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MATTERS RELATING TO THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Progress report of the Least Developed Countries Expert Group

Note by the secretariat

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Mandate

1. At its sixteenth session, the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) endorsed the programme of work of the Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG), and invited the Chair of the LEG to update the SBI at its seventeenth session on progress in the implementation of its programme of work.¹

B. Scope of the note

2. This document provides an update on the progress made in the work of the LEG since the sixteenth sessions of the subsidiary bodies. This report should be considered in conjunction with document FCCC/SBI/2002/INF.14, which includes annotated guidelines for the preparation of National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs), as well as appendices on seeking synergies among multilateral environmental agreements, on mainstreaming NAPAs into national development planning, and on prioritization of NAPA projects, as part of the input of the LEG into the process of review of the NAPA guidelines at the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 8).

II. SECOND MEETING OF THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES EXPERT GROUP

3. The second meeting of the LEG was held in Bonn, Germany, from 16 to 20 June 2002. The LEG members discussed the following:

(a) Outreach activities, including LEG participation in the Ninth Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), held in Kampala, Uganda, from 1 to 5 July 2002; the Global Environment Facility (GEF) briefing on NAPAs and national focal point support for least developed countries (LDCs), presented at a side event during the sixteenth session of the SBI in Bonn on 13 June 2002; the interagency meeting, convened by the UNFCCC secretariat on 13 June 2002; and the possibility of organizing a side event at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September 2002.

(b) Preparation of simulated NAPAs, designed to enable the LEG to detect potential problems that may be encountered in following the NAPA guidelines;

(c) Methodologies for prioritization of NAPA activities under paragraphs 15 and 16 of the NAPA guidelines;

(d) Preparation of annotations to the NAPA guidelines;

(e) Preparation of a paper on the promotion of synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements;

(f) Preparation of a paper on mainstreaming NAPAs into national development planning;

(g) LEG input into the review process of NAPA guidelines;

(h) The relationship between the work of the LEG and that of the GEF implementing agencies, including a conference call between the LEG and the GEF and its implementing agencies, which was held on 20 June 2002;

¹ See FCCC/SBI/2002/6, paragraphs 29 and 30.

(i) Arrangements for the organization of a LEG workshop, which was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh, from 18 to 21 September 2002 (see section IV below); a subgroup of LEG members was assigned to undertake the substantive preparation for this workshop;

(j) Planning the launch of an LDC website, which could be hosted by the UNFCCC secretariat, and which would provide LDC Parties with simple and fast access to relevant information and documents, including those relating to the work of the LEG.

III. INTERSESSIONAL WORK

4. During the intersessional period between the sixteenth and seventeenth sessions of the subsidiary bodies, the LEG devoted much of its work to the organization of the Dhaka workshop, and to the revision and finalization of papers prepared by the LEG, based on the discussions held at the second LEG meeting in Bonn, including the annotations of the NAPA guidelines, and the papers on mainstreaming, synergies and prioritization, as well as the submission by the LEG to the process of reviewing the NAPA guidelines. The data-gathering phase of the simulated NAPAs was completed during the intersessional period; however, the completion of the simulated NAPAs is planned to take place after COP 8.

5. In addition, the participation of some LEG members at external meetings and conferences, including the WSSD in Johannesburg, and the UNDP meeting on an adaptation policy framework, held from 11 to 14 September in Havana, Cuba, provided a chance to conduct outreach activities to further the interests of the LDCs in the context of the work of the LEG, and to make the work of the LEG more consistent with the outcomes of these meetings.

IV. WORKSHOP ON CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR NAPA PREPARATION

6. The LEG held a workshop from 18 to 21 September 2002 at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on capacity-building for the preparation of NAPAs by LDCs. Financial support for the workshop was provided by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), the Government of France, and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) through a project funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provided logistical support.

7. Participants at the workshop included potential members of national NAPA teams from environment, planning and finance ministries and civil society in LDC Parties. Each LDC Party was invited to nominate three participants. A total of 135 participants attended the workshop, including eight LEG members. The workshop, which was inaugurated by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, also served as a launching pad for the NAPA preparation process, and provided an opportunity for interaction with the GEF and its implementing agencies on the modalities for funding and on the proposals for preparing NAPAs.

