



**Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards  
of UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP  
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## **Climate change and its impact on development**

**Background document prepared jointly by  
UNDP (coordinator), UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP**

## **Introduction**

1. This session on climate change and its impact on development is an opportunity to review the work of the United Nations in jointly addressing climate change. The review looks at work done by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) task team on climate change and environmental sustainability and the United Nations system Chief Executives Board for Coordination-led initiative on 'delivering as one' on climate change, which have documented the areas in which the United Nations works at country level, prepared a framework for cooperation at the global policy level, and issued a 'statement of purpose' to articulate the normative basis, mandates and capacities in support of the climate change response of the United Nations system.

2. As this note was prepared before the December 2009 meeting of the Conference of Parties in Copenhagen, the joint meeting of the Executive Boards session is an opportunity to provide updates on decisions taken and their implications for the work of the United Nations in responding to climate change. Therefore, the following points are of paramount importance:

(a) That climate change must be addressed in the context of continued efforts to improve quality of life for people around the globe, including through the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. This means the impacts of climate change on communities and vulnerable groups – especially women and children – must be understood, that the policy and programmatic responses prioritize actions that reduce immediate and long term risk, and that programmatic responses build resilience and adaptive capacity;

(b) That the work of the United Nations remains focused on supporting Governments and other national bodies in responding to climate change, aligned to national priorities and goals. Building national capacity development is the ultimate aim of the United Nations, which includes supporting policy development, establishing and operating effective institutions, and building individual capacities to apply new technologies or diversify livelihood strategies;

(c) That given the pervasive nature of climate change, responses to it must be mainstreamed into existing national development plans and strategies so the threats and opportunities of climate change are addressed comprehensively. Stand-alone climate change response plans will not be successful vehicles for achieving the dual objectives of development and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

3. The United Nations is heavily engaged in humanitarian response. It needs the support of the international community to significantly step up its commitments in the face of climate change, which is increasingly a major driver of disasters. At the same time, a concerted shift is needed away from pure emergency response, towards disaster risk reduction.

## **Climate change and its impact on development**

4. Climate change presents an extraordinary threat to human security by exacerbating current economic, political and humanitarian stresses, eroding development gains, and potentially magnifying existing gender disparities. An analysis of the latest peer-reviewed science, published in a September 2009 United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report<sup>1</sup>, indicates that the pace and scale of climate change may now be outstripping even the most sobering predictions issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2007, with far-reaching, global consequences. Poor communities will be most impacted, particularly those in developing countries with large and growing populations, who have a greater dependence on ecosystem services for livelihoods and limited institutional and financial capacity to manage risk. Warming of just 2 degrees Celcius could result in permanent reductions in per capita income in Africa and Asia of between 4-5 per cent.<sup>2</sup>

5. Coastal areas, including large and small cities and crucial agricultural zones, are threatened with submergence and saline intrusion, while low-lying islands in the Pacific are faced with outright extinction. Mountain glaciers in Asia and Latin America are melting at a rate that could

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<sup>1</sup> UNEP, Climate Change Science Compendium, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> World Bank. 2010. World Development Report: Development and Climate Change.

eventually threaten water supplies, irrigation and hydropower for a substantial portion of the world's population. By 2020, 75-250 million people across Africa could face water shortages, with serious impact on food security, access to safe drinking water and sanitation.

6. Climate change will have severe implications on agriculture that relies on precipitation, affecting local cropping patterns – especially of staple crops – and international production and trade. By 2020, agricultural activity dependent upon rainfall could drop by 50 per cent in some African countries. Estimates suggest that by 2050, there will be 25 million more malnourished children as a result of climate change. Climate change is already changing the geographic distribution, frequency and intensity of weather-related hazards. Erratic weather events destroy crucial infrastructure and alter local ecosystems, resulting in increased disease prevalence. Health risks, particularly water- and vector-borne diseases, are also poised to increase.

