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**Regional synergy in the context of national  
adaptation programmes of action**

**Technical paper**

*Summary*

This paper presents a synthesis of information relating to regional synergy in the context of adaptation to climate change, that could be useful in the preparation and implementation of national adaptation programmes of action (NAPAs). The paper reviews NAPA proposals as well as other relevant documents. It also describes relevant existing programmes and projects undertaken by various international entities, with the aim of identifying opportunities for cooperative action during the NAPA process. The paper identifies possible action by which the Least Developed Countries Expert Group can enhance the promotion of regional synergy during the preparation and implementation of NAPAs.

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## I. Introduction

1. The Conference of the Parties (COP), by its decision 29/CP.7 in 2001, adopted the terms of reference of the Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG), which was mandated to facilitate the exchange of information and to promote regional synergy in the preparation and in the implementation strategy of national adaptation programme of action (NAPAs).
2. At the first meeting of the LEG in February 2002 in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, the programme of work for 2003–2004 was discussed. The programme included developing recommendations on the promotion of regional synergy on an ongoing basis.
3. By the end of 2002, after the second meeting of the LEG in Bonn, Germany, it was recognized that “regional cooperation is an important component for success in the implementation of NAPAs”. It was also agreed that this issue will be further addressed by the LEG, once “a representative sample of NAPA proposals has been prepared”.
4. At the fifth meeting of the LEG in Maputo, Mozambique, in March 2004, the group requested the secretariat to prepare this paper. The paper was revised at the sixth meeting of the group and finalized thereafter by the secretariat.
5. This paper provides least developed country (LDC) Parties with a synthesis of information considered by the LEG in the context of promoting regional synergy.

## II. Overview of information in the proposals for preparation of national adaptation programmes of action

6. The secretariat reviewed 31 NAPA proposals, as follows:
  - (a) Five from Pacific LDCs (Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu)
  - (b) Six from Asian LDCs (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Maldives)
  - (c) Six from West African LDCs (Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Senegal)
  - (d) Three from East African LDCs (Sudan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania)
  - (e) Three from central African LDCs (Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda)
  - (f) Three from African LDCs of the Horn of Africa (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia)
  - (g) Five from southern African LDCs (Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia).
7. Of these 31 NAPA proposals, 18 made reference – at various levels of detail and scope – to regional cooperation, as follows:
  - (a) All five from Pacific LDCs
  - (b) All six from Asian LDCs
  - (c) All six from West African LDCs

- (d) One from an LDC from the Horn of Africa (Eritrea).
8. The 13 other proposals reviewed did not mention the concept of regional cooperation.
9. The NAPA proposals generally contain little information relevant to regional synergy. This does not come as a surprise, because the NAPAs are intended to communicate priority activities addressing the urgent and immediate needs of a country, i.e. there is an inherent focus on the national level. Also, the NAPA annotated guidelines specify that the criteria by which to evaluate and prioritize potential climate adaptation projects should be country-specific. Regional synergy, although desirable, is not recognized at the moment as a priority for countries. Although synergy among multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) is mentioned in the NAPA guidelines (annex to decision 28/CP.7, paragraph 15 (c)), regional synergy is not.
10. In addressing regional synergy, the LEG recognizes that any countries with shared vulnerabilities and climatic conditions can cooperate on climate adaptation activities, and that the countries need not share common borders. That said, cross-border issues (exclusively geared towards neighbouring LDCs) and the concept of regional synergy with non-LDC neighbouring countries were generally not addressed in the NAPA proposals reviewed.
11. The information reported mostly pertains to synergy with other LDCs in the context of:
- (a) LDC cooperation and coordination in the implementation phase: economies of scale and cost sharing, possibly leading to the joint implementation of project activities (Pacific islands, Eritrea);
  - (b) Review of studies for the preparation of NAPAs: vulnerability and adaptation assessments, adaptation assessment methodology (Pacific islands, Asia, West Africa);
  - (c) Sharing of experience with other LDCs, on coping strategies in particular (Pacific islands, Asia);
  - (d) NAPAs as a unique opportunity for sharing experience and expertise across a region.
12. The information reported mostly covers how regional cooperation would support the preparation and implementation of NAPAs, rather than how the preparation/implementation of NAPAs could promote such cooperation, other than the unique opportunity for sharing experience, which is recognized by almost all Parties that made reference to regional synergy. For the preparation of their respective NAPAs, many countries recognized that the methodology for adaptation assessment would benefit from a regional approach that draws upon existing techniques to avoid duplication of efforts (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Guinea, Maldives, Mali). Many NAPA proposals identified the review of past and current sectoral studies undertaken in other countries within the region, or in other regions, as useful background information for the preparation of their NAPAs (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Gambia, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Maldives, Senegal, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu).
13. Throughout the various proposals reviewed, there are only vague ideas of arrangements for sharing experience and lessons learned, namely through the creation of a NAPA network whose functioning still remains to be defined. One country (Bangladesh) proposed to work on preparing plans for the creation of such a network that would foster the sharing of information on activities, lessons learned and best practices with other LDCs that are engaged in NAPA formulation.

