



AUSTRALIA

Enhanced Action on Adaptation

Submission to the AWG-LCA

This submission outlines the initial views of the Australian Government on enhanced action on adaptation, as called for in the Bali Action Plan.

Australia considers that a strong agreement on enhanced action on adaptation should be a core component of the post-2012 outcome. Australia places a high priority on strengthened adaptation support for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and vulnerable small island developing States, in particular in the Pacific.

Prioritising Assistance to the Most Vulnerable

The level of national vulnerability to climate change varies greatly between countries. Vulnerability to climate change is a combination of (1) the exposure of individual countries to the physical impacts of climate change that differ greatly on a regional and local level, and (2) the institutional and financial capacity of individual countries to respond to those differing impacts.

The interrelationship between local physical vulnerability and capacity to adapt can be complex. For example, the Netherlands is highly vulnerable to sea level rise, whereas Afghanistan, a landlocked LDC, is not. By contrast, a similar percentage of the populations of the Netherlands and Tonga are equally vulnerable to the physical impact of sea level rise¹, but the Netherlands could be expected to have a greater national capacity to respond.

Australia has a high degree of physical exposure to climate change impacts as our nation has the driest and most variable climate of all the

¹ World Resources Institute, Climate Analysis Indicator Tool. Available at: <http://cait.wri.org>, accessed on 22 July 2008.

inhabited continents. Australia has a robust national capacity to help adapt to climate change.

Many LDCs and small island developing States also have a high level of physical exposure, but have a more limited national capacity to respond to the challenge of adaptation. Australia will continue to place a high priority on support for adaptation for vulnerable countries in our region.

To prioritise international efforts towards the most vulnerable countries, the AWG-LCA should resolve a general scale of vulnerability for Parties in terms of physical impacts and capacity to respond.

Financing Adaptation

Australia considers it vital to maximize the amount of international financing available to those most in need. The post-2012 outcome should desirably result in (1) the scaling up in the level of international finance availability for adaptation, and (2) clear guidance on the prioritization of the distribution and use of international funds.

In considering this matter, the AWG-LCA should take account of the need for effective donor collaboration and coordination to ensure the maximum possible benefit from available funds. Australia expects the AWG-LCA to apply the principles on aid effectiveness set out in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness of 2 March 2005. Care must also be taken to not exceed the absorptive capacity of individual recipient countries.

The AWG-LCA should, in due course, address the question of operational management and arrangements for new financing for adaptation envisaged as part of the post-2012 outcome.

The AWG-LCA should also be cognisant that donors do, and will continue, to provide financing for adaptation through a variety of means. This is particularly the case given the requirement for adaptation to be mainstreamed throughout development strategies. Australia's recent announcement of \$150 million to support adaptation measures for countries vulnerable to climate change impact within our region is an example of such financing.

To gain a clear picture of the level of existing effort on adaptation, the AWG-LCA should task the UNFCCC Secretariat to provide consolidated and streamlined information on available sources of funding for adaptation. This should build upon survey data provided by the OECD.

Australia has addressed the broader matter of provision of financial resources and investment (1/CP.13 paragraph 1(e)) in a separate submission.

Science and Adaptation

Sound scientific analysis should guide the basis of long-term action on adaptation. A large and growing body of scientific information is available to inform national policy development. For example, the IPCC Fourth Assessment report provides information on the possible scale of future impacts, such as the likelihood of a higher number of serious natural hazards in the South Pacific region.²

For its part, Australia has made an important contribution to research on the effects of climate change to improve our knowledge on the impacts, to strengthen our ability to respond and to assist areas of national vulnerability – including in particular coastal zones, infrastructure, the agriculture sector and world heritage and iconic sites. Australia is also supporting efforts to build the capacity of the most vulnerable countries in our region to assess key climate vulnerabilities and risks and to formulate appropriate adaptation strategies and plans.