7. The erosion of territories and livelihoods induced by climatic changes, in conjunction with demographic and other trends, intensifies competition over increasingly scarce resources, triggering changes in migration flows and contributing to the outbreak of conflicts. In 2008, over 20 million people were displaced by climate-related sudden-onset natural disasters, compared to 4.6 million new internally-displaced people as a consequence of conflicts during the same period.<sup>3</sup> Failure to support rural populations in adaptation will help produce crisis-driven movements that increase the vulnerability of those forced to move, as they leave behind homes and assets, and lose valuable social networks and family ties. Migration can be an important adaptive mechanism, but only if policies are developed to support it, particularly for the poorest, who often do not have the resources to move. Climate change is hence also likely to reinforce the trend to general instability that already exists in many societies and regions, particularly in weak and fragile states.<sup>4</sup>

8. Most of the global economic and demographic growth is found in cities, as are most of the emissions. By 2050, the population of Africa will increase by about 1 billion, of whom 800 million will live in urban areas, while in Asia during the same period, urban population is expected to grow by almost 2 billion. Much of the resulting urban growth could occur in vulnerable areas, which are the most heavily impacted by climate change. Yet when they are well planned, well designed and well administered, cities can offer better opportunities for sustainable development for the poor.

### **The nature of the joint work of the United Nations organizations on climate change**

9. The United Nations system, as the most inclusive multilateral institutional framework for policy and action, has an essential role to play in supporting efforts by the international community to combat climate change and its impacts, especially in developing countries. The experience and capacity of the United Nations system organizations provides the international community with an important resource in undertaking the multisectoral approach required for mitigation and adaptation. In addition to providing the forum for global negotiations on climate change, the system brings together normative, policy and deliberative capacities, scientific and knowledge resources, a global network of country and regional offices, and expertise in key climate-relevant sectors.<sup>5</sup> Under the guidance of the Secretary-General, the United Nations system will continue to build and expand on this work in response to intergovernmental mandates arising from Copenhagen and beyond.

10. Sustaining results means bridging the implementation gap at the country level. A 2008 UNDG report entitled *Climate change actions undertaken by United Nations country teams* (<http://www.undg.org/docs/10587/UNDG-Study-on-Climate-Change.pdf>) documents the joint work by a number of country teams on climate change. It highlights contributions of United Nations organizations in the areas of climate knowledge and raising public awareness, impact and vulnerability assessments, capacity building, disaster risk reduction, advocacy, policy development, and documentation of best practices for adaptation. The importance of increasing

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<sup>3</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Norwegian Refugee Council, June 2009: [http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/PSLG-7STFU6/\\$File/full\\_report.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/PSLG-7STFU6/$File/full_report.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Institute of International Social Development, 2009, *Climate Change and Security in Africa/*

<sup>5</sup> United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, *The United Nations system at the forefront of efforts to address climate change*, November 2009.

efforts to green the United Nations, thereby putting it in a position to lead by example, was also noted. The study indicated a need to strengthen joint work and involvement with Governments and expand partnerships with other stakeholders.

11. Chief among the recommendations was the need to mainstream climate change into the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), a strategic United Nations document. In response, UNDG is completing a guidance note for country teams and implementing partners entitled Mainstreaming environmental sustainability in country analysis and the UNDAF; a guidance note for United Nations country teams and implementing partner teams ([http://www.undg.org/docs/10662/ES\\_GuidanceNote\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.undg.org/docs/10662/ES_GuidanceNote_FINAL.pdf)).

