

Climate change is water change

The IPCC states that water is the primary medium through which climate change impacts will be felt by humans and the environment¹. In addition, water is critical for climate change mitigation, as many efforts to reduce carbon emissions rely on water availability for their long-term success. Mitigation and adaptation need to be viewed as complementary responses to climate change. Recognising the increasing prominence of water in relation to the climate change agenda, the Water and Climate Coalition calls on Parties to consider the following in their discussions:

Water resource management is key to successfully mitigating and adapting to climate change. Water is not a sectorial issue, but a cross cutting resource fundamental for almost all aspects of society – including health, food and energy security, environmental conservation, disaster risk reduction and industrial development. Water is a fundamental provider of ecosystem services, and the foundation for green growth.

Addressing water in both adaptation and mitigation measures will have a pivotal role in the successful implementation of programmes and measures. Water-related principles need to be applied in the context of climate change mitigation and adaptation through multi-level collaboration between sectorial, multi-sectorial and multidisciplinary institutions.

Moreover, water provides a clear-cut example of the linkages between mitigation and adaptation, and the necessity to mitigate and adapt in a coherent way. Biofuels, forest carbon, hydropower, ecosystem services and agriculture are all heavily dependent on sustainable, resilient water resources management. However, mitigation and adaptation run the risk of becoming competing, even antagonistic approaches. It is thus of utmost importance that UNFCCC policies and institutions facilitate and promote coherence and cooperation. Uninformed compartmentalised decision making risk paving the way for incoherent or insufficient national, regional, and global measures.

Facilitating the integration and application of water knowledge is a necessary step in order to ensure the sustainability of adaptation and mitigation strategies and measures. Given the centrality of water change to climate change, the various UNFCCC bodies need to specifically and urgently address the role of water in securing a sustainable future. This is especially crucial as the AWG-LCA and AWG-KP concludes in Doha, and work continues under the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP).

With this in mind, the Water and Climate Coalition recommends that:

- Knowledge on water resources management is fed into the work of the Adaptation Committee.
- The role of the Nairobi Work Programme is strengthened, and a thematic initiative on water is established under the NWP.
- It is ensured that strategies to prevent, and recover from, climate related disasters are sustainable and contribute to safeguarding water resources long term.
- The Green Climate Fund already at this early stage of its work, considers supporting initiatives that seek to build capacity in water management to address adaptation and mitigation.

¹ IPCC Technical Paper on Climate Change and Water, <http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/technical-papers/climate-change-water-en.pdf>

Secure the integration of water knowledge in the work of the Adaptation Committee

Given the pivotal role of water management in adaptation to climate change, it is critical that knowledge of water management guides the work of the UNFCCC Adaptation Committee. Since the Adaptation Committee is requested to ***engage with, and draw on the expertise of, relevant institutions, organizations, frameworks, networks and centres outside of the Convention***², the Coalition will consistently follow the work of and provide useful input to the Adaptation Committee.

With a mandate of ***providing recommendations to the COP on ways to rationalize and strengthen coherence among adaptation bodies, programmes and activities under the Convention***³, the Adaptation Committee is in a key position to ensure that water perspectives are made part of all adaptation decisions and measures under the UNFCCC.

Among the list of activities identified for the Adaptation Committee is to identify a roster of experts on adaptation issues. The Water and Climate Coalition strongly recommends that broad water resource knowledge, as well as expertise on water- and climate linkages, is represented among the experts chosen. Water knowledge should also be considered when the Adaptation Committee evaluates capacities of regional centers and networks working on adaptation, and when providing technical support to Parties on the development of national adaptation plans.

Establish a thematic action initiative on water resources under the Nairobi Work Programme

The Durban outcomes request SBSTA to, at its 38th session (May/June 2013), *reconsider* work areas of the Nairobi Work Programme (NWP) with a view to making recommendations to COP 19 (December 2013) on how best to support the objectives of the work programme and the Cancun Adaptation Framework.

On July 18-20, 2012, the SBSTA held a technical workshop on “water and climate change impacts and adaptation strategies” in Mexico City. The Water and Climate Coalition much welcomed this initiative to explore the inter-relation between water change and climate change in greater detail. Participants agreed that there is “an urgent need for policy considerations on climate change impacts on water resources and adaptation strategies in the UNFCCC process”⁴. One of the outcomes of these discussions was that there is a need to strengthen NWPs role as a platform and knowledge centre for water-related matters, and as a broker between actors dealing with these issues. The Water and Climate Coalition fully supports this view, as it regards the NWP as a gateway to all interested groups from practitioners and experts, to community-level policy makers and others. The NWP is furthermore a conduit into the negotiation process from all engaged groups. If given sufficient mandate, it can be a very effective instrument to catalyse actions at various levels of implementation, and could also serve as a platform for discussions on how to facilitate coherence between adaptation and mitigation strategies. A holistic and multidisciplinary approach with regard to water needs to build upon knowledge sharing, management and collaboration - which is why it is highly relevant to further dialogue on water within the NWP.

² http://unfccc.int/adaptation/cancun_adaptation_framework/adaptation_committee/items/6053.php

³ http://unfccc.int/adaptation/cancun_adaptation_framework/adaptation_committee/items/6593.php

⁴ <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2012/sbsta/eng/04.pdf>

With the above in mind, and with the SBSTA currently reviewing submissions from Parties on future activities for the Nairobi Work Programme, the Water and Climate Coalition suggests that a thematic initiative on water resources is established under the Nairobi Work Programme.

Water in the context of adapting and mitigating damages, disasters, risks and losses

Considering damages, disasters, risk and losses in adaptation and mitigation strategies is crucial in terms of seeking to build resilience in the face of hazards. They all focus on reducing people's vulnerability to hazards by improving methods to anticipate, resist, cope with and recover from their impact.

The Loss and Damage regional expert workshops under SBI have illuminated the entire range of damage and permanent loss that cannot be avoided through mitigation nor can be avoided through adaptation. In order to sufficiently address these issues frameworks or institutions need to be created that link approaches to address loss and damage and accentuate complementarities. Moreover, coordinated mechanisms that pool necessary expertise, data and infrastructure, ensuring that risk transfer approaches complement and accelerate adaptation are necessary. In line with decision 1/CP.16⁵, which calls upon Parties to "make recommendations on loss and damage to the COP for its consideration at COP 18", the Coalition thus calls for a more explicit acknowledgement of water linkages within the work programme on loss and damage under the SBI.

Water-related stresses due to climate change are significant, and the reconstruction process following disasters inevitably includes new investments in water infrastructure and protection. Ensuring that investments are sustainable is critical in order to safeguard water resources long term. The disaster risk management community has a long history of dealing with water related hazards, and therefore a wealth of experience which is highly relevant to activities and measures. However, it needs to be stressed that pre-emptive action is far more cost effective. Therefore it is of great importance to ensure that water related perspectives are part of long term strategic planning in the National Adaptation Plans.

Establish water as a priority under the Green Climate Fund

The Green Climate Fund (GCF) was established in Cancun at COP 16 to deliver financial resources to developing countries for climate change adaptation and mitigation. The terms and structure have been elaborated since and the expectations for an equitable and useful design are extensive. The Cancun Agreement calls for the GCF 'to support projects, programmes, policies and other activities in developing country Parties using thematic funding windows'.

Acknowledging that the work of the Green Climate Fund is still in its early stages, the Water and Climate Coalition would still like to recommend that the Fund considers supporting programmes and activities that build capacity in water management to address adaptation and mitigation risks, and strengthens the ability of local and regional actors to sustainably manage water resources.

⁵ <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2010/cop16/eng/07a01.pdf>

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