### III. Rationale for regional synergy – what is it and why is it important?

14. “Synergy” can be defined as the “interaction or cooperation of two or more organizations, substances, or other agents to produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects”. A “region” is an “area of the world having definable characteristics but not always fixed boundaries” (*Concise Oxford Dictionary*).

15. For the preparation phase, the NAPA proposals highlight the rationale for regional cooperation as being the sharing of experience, information, methodologies and project outputs in the formulation stage of the NAPAs. For the implementation phase, the only rationale identified for regional activities is the opportunity to share the cost of experts and other project inputs, as long as achieving economy of scale in this manner does not compromise national priorities and requirements.

16. The compilation and synthesis reports of national communications from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention (non-Annex I Parties) were reviewed to seek additional information on what areas developing countries stress for regional synergy. The following is a summary of this information:

- (a) Participation in regional (and international) programmes that take into account, support and enhance national efforts to conduct impact and adaptation assessments
- (b) Development of regional climate change models, or better regional climate scenarios, may help adapt existing methodologies to local conditions
- (c) Collection of data at a regional level as an effective means for solving the problem of lack of data. One of the most important constraints on the assessment of vulnerability and adaptation was that data required were either not available (uncollected), inaccessible or not applicable to national circumstances. The reports suggested that, where possible, vulnerability and adaptation studies should be conducted at a regional or subregional level, particularly for cases where a number of countries shared natural resources, including coastlines and water resources within major catchments or river systems.

17. In addition to the above considerations, some adaptation projects can be implemented only at a regional level. A joint report<sup>1</sup> of the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), the West African Water Partnership (GWP–WAWP) and the West Africa Office of IUCN–The World Conservation Union (IUCN) suggests that the solutions proposed to cope with the predictable impacts of climate variability and change “are often technically, financially and/or politically unachievable by individual countries. Many of these adaptation measures may be relevant only at the regional level”. The authors further consider that “a regional strategy is the missing link in the efforts aiming at strengthening the level of preparedness in West Africa to tackle the impacts of climate change, in the water sector in particular”. A few reasons are brought forward, such as:

- (a) There are risks of multiple conflicts over water
- (b) The current exchange of adaptation experience is poor, even when good practices are concerned
- (c) The focus on national approaches to adaptation limits opportunities for achieving economies of scale

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<sup>1</sup> Water, Climate Change and Desertification in West Africa: Regional Strategy for Preparedness and Adaptation.

- (d) Availability of expertise, considered on a per-country basis, is sometimes insufficient to address the scientific challenges posed by climate change.

18. Insurance is one form of adaptation (highlighted by the UNFCCC in its Article 4.8) which is best implemented at a regional level. The report of the small island developing States (SIDS) workshop<sup>2</sup> on insurance and climate-related extreme weather events outlined that individual Pacific island countries were not likely to be able to afford catastrophe insurance because of high frequency of disasters, small pools of contributors, the complete exposure of low-income groups and difficulties in raising a sufficiently large fund pool. Therefore, a regional scheme could serve to spread the risk, increase the pool of contributors and reduce the cost of administration.

19. According to the Third Assessment Report (TAR) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), extreme weather events are expected to increase in frequency and intensity. Therefore, as outlined in the report of the workshop on local strategies and technologies for adaptation<sup>3</sup> (New Delhi, November 2003), regions currently experiencing flooding can reliably anticipate whether floods would increase or decrease in the future, which would justify some lateral transfer of existing coping strategies, or at least exchange of local knowledge and experience between regions. The same can be applied to other climate-related extreme events.

20. The rationale for regional synergy is therefore several-fold, for both NAPA preparation and implementation, and includes the following elements:

- (a) The need to strengthen capacity to adapt (preparation and implementation)
- (b) The opportunity to help broaden the knowledge base on adaptation (preparation and implementation)
- (c) The opportunity to share costs and pool resources (implementation)
- (d) Avoiding negative transboundary impacts (implementation).

#### **IV. Opportunities and barriers to regional synergy**

21. Many opportunities arise from addressing climate-related hazards at the regional level, for example through cost and information sharing in capacity-building activities, early-warning systems and measures for disaster risk reduction, for example for:

- (a) Droughts, through such organizations as CILSS or such initiatives as the Global Environment Facility–United Nations Development Programme (GEF–UNDP) project “Coping with Drought and Climate Change: Best Use of Climate Information for Reducing Land Degradation and Conserving Biodiversity” in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal and Zimbabwe
- (b) Floods, through regional initiatives for flood monitoring and forecasting as well as positioning of relief equipment and supplies. Action at the regional level is particularly necessary for countries with shared river basins
- (c) Vector-borne diseases triggered by climate fluctuations, through regional early-warning mechanisms such as the Malaria Early Warning Systems established by the Regional Office for Africa of the World Health Organization (WHO), the Southern African

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<sup>2</sup> FIELD/UNDP workshop, 28 November 2003, Milan, Italy.