### **UNDP, UNICEF, WFP and UNFPA working on climate change**

12. The four organizations whose Executive Boards comprise the audience for this joint meeting represent the strongest in-country presence in social and economic areas of work, and each contributes to the larger United Nations efforts based on mandate and comparative advantage. Accordingly, the particular contributions of these organizations on climate change are in the areas of:

(a) Capacity development for risk assessment, identification and mapping of the most vulnerable populations; climate change response planning for both pro-poor adaptation and low-emissions growth plans; coordination of financing and resource mobilization; support, as needed, for implementation and monitoring;

(b) Boosting community resilience as the basis for livelihoods protection, child survival and development in the face of increased risks associated with climate change, especially in areas of education, water, nutrition, food security, health and the eradication of hunger; enhancing social protection and safety net programmes as part of the adaptation framework; early warning and crisis/disaster preparedness systems; bridging the gap between humanitarian response and long-term development approaches, particularly to address underlying vulnerabilities; mobilization and involvement of children and youth as advocates for climate change responsive planning, implementation, and disaster reduction;

(c) Supporting the design and implementation of low carbon development policies and programmes aimed at expanding access to sustainable energy services for poor and vulnerable populations, while increasing long-term energy security by accelerating the transition to clean and renewable energy options;

(d) Researching and understanding the interplay of population dynamics and climate change mitigation and adaptation including reproductive health and women's empowerment as elements of capacity for adaptation; better socio-economic and demographic data to assess climate change impacts, vulnerability, resilience and mitigation potential; and

(e) Projecting the impact of climate change on hunger and malnutrition worldwide, particularly among the most marginal and vulnerable people in least developed countries; understanding and anticipating newly emerging threats to hunger, and responding; ensuring enhanced and unhindered access for vulnerable populations to adequate food and nutrition as a key complementary pillar to global food security and enhanced food availability.

### **Delivering as one: examples at the country and global levels**

13. The following examples are illustrative of the joint work of the United Nations at the country and global levels. They provide a practical demonstration of activities that address priority concerns toward the pursuit of practical climate change responses. They also highlight the broader development impetus, the importance of capacity development, and the concern with mainstreaming climate change into national plans and strategies.

14. *Cambodia*. Climate change has been identified as a priority in the new 2011-2015 UNDAF for Cambodia. Developing the capacity of national and local authorities, civil society and the private sector to promote and implement climate change adaptation and mitigation make up a significant element of the work for the United Nations. This is particularly important, as Cambodia is the only country where two major global adaptation financing initiatives – the World Bank-managed Pilot Programme for Climate Resilience and the Global Climate Change Alliance of the European Commission – are being piloted. The Food and Agriculture

Organization (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and UNDP are working on climate change adaptation for agriculture and water resources, WFP and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) are working on immediate disaster relief and disaster preparedness and management, the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF are studying the impact of climate change impact on health especially on women and children; the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) is working on energy efficiency and reducing emissions; while UNDP and FAO are supporting the government to develop a reduced emissions from deforestation and degradation readiness roadmap.

15. *China*. The China Climate Change Partnership Framework, 2008-2010, brings together the work of nine United Nations organizations – FAO, the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNDP, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNICEF, the United Nations Asian and Pacific Centre for Agricultural Engineering and Machinery, UNIDO and WHO – in close coordination and partnership with their 10 government counterparts. The United Nations country team established a theme group on climate change and the environment, which coordinates the activities and pools the knowledge and resources of the United Nations system and donor organizations in support of UNDAF ‘outcome three’: More efficient management of natural resources and development of environmentally friendly behavior in order to ensure environmental sustainability. The country team also compiled a mapping matrix of UNDAF ‘outcome three’-related activities, to provide comprehensive information on all activities on climate change, planned and undertaken by the United Nations country team and other stakeholders, including government organizations, donors, bilateral organizations, multilateral organizations and non-governmental organizations. The mapping matrix will be an important tool in project development, allowing the United Nations country team and stakeholders to gain a clear picture of ongoing activities, identify gaps in the existing coverage of projects, avoid duplication and devise new projects that complement existing ones. Another example of joint United Nations activities is the weather index insurance pilot project by WFP and IFAD, which has just successfully completed its first phase. The project aims to develop insurance schemes designed to help shield small farmers from the impact of natural disasters and climate change.

