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UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

SUBSIDIARY BODY FOR SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE

Fifteenth session

Marrakesh, 29 October – 6 November 2001

Agenda item 4 (c)

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

METHODS AND TOOLS TO EVALUATE IMPACTS AND ADAPTATION

Submissions from Parties

Note by the secretariat

Addendum

1. At its fourteenth session, the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) took note of the report of the workshop on methodologies on climate change impact and adaptation held at Sainte Adèle, Canada, in June 2001 (FCCC/SBSTA/2001/INF.4).
2. The SBSTA invited Parties to consider the information provided and to be prepared, at its fifteenth session, to give further consideration to planning its work on the methodologies to assess climate change impacts, vulnerability and adaptation. To facilitate consideration, the SBSTA invited Parties and organizations to submit their views on the issues identified in document FCCC/SBSTA/2001/INF.4 by 1 October 2001 for compilation into a miscellaneous document (FCCC/SBSTA/2001/2, para.18 (b)).
3. One additional submission* has been received. In accordance with the procedure for miscellaneous documents, this submission is attached and reproduced in the language in which it was received and without formal editing.

* In order to make this submission available on electronic systems, including the World Wide Web, it has been electronically imported. The secretariat has made every effort to ensure the correct reproduction of the text as submitted.

SUBMISSION BY EL SALVADOR, NICARAGUA AND HONDURAS

SBSTA15: METHODS AND TOOLS TO ASSESS CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS AND ADAPTATION

Report of the workshop on methodologies on climate change impact and Adaptation (FCCC/SBSTA/2001/INF.4)

1. Introduction.

The FCCC/SBSTA/2001/INF.4 document presents an excellent synthesis of the results of the workshop on “Methods and tools to assess climate change impact and adaptation”, which took place from 11 to 14 June 2001 in Sainte Adèle, Canada.

Delegates from developed and developing countries participated in this workshop, as well as members of scientific organizations, universities and cooperation agencies. El Salvador, México, Panamá and Cuba participated on behalf of the Central America, Mexico and Cuba region.

The workshop was developed in cooperation with another workshop organized by the UNDP-GEF National Communications Support Programme (NCSP). The latter workshop was directed at reviewing an “Adaptation Policy Framework” proposal (APF), prepared by the NCSP in response to needs expressed by developing countries. The APF was designed on the basis of an assessment of the methods used over the last decade on vulnerability and assessment, the IPCC Third Assessment Report, and based on national experience developed in the National Communications process.

2. Comments on the Conclusions of the Document FCCC/SBSTA/2001/INF.4.

The conclusions of the workshop include elements of great relevance for the development of adaptation strategies in developing countries. In this regard, the APF is entirely consistent with these conclusions, particularly with respect to the following:

- a. Orienting vulnerability and adaptation assessments towards the development of intervention strategies and processes that generate policies to be incorporated into national sustainable development planning processes.
- b. Promoting the evolution of methodological approaches, methods and tools towards a better understanding of the risks associated with climate variability and extreme events.
- c. Ensuring the participation of key stakeholders in the impact, vulnerability and adaptation assessments, especially of the vulnerable human populations affected. Likewise, incorporation into these assessments the local knowledge of these stakeholders about issues and their possible solutions so that the intervention processes may be adopted, successful and sustainable.

- d. Assessing vulnerability and adaptation based on present and past experiences in relation to adaptability to climate variability and extreme events, and ensuring that methods are practical, appropriate, sustainable, easy to use and that they make use of available data.
 - e. Build national capacity to develop, identify and apply the most appropriate methods based on national circumstances, and to ensure the cumulative effect and continuity of efforts, strengthen or establish national teams of climate change experts.
3. The Adaptation Policy Framework.

During a NCSP organized workshop, developed in Panama¹, eight countries from the Meso-American region² and Cuba endorsed the APF and adopted it as the methodological approach for executing the *Capacity Building for Stage II Adaptation to Climate Change in Central America, Mexico and Cuba*³ project. All of the countries mentioned support the APF because its approach adequately addresses the UNFCCC objective of building national capacity for climate change adaptation in non-Annex I Parties. Likewise the countries feel that the APF is based on sound scientific and technical information, it is replicable and seeks sustainability, and promotes the participation of key stakeholders, mainly from the most poor and vulnerable human populations.