Mainstreaming Adaptation for Greater Results

Managing the effects of climate change is central to poverty reduction, economic growth and sustainable development. Actions that increase resilience to climate change should become an integral part of national development plans to manage the adverse impacts of projected climate change and variability.

The Pacific Islands Framework for Action on Climate Change 2006 – 2015 is a good example of a regional effort to address the risks and effects of climate change in the context of their national sustainable development strategies.

The National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) prepared by LDCs are emerging as a useful way for individual countries to collate and consolidate information on their priority adaptation needs. NAPAs can be a practical means to provide information on adaptation needs to donors. NAPAs should be living documents to reflect new and more detailed information and to reflect changes in domestic priorities. While only LDCs have so far developed NAPAs, other countries facing limits on their

² IPCC 4th Assessment Report, Chapter 3: Observations: Surface and Atmospheric Climate Change, p 307.

capacity to respond to climate change should also consider developing NAPAs.

Disaster Reduction

Risk management strategies should be built into current policies and take into account possible short and long-term impacts. Building resilience to climate change often also enhances resilience to disasters. For example, well-designed building codes can provide for buildings that are more resilient against predicted hazards and disasters, including over longer time horizons. Mainstreaming for climate change and mainstreaming for disaster risk reduction, therefore, can be mutually reinforcing. The Hyogo Framework for Action 2005 – 2015 provides a useful basis for the AWG-LCAs discussions on this particular element of the Bali Action Plan.

The UNFCCC

Successful adaptation requires the active participation of many stakeholders at the local, regional, national and international levels. It would not be possible to address adaptation solely under a multilateral setting.

Parties to the UNFCCC should agree policy parameters to guide action to reduce the threat of climate change, rather than mandate specific operational outcomes better formulated at a national level. The UNFCCC Secretariat should provide a link between the different international institutions working in the adaptation field to help coordinate collective action on adaptation.

Parties to the UNFCCC could outline the roles and responsibilities of different actors and agree the principles to guide adaptation action, where possible identifying priority areas through information provided by national governments, regional and multilateral bodies. The UNFCCC could draw on the approach used in the Pacific Islands Framework for Action on Climate Change 2006-2015 for advancing adaptation under the Bali Action Plan. This approach provides an overarching vision, supported by goals and principles, expected outcomes and timelines.

Multilateral and Regional Agencies

There are many international institutions working in adaptation-related fields with a high level of specific expertise and local knowledge. The AWG-LCA could explore the additional value that regional bodies could provide to international adaptation efforts taking into account the specific

expertise and scope of existing bodies, in order to identify if, and where, gaps can be addressed.

There are presently several UN institutions and programs working in fields related to climate change adaptation. Australia sees a distinct role for the UN Secretary-General in ensuring that smooth lines of cooperation exist between UN agencies working on adaptation activities, in order to avoid duplication and competition. We look forward to the information note the AWG-LCA requested the UNFCCC Secretariat prepare on adaptation related activities within the United Nations system.³

Economic Diversification

Economic diversification is integral to the dual goals of building resilience to climate change and achieving sustainable development. All countries are subject to economic cycles and changing circumstances.

Although climate change impacts are only one factor that may influence economic fluctuations, the UNFCCC can play a role in facilitating analysis and further information on the impacts of response measures and on successful approaches to economic diversification. Given the motivations for building resilience to economic shocks beyond climate impacts, it is ultimately a consideration for countries themselves.

In Australia's case, we will continue to integrate climate change considerations into our macro economic planning in order to build a more resilient economy.

Avoiding overlap

Australia notes the clear linkages between the work of the Ad Hoc Working group on Long Term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA) and existing work being undertaken by the Subsidiary Bodies to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Where possible, the discussion in the AWG-LCA should build on and not duplicate existing processes. On Adaptation the most relevant work relates to the Nairobi work program on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change (under SBSTA), and 1/CP.10 (under the SBI).

³ AWG-LCA2, Bonn June 2008. FCCC/AWLCA/2008/8, page 7.