16. *Malawi*. Malawi already faces a number of existing vulnerabilities; 52 per cent of the population lives in poverty, concentrated in the North and South of the country. These also are the areas where the droughts and floods recur, usually on an annual basis. Food and nutrition insecurity is prevalent throughout the country, with a high proportion of the population reliant predominantly on subsistence farming. Hence, further climate threats and challenges are only likely to further exacerbate existing vulnerabilities.

17. A ‘one United Nations fund’ is being established using the United Nations multi-donor trust fund mechanism, which will fund a climate change programme that seeks to mainstream climate change considerations in development support. Malawi is generally recognized as a self-starter regarding United Nations reform, and has made major strides in programme cohesion and coherence. UNEP and UNDP have agreed to co-manage their respective programmes in climate change, poverty and environment, the African adaptation programme and the Global Environment Facility portfolio. In addition, UNDP, UNEP, WFP and FAO are strongly engaged in mainstreaming activities, with FAO taking the lead in the pertinent UNDAF coordination mechanism to ensure other United Nations organization will help formulate the next Malawi growth and development strategy and associated UNDAF, starting in 2010. In this context, a global project, funded by the Government of Spain, to integrate climate change risks into national development processes and United Nations country programming has allowed initiation of partnerships between the national planning mechanisms, the national coordination mechanism on climate change and the United Nations country team. More broadly, ensuring there are adequate national systems in place to monitor the impact of the global challenges on the most vulnerable has been given priority in Malawi. Information technology is being used to further strengthen these systems and provide more timely information. For example, to assist the government of Malawi collect more real-time data on malnutrition, UNICEF is supporting the piloting of ‘rapid short message service’, a mobile phone-based data collection system.

18. *Mozambique*. In Mozambique, the United Nations country team with funding from the UNDP-Spain Millennium Development Goal Achievement Fund, executes a joint programme for environmental mainstreaming and adaptation to climate change. Six United Nations organizations (FAO, UNDP, UNEP, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme,

UNIDO and WFP) are working together with six Government institutions (from national, provincial and district levels) in mainstreaming adaptation measures in development plans and introducing coping mechanisms at the community level in semi-arid areas of the Limpopo River Basin. The field activities, mainly related to agriculture, water and forest management, focus in the district of Chicualacuala, especially vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

19. *Uganda.* The United Nations country team is formulating a joint United Nations programme to support the Government of Uganda in addressing climate change mitigation and adaptation, especially in the disaster-prone Karamoja and Teso regions (led by WFP). Mitigation measures will range from advocacy for legislation, to the promotion of cleaner technologies and alternative energy sources, including wind and solar power. Adaptation measures will include support to the adjustment of traditional agricultural/livestock practices to changing climatic conditions, community rain harvesting and development of flood protection and watershed infrastructure. It will also support setting up strategic food reserves and enhancing weather monitoring and forecasting systems. UNDP, WFP, FAO, UNICEF and district governments are also developing a community-based food security and early warning system.

### **Regional and global initiatives**

20. In Southern Africa, the United Nations has worked with the Southern Africa Development Community to strengthen the vulnerability analysis and food security monitoring capacity of its member states in order to improve their ability to respond to shocks. The project has improved the formulation of food security policies and the management of programmes, particularly social safety nets, and enhanced institutional capacity to undertake vulnerability assessments, livelihoods analysis, food security monitoring and general emergency preparedness. Partners include WFP, the Famine Early Warning System Network, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, FAO, WHO and UNICEF as well as Southern Africa Development Community staff at regional and country levels.

21. In Central America, in support of United Nations country teams and emergency preparedness technical teams, the Early Warning System for Central America was developed by WFP in collaboration with the Government of El Salvador and other national, regional and international partners, including the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. The Early Warning System for Central America is a cutting-edge web platform that enhances the capacity of national and regional institutions to anticipate potential natural threats in the region and to enhance local and regional disaster preparedness and risk reduction. It is already contributing very effectively to reducing the impact of increasingly frequent and severe natural disasters on the most vulnerable populations in the region.

