” national inputs, **agreeing on the final objectives of the GGA would still be a political decision by the parties.**

For example, these objectives could take the form of specific targets, similar to the Sustainable Development Goals or Millennium Development Goals (e.g., “X% of all properties insured against adverse climate change effects by 2027”). They could focus on specific sectors of the economy (e.g., agriculture or transport infrastructure) or activities (“training a number of people”) and be process- (e.g., risk assessments carried out and budgets drawn up) or outcome-oriented (“1 million state of the art storm shelters built in small island developing states”). The exact modalities of the GGA will depend on how countries report on their adaptation efforts, programmes, activities, and needs for minimizing impacts from extreme weather events and other climate-related impacts.

Climate risk management and the GGA

As highlighted by the IPCC's Sixth Assessment report, **the concept of risk is central to understanding and addressing climate change impacts.** The IPCC report identifies eight clusters of key risks faced by countries across the world, which are defined by the nature of associated hazards, exposure, vulnerabilities, response options, values, magnitude, likelihood, and temporal characteristics, as well as interactions within and across clusters. By linking adaptation and climate risk management, the GGA can provide a way to navigate this complex landscape of compound, covariate, and/or cascading risks.

The GGA has the potential to **bridge global, regional, and national protection gaps** by incorporating science-based and comprehensive risk management, risk perceptions and communication, taxonomies of climate risk, environmental and social governance, human dimensions of climate change, and enabling conditions for effective policy-making. As an instrument to enhance resilience-building with the objective of reducing vulnerabilities, the GGA could **address climate change through a risk lens** and benefit from lessons learnt, good practices, and experiences collected in this field.

However, while it can be considered in the context of risk management, the GGA should be delineated and kept distinct from disaster risk reduction (including work related to the Sendai Framework) and humanitarian relief and recovery efforts, highlighting the **uniquely transformative aspects of climate change adaptation that go beyond immediate and near-term risk management** and link to concepts of building back better, transformative recovery, and just transition. It is equally important to integrate climate-science, evidence, and sharing of knowledge and good practices that would allow for ambitious actions building on the GGA to be conducted in relation to long term, and transformative resilience building efforts.

Adaptation finance to pursue a GGA in developing countries

Describing adaptation activities or outcomes is only one side of the GGA. The other side is the **provision of effective support for developing countries through new, additional, adequate, and predictable financial resources** from developed country parties and potentially other wealthy parties. [6] Such support is needed to adequately recognize, carry forward, and scale up the adaptation efforts of developing countries.

The Paris Agreement explicitly recognizes the **international dimension of adaptation** (Art. 7.2) and the need to support adaptation efforts in developing countries, especially in those that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change (Art. 7.6). The lack of adequate funding, however, remains a key issue in the multilateral climate change process. This is highlighted again in a separate section on adaptation finance in the Glasgow CMA decision (decision 1/CMA.3) which, inter alia:

- Notes with concern that current provision of climate finance for adaptation remains insufficient to respond to worsening climate change impacts in developing country parties (para. 14 decision);
- Urges developed country parties to urgently and significantly scale up their provision of climate finance, technology transfer and capacity-building for adaptation so as to respond to the needs of developing country parties (para. 15);
- Recognizes the importance of adequacy and predictability of adaptation finance (para. 16); and
- Urges developed country parties to at least double their collective provision of climate finance for adaptation to developing country parties from 2019 levels by 2025.

Parties have begun to renegotiate the overall goal on climate finance from a floor of USD 100 billion per year and decided in Glasgow to

conclude their deliberations by setting a **new collective quantified goal on climate finance in 2024** (decision 9/CMA.3). To reach agreement, they established an ad hoc work programme, to be carried out from 2022 to 2024. Their decision also states that the new goal will consider the needs and priorities of developing countries and include, inter alia, quantity, quality, scope, and access features as well as sources of funding and transparency arrangements to track progress, without prejudice to other elements that will also be considered as the deliberations evolve (decision 9/CMA.3 para. 16).

While formally separate, there is an **intrinsic link between the ad hoc work programme on the collective goal on climate finance and the work programme on the GGA**. Parties could, for example, be encouraged to further qualify the new collective quantified goal and specify a separate goal on adaptation finance. Parties could also specify their national contributions and distinguish between adaptation finance from public sources and an additional target to be mobilized from other sources. Through this, the financial commitments of developed country parties could very broadly mirror the adaptation efforts of developing countries and represent a significant step forward in developing the GGA into a joint international collaborative target. [7] Alternatively, **individual country parties could take responsibility for achieving one or more of the agreed-upon adaptation goals and commit to funding the relevant activities, programmes, or outcomes** while enjoying flexibility in how to raise this money. If they fail to mobilize the full support expected from private sources, public government funding will have to make up for any shortfall. This model of providing financial support in line with changing adaptation priorities (rather than absolute amounts) reflects not only the dynamic and unpredictable nature of climate change impacts but also the Paris Agreement's postulation that the costs for adaptation will increase when mitigation efforts fail (Art. 7.4).

