

Adaptation and Resilience

Foreword

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The impacts of climate change are already being seen around the world. From droughts in Africa to typhoons in the Pacific, hurricanes in the Caribbean and heatwaves in South Asia, these are phenomena with devastating impacts on human life and made more likely or more intense by climate change.

It is clear that societies need to adapt in order to prepare for increasing climate impacts on people, nature and the economy. A need which has been recognised since governments agreed the United Nations climate change convention in 1982. But still, adaptation is often seen as the ‘poor cousin’ of mitigation (reducing emissions), receiving less attention and less financial support. We therefore welcome the Government making adaptation and resilience one of its five priority themes for COP26, although we are yet to see substantial detail of what vision ministers have for this.

At COP26 it is crucial that we see rich nations deliver on their 2009 pledge to mobilise \$100bn per year for the poorest nations. It is worrying that progress to date has been slow, and it is not clear that ministers have internalised how crucial it is for the \$100bn to be delivered. Moreover, wider issues, notably the planned cut in ODA to 0.5% of GDP, threaten trust and resourcing in this most critical of years.

There must be progress on climate finance for two reasons. One is that a decisive solid outcome on adaptation and resilience is critical for many societies. The other is that the smallest and poorest nations are potential allies of the UK in delivering a successful COP outcome on cutting emissions; but they need to know that the UK also has their back on adaptation and resilience.

What is Adaptation and Resilience?

Well over a hundred scientific studies show climate change is already making extreme weather events either more likely to happen or more serious when they do.¹ The planet will continue to warm until we reach net-zero CO₂ emissions, and so even with rapid action to cut emissions, some level of future warming will occur on the road towards net-zero. We will therefore see some intensification of climate impacts in the future, with sea levels continuing to rise, insect-borne diseases spreading, and the frequency and severity of extreme weather events such as droughts and hurricanes increasing. While we can limit the level of future warming via rapid decarbonisation, climate impacts are a present reality and will remain so in the future.

These impacts affect all countries, including the UK. Human-induced climate change stoked both the 2015 winter storms and the 2018 heatwave, but it is the poorest, smallest nations, which have emitted the least greenhouse gases, where the adaptation and resilience need is most acute. Adaptation measures can encompass many things, building flood defences and drainage systems, adopting new crop varieties, establishing early warning systems for life-threatening weather, and many more. But nearly 30 years after the climate convention came into force, not all nations are prepared. Last year the UN Adaptation Gap report found that some nations have still not drawn up a national adaptation plan, and only half of nations are addressing risks comprehensively.²

Adaptation and international climate finance are inextricably linked; and the UN report places primary responsibility on wealthy nations for failing to generate promised funds to help the poorest societies adapt, saying that “...huge gaps remain in finance for developing countries and bringing adaptation projects to the stage where they bring real protection against climate impacts.” Prosperous nations such as the UK have a formal responsibility, having committed in the 1992 UN climate convention to “...assist the developing country Parties that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change in meeting costs of adaptation to those adverse effects.”³ At the UN climate summit in Copenhagen in 2009 and again in the 2015 Paris Agreement, prosperous nations pledged that by 2020, they would be ‘mobilising’ at least \$100bn per year to help the poorest nations adapt to climate impacts and reduce their emissions, with half of this money earmarked for adaptation.^{4,5} So far moneys raised have fallen short of that figure: there are ongoing disputes about control of funding,⁶ only one fifth is being used for adaptation,⁷ and an increasing proportion of what donors claim as “climate finance” takes the form of loans.⁸

Meanwhile, adaptation costs are rising as climate impacts increase. The developing world’s annual need is estimated at \$70bn and is forecast to rise 2-to-4-fold by 2030. Under the Paris Agreement, governments have pledged to set a new, higher finance goal before 2025, with those discussions due to start at COP26.

Attention is now on governments to ensure the \$100bn per year is on the table by the Glasgow summit, and that a sufficient proportion of it goes to adaptation. The UK as host has a key role in stimulating this process, creating incentives for other governments to come forward, building coalitions, inviting other nations to co-lead and to create a space for discussions on increasing funding.

In the Paris Agreement, governments agreed to work towards a Global Goal on Adaptation that would enhance adaptive capacity, reduce vulnerabilities to climate change and strengthen resilience. But five years on, the precise nature that such a goal could take is not yet clear.⁹ Discussions on progress towards the Goal are due to begin this year and feed into the Global Stocktake in 2023.

Outside the formal negotiating process, 122 countries plus nearly 100 other organisations launched in 2019 a Call for Action on Adaptation and Resilience.¹⁰ The UK and Egypt co-led this process and have since announced a new Adaptation Action Coalition that, ministers say, “...will work to turn international political commitments into on-the-ground support for vulnerable communities.”¹¹ Meanwhile, paralleling the recent growth in interest in what action entities other than governments are taking to cut emissions, the High-Level Champions of Chile and the UK launched the ‘Race to Resilience’, designed to ‘catalyse a step-change in global ambition to build the resilience of 4 billion people by 2030’.¹²

With both of these initiatives there is at this stage a lack of clarity about what outcomes will be in practice – and in particular, what scaling-up is possible unless the requisite progress on climate finance takes place.