The intervention strategy proposed in the APF is consistent with the latest scientific results in the field of vulnerability and adaptation, as introduced in the Third Assessment Report of the IPCC⁴. The APF approach is innovative as it focuses on vulnerability and adaptation to current climate conditions, including extreme events, as a point of departure for strengthening adaptability to climate change. The APF is also intended to integrate adaptation policies and measures at the development level and in natural resources and environment management systems currently under implementation.

One of the key innovations of the APF is the explicit recognition that adaptation policies and measures will not be adopted and applied if these are established in isolation from the rest of national, sectoral and local development decisions and plans on resource management (e.g., water resources, agriculture, food security, human health, coastal zones, land use and natural ecosystems). Along these lines, the APF proposes that the assessment of adaptation options shall take into account development priorities and current policies on system management for the given intervention.

The APF has been prepared through a broad consultative and participatory process of experts from developed and developing countries, and is supported by Country Study Programmes in Germany and the Netherlands, UNDP, WMO, WHO and other organizations. These types of processes have been supported continuously by non-Annex I Parties.

¹ Panama City, from 21 to 23 August 2001.

² Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama.

³ Currently in the process of GEF approval and to begin in January 2002. Project number: PIMS 2220.

⁴ IPCC: TAR, 2001.

4. Comments on the challenges for future work of SBSTA and the Secretariat on methods and tools to assess vulnerability and adaptation to climate change.

In light of the expertise developed by developing countries preparing their case studies and first national communications, experts from these countries have underscored numerous times the limiting factors and issues that they have found using available methodological approaches, methods and tools for vulnerability and adaptation assessments. The conclusions of the Saint Adèle workshop reflect in large part the concerns expressed by representatives of the developing countries that participated in the workshop.

In the case of the Meso-American region⁵, one of the short-term priorities is the integration of vulnerability and adaptation assessments into sustainable development plans, programmes and projects, as well as linkage of climate change in the long-term to current problems arising from climate variability, including extreme events.

In the majority of Initial National Communications of countries from this region, studies on climate vulnerability were focussed more on the sectoral impacts of climate change than on adaptation. These studies developed future scenarios related only to average values of the climate variables⁶. Climate variability and extreme climate events were not considered in spite of the fact that the Meso-American region is particularly susceptible to them, and that the vast majority of its most impoverished populations systematically suffer enormous damages and losses, including human life, due to hurricanes, tropical storms, droughts, flooding, forest fires, tsunamis, etc. Furthermore, the sectoral studies concentrated on biophysical systems, and only a few addressed the socio-economic and human dimensions. One characteristic common to the studies was that the degree of adaptability to climate risks of human populations was not addressed.

5. Recommendations to SBSTA.

Considering that:

5.1. The conclusions of the workshop on “Methods and tools to assess climate change impact and adaptation” address aspects related to: a) current expertise and state of the art methods; b) improving methods; and c) improving information and its adequate dissemination; and

5.2. The APF was prepared in response to the needs presented by developing countries on capacity building for developing and prioritizing adaptation policies and measures in national processes on sustainable development⁷.

We recommend that SBSTA:

⁵ Mexico and Central America.

⁶ Fundamentally the variations in the media of temperature and rainfall.

⁷ All countries that have endorsed Agenda 21 are committed to developing sustainable development programmes and plans.

- 5.3. Carries the conclusions of the workshop for incorporation into the guidelines of the UNFCCC financial mechanism as well as for the IPCC working groups⁸, in addition to being considered for future enabling activities for national communications.
- 5.4. Elaborates, on the basis of the conclusions of the workshop, recommendations for the design and execution of technical assistance, capacity building and training programmes on climate change vulnerability and adaptation issues.
- 5.5. Takes and systematically integrates into future SBSTA work on the execution of Stage II Adaptation the methodological approach presented in the APF, including aspects related to methods and tools.
- 5.6. Facilitates and formalizes the establishment of a dialogue between the community of experts from developed and developing countries by working on assessments or intervention processes *in situ* on vulnerability and adaptation matters. The dialogue should be oriented towards improving methods and tools through: a) interaction between end-users and developers of methods; b) adoption of integrated approaches that incorporate contributions of the various social and environmental disciplines; c) improving data quality, including data rehabilitation; and d) promote and facilitate the strengthening of national climate observing systems.

⁸ Includes teams of experts that prepare technical and best practices manuals for National Inventories of green house gases.