Principles-based approaches to the GGA

Climate change is, inter alia, a matter of global justice and human rights. Climate impacts and climate action are shaped by a multitude of societal factors, such as cultural norms and social practices, socioeconomic development, underlying physical and social vulnerabilities, and societal responses within, as well as relationships of power between, countries and regions. The GGA therefore needs to incorporate a principles-based approach that **works towards climate justice, inclusive and participatory processes, equity, and good governance.**

Key elements of a principles-based approach towards operationalizing the GGA could include the following:

- Conceptual foundations and principles-based approaches to adaptation and the GGA, including key considerations related to human rights and the associated international, regional, and national legal instruments;
- Participation, representation, and inclusion of vulnerable groups and communities in the context of the GGA and Action for Climate Empowerment;
- Recognition and consideration of environmental, social, and governance systems as well as issues of accountability, due diligence, and transparency;
- Intersectional and rights-based approaches to ensure responsiveness of the GGA's modalities and methodology to the specific issues and needs of women, youth, children, the elderly, those with special needs, Indigenous peoples, informal workers, migrants, and other vulnerable or marginalized groups.

Collective inputs for a holistic outcome on the GGA

While this paper presents approaches on how the GGA could be operationalized in a meaningful way, **further analysis is needed to ensure that the work programme provides for resilience-building at all levels**, particularly leading to an enhanced adaptive capacity of those most vulnerable to climate change.

This includes activities aimed at identifying needs or risks, enhancing reporting, developing indicators, sharing information, scaling up processes, ensuring stakeholder engagement through inclusive and participatory processes, measuring success, building capacities, raising sufficient funding, and channelling support. Further, it is important to elicit further information and ideas and contribute to the

discourse on defining a GGA and pursue it to ensure successful outcomes. This includes **collective, multi-stakeholder driven processes which would bring insights into different dimensions related to the GGA** and create scenarios for transformative, inclusive, and participatory action leading to scaled-up resilience in the short- and long-term.

It is vital that stakeholder dialogues are held to **bring together expertise relevant to the GGA, from parties to the multiple stakeholders working along different verticals** to ensure that the outcomes of the GGA work programme lead to resilience at all levels and of all peoples, especially those at the forefront of climate risks.

Footnotes

- [1] Decision 1/CP.17, Establishment of an Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action, UNFCCC/CP/2011/9/Add.1, 15 March 2012.
- [2] Decision 11/CMA.1, Matters referred to in paragraphs 41, 42 and 45 of decision 1/CP.21.
- [3] Decision 7/CMA.3, Glasgow–Sharm el-Sheikh work programme on the Global Goal on Adaptation.
- [4] Ibid
- [5] Adaptation Committee, Approaches to reviewing the overall progress made in achieving the Global Goal on Adaptation, AC/2021/TP/GGA, 9 April 2021, in response to a request by the parties to the Paris Agreement in decision 1/CMA.2.
- [6] Decision 2/CP.17 Outcome of the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-Term Cooperative Action under the Convention, and Decision 3/CP.17 Launching the Green Climate Fund, Annex.
- [7] The submission by Oxford Climate Policy/ecbi on the new collective quantified goal as specified in paras.15 and 16 of Decision 9/CMA.3 suggests a separate Collective Quantified Public-sector Goal on Adaptation Grant Finance.

Organizational profiles

Legal Response Initiative (LRI)

LRI is a UK based charity that provides free legal support to climate vulnerable developing countries as well as civil society observer organizations in and around the international climate negotiations. It does this with the support of a global network of lawyers from law firms, barrister chambers and universities. All LRI advice and briefing papers are publicly available a database at <https://legalresponse.org/legal-assistance/>.

SLYCAN Trust

SLYCAN Trust is a non-profit think tank working on climate change, sustainable development, biodiversity and ecosystem conservation, animal welfare, and social justice including gender and youth empowerment. Our work spans the national, regional, and global level from policy analysis and evidence-based research to on-the-ground implementation. For more information, please visit [our homepage](#) or the [Adaptation & Resilience Knowledge Hub](#).

This paper reflects our current understanding of the discussion and has been put together for information purposes only. It is work in progress and we very much appreciate any feedback or inputs.