8. The workshop consisted of clusters of presentations, each of which was followed by a training session in which participants were divided into small groups to do exercises on the different steps required for completing a NAPA.

9. The final day of the workshop included presentations by the GEF and its implementing agencies, and a session on the experience of those Parties that are close to completing the preparation of their NAPA funding proposals.

10. LEG members held informal meetings with the GEF and its implementing agencies, to discuss the relationship between the work of the LEG and that of the GEF implementing agencies. Further discussions will be necessary in order to reach agreement on the modalities for cooperation.

11. The workshop provided a forum for a two-way interaction whereby LEG members provided participants with a detailed elaboration of the NAPA guidelines and the NAPA preparation process, and participants provided feedback which served as useful input into planning the future work of the LEG. Much of this feedback could also provide insight into any possible future revision of the NAPA guidelines. The following elements were identified as being of particular relevance to the application of the NAPA guidelines and to the future evolution of the NAPA process:

(a) The preparation and implementation of NAPAs is particularly important for LDC Parties because NAPAs allow for a prioritization of urgent and immediate adaptation action, including that relating to extreme events. It does so in an inclusive manner that ensures the participation of all relevant stakeholders, especially those at the community level;

(b) Effective access to information relevant to NAPA preparation was seen as a challenge for completing NAPAs. This can be partly overcome through a political endorsement of the process by high-level policymakers, an active engagement of all relevant institutions in its preparation, and acceptability by local communities through proper awareness building of the details of the process for all relevant stakeholders;

(c) Although the NAPA guidelines do not mention national communications as a possible source of information in the preparation of NAPAs, participants noted that information available in national communications, and in other relevant national environmental and development-related documents and plans, should be reviewed as part of the process of information synthesis referred to in paragraph 8 (b) (i) of the NAPA guidelines;

(d) The bottom-up approach of the NAPA preparation process should be an important guiding principle in the development of NAPAs, where community-level consultations form the basis upon which subsequent assessment and policy decisions are made. In this regard, the need for a wide participatory process at the grassroots level was repeatedly emphasized during the workshop;

(e) Activities proposed in the NAPA should strive to build upon existing local adaptation strategies and indigenous knowledge;

(f) Vulnerability to climate change is inextricably linked to poverty. Therefore linkages to poverty-reduction strategies are fundamental to the effectiveness of the NAPA process. Although NAPAs address urgent and immediate needs, these linkages should be approached through the long-term perspective of enhancing adaptive capacity by poverty alleviation;

(g) In addition to complementarity with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Convention on Biological Diversity, synergies with other relevant agreements should also be considered;

(h) Regional cooperation is an important component for success in the implementation of NAPAs. This issue will be further addressed by the LEG, in accordance with paragraph 9 (d) of its terms of reference;

(i) It is important to engage a multiple-stakeholder team in preparing the NAPA, including representatives from environment, planning and finance ministries and civil society.

V. UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

12. The LEG plans to initiate its remaining planned activities following COP 8. These activities will include:

- (a) The promotion of regional synergies, which would be particularly relevant in the implementation phase of NAPAs. Consideration of this issue will be initiated once a representative sample of NAPA proposals has been prepared by LDC Parties;
- (b) The provision of technical guidance and advice on the preparation and implementation strategy of NAPAs, upon request by LDC Parties;
- (c) The provision of recommendations on capacity-building needs for the preparation and implementation of NAPAs;
- (d) Coordination of LEG support with that provided by implementing agencies;
- (e) The organization of follow-up regional workshops.

VI. POSSIBLE FURTHER ACTION BY THE SBI

13. The SBI may wish:

- (a) To take note of the annotations prepared by the LEG (document FCCC/SBI/2002/INF.14) and to invite LDC Parties to consider these annotations, where appropriate, in their application of the NAPA guidelines;
- (b) To provide any further guidance on the modalities of provision of LEG advice to LDC Parties, referred to in paragraph 12 (b) above;
- (c) To invite Parties to provide support for the organization of follow-up regional workshops, in order to further assist LDC Parties in finalizing their NAPAs and capitalizing on regional synergies.