Outside the UN arena, three events threaten progress on the already challenging adaptation agenda:

- Covid-19 leaves many developing nations facing extremely challenging economic circumstances, including escalating levels of debt and lack of access to international support. Among other things, this puts pressure on government finances that could otherwise have gone to climate protection
- Strained relations with the EU appear to be preventing the UK engaging major European nations such as France and Germany that could do some of the diplomatic ‘heavy lifting’ on the finance agenda
- Government’s decision to cut ODA adds financial pressure on developing nations and sends a signal that the UK is neither honouring its promises nor particularly interested in the fate of the poorest countries.¹³

Looking further ahead, science shows that the capacity to adapt to climate change impacts will reduce as temperatures rise, with ‘limits to adaptation’ being progressively breached. This makes it additionally imperative that COP26 reaches a transformational conclusion and sets every nation and every sector on track to net zero emissions around mid-century. This becomes much more likely, however, if the UK ensures that it and other wealthy nations commit fully and constructively to addressing the immediate adaptation and finance needs of the world’s poorest

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The UK Governments focus on adaptation and resilience in the run up to COP26 is welcome. Ensuring communities can adapt to current and future climate impacts is essential and urgent, but does not receive the same level of funding or attention as climate mitigation.

Adapting to climate change requires a different way of working – the impacts of changes in the weather have very different implications across the diversity of contexts in any country. It is not just a matter of spending more money. It matters where this money goes and how it is provided. Too often, adaptation projects are delivered in a top-down manner – failing to respond to the needs of those most affected and often perpetuating existing inequalities. IIED is part of a global coalition of stakeholders is working to overturn this

model and increase the funding and decision-making power in the hands of local communities and institutions. The UK can use its position as COP26 President to join these efforts and help catalyse the emergence of a new, locally driven model of climate adaptation and resilience building.

Climate mitigation measures, such as taking coal out of the energy mix, are universally applicable - even if the associated political issues vary by locality. Adaptation projects are typically much more contextual. By necessity they must also be more adaptive and agile – responding to events as they happen and ensuring knowledge and institutional capacity are built over time. This means local actors with a deep understanding of the challenges being faced should be given the authority and resources to lead adaptation and resilience building efforts.

Though all climate support and financing should be responsive to local priorities and needs, this is especially true for adaptation and resilience building work. For this reason, IIED, along with a collaboration of 45+ governments, leading global institutions and local and international NGOs have endorsed eight principles for locally led adaptation. Locally led adaptation means giving agency to local institutions and communities to define, prioritise, design, implement, and monitor adaptation projects. Beyond ensuring adaptation efforts respond to the needs and priorities of local communities, a locally led approach also builds up local institutional capacity and skills in – ensuring the longevity of interventions.

These principles resulted from an extensive consultation process, responding to the 2050 Vision of the Least Developed Countries Group – an established block in the UNFCCC that has been at the forefront of driving more ambitious climate action at COP negotiations. The consultation was guided by Dr Muhammad Musa, director of the BRAC, and Sheela Patel, former board chair and founding member of Slum Dwellers International.

These eight principles are:

- Devolving decision making to the lowest appropriate level
- Addressing structural inequalities faced by women, youth, children, disabled and displaced people, Indigenous Peoples and marginalised ethnic groups
- Providing patient and predictable funding that can be accessed more easily
- Investing in local capabilities to leave an institutional legacy
- Building a robust understanding of climate risk and uncertainty
- Flexible programming and learning
- Ensuring transparency and accountability
- Collaborative action and investment

These principles provide a blue-print for a new approach to adaptation and resilience building that overturns the current top-down model. The IIED and global partners are already working to embed these principles, build a community of practice, and demonstrate the value of the locally led adaptation action.

The UK Presidency is rightly prioritising adaptation and resilience building ahead of COP26. The UK is also well known for working closely with local partners in the delivery of international climate projects. This puts the UK in a prime position to advance and catalyse the emergence of a more bottom-up and locally led approach to climate adaptation. They can do this by: encouraging other donors to join them in endorsing the eight principles for locally led adaptation; platforming local voices and speakers in all events on adaptation and resilience building ahead of COP26; working with the LDC Group to ensure examples of locally led

adaptation are showcased at COP26; and using their position as donors to international climate funds to embed the principles of locally led adaptation in their work.

Timeline: 2021

A brief, and by no means exhaustive, list of some of the key diplomatic engagement points in 2021.

