



Adaptation Committee: Head start towards implementation of three year's work programme

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The Adaptation Committee (AC) under the UNFCCC met for the second time from 5th to 8th of March in Bonn.² The Committee, founded as part of the Cancun Adaptation Framework by the climate summit in 2010, is the world primary body to provide advise and coherence on adaptation issues. At the Doha summit in December 2012, the Conference of the Parties confirmed an ambitious three year's work programme to advance the adaptation agenda under the UNFCCC and outside of the convention process.

The second meeting represented a critical juncture for the work of the AC. While the first meeting had to be organized in a hasty fashion – owned to late nomination and little preparation time for the UNFCCC secretariat – the second meeting allowed for more insights into the regular working mode of the body.

For this meeting several items of the three year's work programme needed substantial amounts of work. According to the work plan, the Committee was required to

- analyse and establish concrete activities to advance the coherence on adaptation under the Convention;
- initiate a process to engage UN and regional agencies to report on adaptation support;
- develop concrete products (list of adaptation experts and a clearing house mechanism for national adaptation planning);
- start a process to develop guidance on national adaptation planning for non-LDCs;
- develop concepts for an UNFCCC workshop on adaptation evaluation
- develop ideas for an adaptation overview report, periodic reports and a high-level adaptation forum;
- provide inputs into the long-term finance discussions that take place under the UNFCCC finance negotiation stream;
- embark on a communication strategy.

Expected: Work launched on National Adaptation Plans

Several outcomes from the meeting should be highlighted. National Adaptation Plans will be the primary conduit for national action on adaptation that developing countries need to undertake to tackle the impacts of climate change. The Cancun decision prioritized Least Developed Countries (LDC) in view of the low capacities there, but also invited non-LDC countries to employ the agreed modalities. A lot of expectation exist from these non-LDC countries – countries that are not among the poorest, but have to deal with large climate change impacts, such as Small Island States and glacier depend mountainous countries. The AC has the mandate to look at the guidelines that were prepared for LDCs and explore how, if at all, they need to be changed for other developing countries. During the meeting a working group was launched, consisting of AC members and invited experts that would revise previously elaborated

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² see here

http://unfccc.int/adaptation/cancun_adaptation_framework/adaptation_committee/items/7374.php for official background documents

adaptation policy kits. The outcome will be proposed for adoption to the Warsaw COP at the end of this year.

On its way: An Adaptation Status Report & High Level Forum on Adaptation

One important output of the Committee will be a “State of Adaptation Report” (called an overview report), which summarizes existing adaptation practice, points to future developments, challenges and gaps. The document is supposed to be ready in 2014, and can inform the wider UNFCCC negotiations towards a 2015 treaty as well as the efforts leading to a new development framework that will follow the Millennium Development Goals. The AC made important progress by appointing dedicated members to develop an outline. It also concluded that the Committee will rely on external contribution and co-work with other (UN) agencies and stakeholders.

The AC also developed a first proposal for an Annual Adaptation Forum, that would profile adaptation with high policy representation at the climate summits. The AC laid out potential themes for periodic reports that would feature sub-issues for the implementation of adaptation.

Major endeavours: Strive to more coherence and a communication strategy

The AC’s major functions to provide coherence on how the climate convention process approaches adaptation, and create a bigger buzz for adaptation more generally, are humongous tasks. Adaptation is scattered among various agenda items and negotiation streams, and streamlining is urgently required. Recently, new institutions were created to support climate policy in developing countries. Bodies such as the Standing Committee on Climate Finance or the Technology Executive Committee, the Green Climate Fund and of course also the Adaptation Fund have all relevance for adaptation. Hence the AC needs to develop some working arrangements with each of these new bodies.

At the same time, the AC needs to develop a substantial strategy how to engage stakeholders outside of the UNFCCC process, and how to communicate with them. An adaptation status report, and an annual high-level forum are already important deliverables in such a strategy.

It is encouraging to see, that for both tasks, the Committee appointed different groups, who will expand these aspects of the AC core mandate.

Further work: Mapping adaptation support of regional and UN agencies, developing a clearing house for adaptation planning, providing input into the long-term finance discussions

The AC also dealt with further work on its agenda. It started the process to get a better view on adaptation support delivered to developing countries. A template to interact with regional and UN agencies was the immediate deliverable from the meeting. Similarly, the members developed an idea of a monitoring and evaluation workshop that will work on recommendation for the COP. In doing this, it is important to highlight genuine experiences of developing countries.

Further activities such as the establishment of clearing house mechanism for adaptation planning, and the conceptualization of a list of adaptation experts were postponed to the next meeting. More work on needs and exact objectives are necessary on this.

One open question was how the AC would react to a call for submissions on long-term finance that is due end of March. By the end of the meeting, the AC finalized its thoughts on the submission, highlighting the need for greater consistency on how adaptation finance reaches developing countries, and the need to explore a specific pathway to upscale adaptation finance.

Additional effort: Move for more transparency

On critical question is, how the AC engages with observers. The conduct of the first meeting left some room for improvement, and it is encouraging to see that the AC chair, vice-chair and the UNFCCC secretariat reacted to the criticism. For the second meeting most documents were published well in advance of the meeting to allow for better preparation. The chair championed

a webcast of the meeting, which for many stakeholders, is the only way to interact with the AC's work. For future meetings, it is important that the AC webcast is seen as a strategic communication tool and announced well in advance. While webcasting is associated with additional costs, it is a fundamental matter of transparency that the AC like other bodies of the UNFCCC discloses the public sections of its meeting. In this context, the UNFCCC secretariat should find ways to reduce costs for webcasting especially when the meeting are hosted in Bonn. Various other bodies (e.g. the TEC, the CDM Executive Board, the Adaptation Fund Board etc) already use web-casting, and pooling of procurement should be possible. In addition, there needs to be better communication about the webcast on the UNFCCC website.

One controversial agenda item was the roles of procedures. Following a proposal by the member of the Latin American Group, the AC decided to revisit its procedures. Changes included more time for preparation, a structured process of observer & expert contributions and – as a matter of transparency– webcasting of the meetings. Again Germanwatch applauds the initiative to make “the official face” of the AC more open and transparent.

Way ahead

The meeting itself was very open following a structure of break-outs and individual working groups. Accredited observers could freely interact with the members. While this practice should be applauded – and members are certainly encouraged to individually follow up with experts and stakeholders in the preparation of the next AC meetings – it also puts a burden on the observers. Organizations need to send key experts, and observers, like members of the AC, sometimes need to put aside their institutional affiliations. The call for fond preparation ahead of the meeting goes both to members and observers.

The second meeting was a promising start. However, the three-year work programme is not short of ambition, and the AC can expect to get additional work from the negotiation process. The secretariat succeeded to mount a mammoth task in preparation for the meeting. Now, members need to divide the work, take over responsibility and ownership on the various adaptation items that require further efforts. In doing this, it is important that they systematically engage, receive feedback and support from their regional constituencies, stakeholders and experts.

The next meeting will likely take place 16th to 18th of June, after UN climate negotiations in Bonn. Prior to the meeting, the Government of the Netherlands invites members of the Committee on a tour to see Dutch adaptation projects, which promises to become an interesting exchange on the practice of adaptation in the Netherlands.