22. The adaptation learning mechanism is a global inter-organizational knowledge platform available online to support climate change adaptation learning. It features practical guidance and best practices on climate change adaptation as contributed by practitioners from the field. The Global Environment Facility is the main financier of the adaptation learning mechanism. UNDP implements the project in partnership with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat, the World Bank and UNEP as core partners. The website can be found at <http://www.adaptationlearning.net/>.

23. The Africa adaptation programme supports integrated and comprehensive approaches to climate change adaptation in Africa by assisting 21 African countries in implementing adaptation actions and resilience plans. Supported by the Government of Japan, through UNDP, the programme ensures that national development processes incorporate climate change risks and opportunities to secure development gains under a changing climate. UNDP will help countries establish an enabling environment and develop the capacity required to design, finance, implement, and monitor long-term and cost-effective adaptation policies and plans. The programme partners with other United Nations organizations in order to benefit from their expertise, such as the World Meteorological Organization, WFP, UNICEF, and UNIDO, in a wide range of national activities. The website can be found at <http://www.undp-adaptation.org/africaprogramme/>.

24. The African drought risk and development network was launched in 2003 to: (a) facilitate peer exchange on good practice in drought risk management between sub-regions in Africa; and (b) to cut across dimensions of drought risk, which have been dealt with traditionally by

various United Nations organizations. It examines the practical interface between the disaster risk reduction community, climate change adaptation perspectives and development needs. An annual drought forum is held, with the participation of several United Nations organizations (UNDP, the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, WFP, FAO), in addition to Government, bilateral and multilateral organizations, and nongovernmental organizations. A discussion board is maintained on FrameWeb ([www.frameweb.org](http://www.frameweb.org)) and a monthly newsletter is produced to inform practitioners about opportunities, success stories and various resources. Knowledge products are also generated. Participation has been from beyond Africa and additional details are in the most recent African drought adaptation forum report at: [http://www.undp.org/drylands/docs/drought/ADDF3/3rd\\_African\\_Drought\\_Adaptation\\_Forum\\_Report.pdf](http://www.undp.org/drylands/docs/drought/ADDF3/3rd_African_Drought_Adaptation_Forum_Report.pdf).

25. The negotiation, design and implementation of a post-2012 climate change regime creates unprecedented needs and opportunities for awareness-raising, training, and skills development at the national, sub-national, and local levels of governance, within various government sectors, and in the United Nations system. The ‘one United Nations training service platform for climate change’ – or CC:Learn – seeks to respond to these challenges by offering a vehicle and service platform at the disposal of United Nations organizations and Member States interested in designing and delivering effective and results-oriented training in the area of climate change. Key objectives of CC:Learn include: (a) Providing a one-stop window for sharing information on and providing access to climate change learning materials; (b) facilitating knowledge exchange concerning design, delivery and evaluation of climate change training; (c) fostering gradual development of a ‘one United Nations’ climate change training package; (d) supporting systematic and country-driven human resources and skills development in Member States; and (e) delivering climate change training through partnerships among United Nations organizations and other partners. Current partners are the United Nations Chief Executives Board, IFAD, ILO, the International Maritime Organization, UNDP, UNEP, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNFPA, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, the United Nations Staff System College, the World Bank, and WHO. The initiative receives in-kind support from the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and UNDP, and financial support from UNFPA.

26. During the session on climate change and its impact on development, it will be possible to interact with leadership from two examples of ‘delivering as one’ – Malawi and CC:Learn.

### **The potential and means for collaborative action**

27. With a substantial and established presence in countries that face the greatest challenges in climate change, the United Nations family is well placed to strengthen partnerships with Governments and other national actors in critical areas – capacity development, priority setting, bridging the implementation gap – and also facilitate important new approaches to climate change adaptation and mitigation. It is well recognized that responding effectively to climate change will require substantial new resources. A discussion of how the expanded services of the United Nations might best be made available, in light of the deliberations at the 15th session of the Conference of Parties in Copenhagen, December 2009, is best addressed at the joint meeting of the Executive Boards in January 2010.