<sup>3</sup> FCCC/SB/2003/INF.2.

Development Community and PARSAC (Partenariat renforcé entre les communautés des secteurs de la santé et du climat).

22. Regional initiatives can also improve the national and regional operational management of climate sensitive natural resources and sectors of significance for LDCs as expressed in their NAPA proposals and national communications, including:
- (a) Water resources and watershed management, for example through the Nile Basin Initiative, a regional partnership among 10 Nile basin states
  - (b) Agriculture and food security, for example the GEF–United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)/Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) project “Transboundary Agro-Ecosystem Management Programme for the Lower Kagera River Basin” in which Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania seek to promote improved land management practices, to restore degraded lands and to identify opportunities to enhance both on-farm and off-farm income to increase agricultural productivity and food and livelihood security, and reduce poverty
  - (c) Transboundary ecosystems, for example the GEF–UNEP/FAO project “Integrated Management of the Fouta Djallon Highlands” in which Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Sierra Leone aim at the conservation and sustainable use of the international watershed and biodiversity of the Fouta Djallon highlands.
23. On the other hand, the body of literature surveyed suggests some challenges and barriers to regional synergy, as follows:
- (a) Adaptation needs differ widely based on geography and the prevailing conditions in the area, so the same phenomenon can have widely disparate impacts on populations in different parts of the world
  - (b) In the context of risk management and insurance, historical differences among countries, cultural differences, differing religious perspectives, different legal frameworks, difficulties in defining an appropriate region for purposes of structuring a pool and difficulties in obtaining the sustained commitment of politicians are particularly challenging
  - (c) Consultative frameworks on climate change are limited in the regions
  - (d) A regional strategy could compete with national efforts for resources
  - (e) Regional institutional networks need to be strengthened to facilitate transfer of technology in the area of adaptation.

## **V. Relevant actors and initiatives**

24. National and regional development needs require cooperation by different sets of actors. Regional networks are an effective way to reach policy makers and other stakeholders at the local and regional level. Research and outreach efforts can be enriched through the involvement of these networks.

25. In 2003, the issue of regional synergy was briefly addressed during the third meeting of the LEG in Samoa; and participants at the LDC SIDS NAPA training workshop acknowledged that regional entities such as the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) could provide an important

element of support to Pacific LDCs, including serving as a regional clearing house of information, and helping to catalyse any possible regional synergy in the NAPA preparation process.

26. International organizations are supporting considerable theoretical and practical work on adaptation, much of which entails capitalizing on regional synergy. Such organizations as UNDP, UNEP, the World Bank, FAO, the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction secretariat, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, WHO, the World Meteorological Organization, the Asian Development Bank, IUCN, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, SPREP, and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are among the organizations involved in work on different aspects of adaptation.

27. The activities vary considerably in scope and magnitude. Some focus entirely on the issues relating to vulnerability and adaptation, whereas others include these issues as a component of a larger project. In terms of magnitude, some are programmes that include several major multi-country initiatives in various regions of the world. Some projects provide support for multiple countries; two examples are the application of the Adaptation Policy Framework in Central America by UNDP, and the Assessment of Impacts of and Adaptation to Climate Change in Multiple Regions and Sectors (AIACC) programme.

28. The AIACC programme is a global initiative developed in collaboration with the IPCC and funded by the GEF to advance scientific understanding of climate change vulnerabilities and adaptation options in developing countries. By funding collaborative research, training and technical support, the AIACC programme aims to enhance the scientific capacity of developing countries to assess climate change vulnerabilities and adaptations, and generate and communicate information useful for adaptation planning and action. The AIACC programme is implemented by UNEP and executed jointly by the System for Analysis, Research and Training organization and the Third World Academy of Sciences.

29. An AIACC project is assessing climate change impacts and adaptations in the Miombo region of Africa (Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe). The project team is continuing to work with UNEP to develop additional material to assist countries of the region with their preparation of NAPA documents. The AIACC regional study in Sudan is closely coordinating its research with that country's NAPA preparation, providing technical capacity and information about potential adaptation options. It is likely that other AIACC studies, particularly those in Africa, will be able to benefit NAPAs in other countries.