25 th January	Global Commission on Adaptation: <u>Climate Adaptation Summit</u>
26 th – 29 th January	<u>World Economic Forum</u> Annual Meeting
February	UK Chairs UN Security Council with <u>focus on climate security</u>

17 th – 30 th May	<u>COP15</u> – UN Convention on Biological Diversity in Kunming, China
June	G7 Summit, Carbis Bay, Cornwall
September	UK Government - Net Zero Strategy expected
14 th September	76 th Session of the UN General Assembly
28 th - September	30 th <u>Youth4Climate: Driving Ambition</u> COP Summit
30 th September – 2 nd October	<u>Pre-COP</u> , Milan, Italy
30 th – 31 st October	G20 Summit, Rome, Italy
1 st – 12 th November	<u>COP26</u> – UN Climate Summit in Glasgow, Scotland

Glossary

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) - the international treaty under which climate negotiations take place. The treaty was signed in 1992 and entered into force in 1994. Its ultimate objective is to ‘prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.’ It also enshrines the duty of richer nations to lead the low-carbon transition and to support the poorest financially.

Conference of the Parties (COP) - a generic term for the ultimate decision-making body of an international convention, which in the case of the UNFCCC convenes annually. Often also used to refer to the conferences where the decision-making body convenes.

26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) - the 26th time that the COP to the UNFCCC has convened. To be held in Glasgow in November 2021.

The Paris Agreement - an extension to the UNFCCC agreed at COP21 in Paris. Signatories committed to limit global temperature rise to 'well below' 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and 'pursue efforts' to limit it to 1.5°C. Where previous efforts to reach a global agreement on emissions reduction focused on dividing the remaining carbon budget between countries, the Paris Agreement invites countries to put forward their own contributions. The intention is that these contributions will become increasingly progressive will collectively achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement.

Paris Agreement Rulebook: guidelines for how the Paris Agreement will operate in practice. The majority of the rulebook was agreed at COP24 in Katowice, however there are a number of outstanding issues such as the operation of market and non-market cooperation mechanisms.

Kyoto Protocol: The Kyoto Protocol was the first major extension to the UNFCCC, adopted in 1997. Unlike the Paris Agreement that requires emission reductions from all countries, the Kyoto Protocol only required action from industrialised countries and economies in transition.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC): An entirely separate entity to the UNFCCC that synthesises evidence on the trajectory and risks of climate change, and on pathways for decarbonisation, for policymakers. These 'Assessment Reports' are updated and released approximately every 6 years to reflect the latest evidence from a range of academic disciplines.

Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC): A formal commitment from a party to the Paris Agreement detailing that party's contribution towards the objectives of the Agreement. NDCs must be submitted every 5 years and must reflect the Party's 'highest possible ambition'.

Party Groupings: Collections of UNFCCC member countries that share interests and objectives and coordinate their activities and negotiation positions. Groupings exist for each major geographical region alongside groupings based on socio-economic characteristics. They include the G-77/China grouping of developing countries, the European Union grouping and the Small Island Developing States grouping that has been instrumental in driving more aggressive action. Parties may be members of more than one grouping.

Global Stocktake: Established as part of the Paris Agreement, the Global Stocktake will comprehensively assess progress towards the goals of the Paris Agreement. Stocktakes must be completed every 5 years, with the first due in 2023.

Article 6: Article of the Paris Agreement covering market and nonmarket cooperation mechanisms. One of the few areas of the rulebook yet to be agreed and an area that will be negotiated at COP26.

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NOTE: This briefing has been prepared by the secretariats of the APPGs for Environment, Climate Change, Renewable and Sustainable Energy. The views expressed in the briefing and comment piece are not the views of the APPG Chairs.

Endnotes

- ¹ [https://ca1-eci.edcdn.com/reports/ECIU Under the Weather 10 12 20.pdf](https://ca1-eci.edcdn.com/reports/ECIU_Under_the_Weather_10_12_20.pdf)
- ² <https://www.unep.org/resources/adaptation-gap-report-2020>
- ³ <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/conveng.pdf>
- ⁴ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/8421652.stm>
- ⁵ <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/10a01.pdf#page=2>
- ⁶ <https://www.iied.org/message-green-climate-fund-board-step-finance-access-for-most-vulnerable>
- ⁷ <https://www.climatechangenews.com/2020/11/06/oecd-one-fifth-climate-finance-goes-adaptation-share-loans-grows/>
- ⁸ https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/100_billion_climate_finance_report.pdf
- ⁹ <https://pubs.iied.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/2021-01/17773IIED.pdf>
- ¹⁰ <https://www.adaptation-undp.org/adapting-now-resilient-future>
- ¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-global-coalition-launched-to-address-impacts-of-climate-change>
- ¹² <https://racetozero.unfccc.int/race-to-resilience/>
- ¹³ Economically advanced countries pledged in 1970 to commit from the mid-1970s at least 0.7% of GDP to ODA <http://devinit.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Factsheet-0-7%25.pdf>

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