30. In 1999, the United Nations University (UNU) launched the "Inter-linkages Initiative" with the aim of promoting a better integrated approach towards sustainable development through synergy and coordination among MEAs at the national and regional level. Given the importance of capacity-building, including at the regional level, UNU and the SPREP organized a workshop for "Integrated Capacity Development in the Pacific on MEAs" in Fiji in 2004. Participants at the workshop concluded that a regional approach to capacity development would serve the countries to address similar issues in a coordinated manner with the goal of establishing long-term strategies on sustainable development for both the countries and the region. Similar workshops and case studies are planned for Africa, which could benefit the NAPA process.

31. The GEF also supports activities enhancing regional synergy. For example, the GEF-UNDP project "Adaptation to Climate Change – Responding to Shoreline Change and its Human Dimensions in West Africa through Integrated Coastal Area Management (ICAM)" seeks to mainstream adaptation into ICAM planning in Cape Verde, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania and Senegal through the development and implementation of pilot adaptation activities in response to shoreline change. Given the extensive coastal continuity, in terms of sediment transport and river discharge, there is a strong rationale for addressing the issue of adaptation and shoreline change through the development of a regional approach to maximize available resources and benefits. Past regional GEF-UNDP and GEF-World



Bank projects include the Pacific Islands Climate Change Assistance Programme and Mainstreaming Adaptation to Climate Change in the Caribbean, respectively.

32. Some bilateral programmes also support regional adaptation-related activities, such as:
- (a) The Australian Agency for International Development's South Pacific Adaptation and Vulnerability Initiative. This seven-year initiative aims to build Pacific island country capacity to adapt to the future impact of extreme weather events and climate change and strengthen regional collaboration between key stakeholders
  - (b) The Canadian International Development Agency's Capacity Building Support for Adaptation to Climate Change in the Sahel. The main goal of this project is to support efforts by CILSS member countries to combat climate change by building the capacities of the AGRHYMET Centre (Regional Training Centre for Agro-meteorology and Operational Hydrology and their Applications) to analyse vulnerability and develop response strategies.
33. The LEG regional workshops on capacity-building for NAPA preparation are themselves examples of how the LEG was able to capitalize on regional synergy, based on the common situations and vulnerabilities exhibited by the countries participating in each of these workshops.

## **VI. Recommendations**

34. There is a general sense among LEG members that regional synergy is an important component for success in the implementation of NAPAs, but little is being reported on this issue in the reviewed NAPA proposals. Reasons for this gap could include:
- (a) The objective itself of the NAPA proposals – to communicate priority activities addressing the urgent and immediate needs of a country
  - (b) The absence of any reference in the NAPA guidelines and in the GEF operational guidance for funding NAPA preparation (which is the basis for implementing-agency support to countries) to the importance of regional synergy and the need to address it in the NAPA process
  - (c) The emphasis on the country-driven approach and the necessity for country-tailored activities
  - (d) The large scope, and need for definition, of what could be meant by “regional synergy”
  - (e) The lack of regional institutional capacity to deal with vulnerability and adaptation to climate change
  - (f) The issue of determining whether funds from the LDC Fund should be used to support activities in non-LDC countries, in the case of an activity implemented across LDCs and non-LDCs
  - (g) The status of the current NAPAs – they are at too early a stage to be able to draw from experience.
35. The report of the LEG at COP 8 reflected some views on the promotion of regional synergy, as follows:
- (a) Cross-border issues in the context of NAPAs should be addressed in a centralized manner, possibly through a collective review of NAPA proposals (for the preparation

phase) and subsequently completed NAPAs (for the implementation phase), to investigate the potential for synergy

- (b) The concept of regional synergy should not be addressed in the strict sense of geographical contiguity because, for example, island LDCs in one part of the world may have opportunities to capitalize on regional synergy with others in another part
- (c) Guidance is needed on how best to enable regional synergy with non-LDC neighbouring countries, particularly in the NAPA implementation phase
- (d) Arrangements are needed for sharing experience among LDCs, particularly those that share common situations and vulnerabilities, including through workshops and regional information networks to enhance access to relevant data and information.

36. The above-mentioned views are still valid, and based on the synthesis presented in this document, a few additional recommendations that could be taken up by the LEG emerge, as follows:

- (a) The LEG should give high priority to its proposed work on cataloguing relevant local coping strategies,<sup>4</sup> to build on traditional knowledge and indigenous adaptation technologies for the implementation phase
- (b) Steps to encourage regional synergy as an essential complement to the NAPA should be recommended, as part of the advice by the LEG on the NAPA “implementation strategy”
- (c) The LEG could identify opportunities for regional synergy, particularly during the implementation phase, relating to climate-hazards (e.g. droughts or floods) or climate-sensitive sectors (e.g. agriculture or water resources), and in so doing articulate measurable benefits where possible
- (d) The LEG should identify and establish the means to facilitate and exchange information on the NAPA process, and, where possible, explore opportunities with existing regional networks (e.g. SPREP, CILSS).

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<sup>4</sup> As suggested during the fifth meeting of the LEG in Mozambique, 22–24 March 2004.