

Submission on the Glasgow– Sharm el-Sheikh work programme on the Global Goal on Adaptation

Submission in response to Decision 3/CMA.4, paragraph 16

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About this submission

This submission aims to inform the activities in 2023 of the Glasgow–Sharm el-Sheikh work programme on the Global Goal on Adaptation. It responds to a decision at COP27 in November 2022 that invited Parties and observers to submit “contributions to and views on the workshops to be held in 2023, including questions related to the themes of those workshops” (Decision 3/CMA.4, paragraph 16).

The work programme was created at COP26 in Glasgow in 2021. For more information see: <https://unfccc.int/topics/adaptation-and-resilience/workstreams/glasgow-sharm-el-sheikh-WP-GGGA>

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1. Context and aim of this submission

This submission aims to inform this year's activities of the work programme on the Global Goal on Adaptation (henceforth referred to as 'GGA work programme'). It responds to a decision at COP27 in November 2022 that invited Parties and observers to submit "contributions to and views on the workshops to be held in 2023, including questions related to the themes of those workshops" (Decision 3/CMA.4, paragraph 16). This submission complements previous contributions by the Grantham Research Institute to the GGA work programme, including co-moderation and presentations at the third GGA workshop in October 2022.¹ It draws on research by the Grantham Research Institute and evidence from the scientific literature and is informed by exchange with colleagues in academia, international organisations, civil society and negotiators.

A decision was adopted at COP27 "to initiate the **development of a framework for the Global Goal on Adaptation** to be undertaken through a structured approach" (Decision 3/CMA.4, paragraph 8). Several inputs for a framework were made at COP27, but the available time was insufficient to debate and consolidate them into a version that all Parties could agree upon. It is therefore **essential to target this year's workshops towards convergence on key aspects of the framework if COP28 is to adopt a useful framework.**

To support this process, this submission briefly outlines key aspects that need to be addressed in the development of a framework for the GGA. It also emphasises that attention needs to be paid to **how a framework could make a difference** and to the possibility of unintended consequences if the framework is not designed well. The second part of this submission provides recommendations for the workshops' content and sequence with reference to the information note from the Chairs of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) that was published on 8 February 2023.

¹ Together with South Africa, the author co-moderated the third workshop under the GGA work programme, which had the theme "On methodologies, indicators, data and metrics, monitoring and evaluation". The author also gave a presentation on the usefulness and pitfalls of indicators and led the breakout group on monitoring and evaluation. Workshop details are available at: <https://unfccc.int/event/third-ws-under-the-glasgow-sharm-el-sheikh-work-programme-on-the-gga>

2. Key aspects for the development of a framework for the Global Goal on Adaptation

This section briefly outlines some of the key aspects that need to be addressed in the development of a framework for the GGA. Accordingly, the mandated workshops under the GGA work programme should provide space to advance discussions on these aspects to prepare for the negotiations that will take place in June 2023 at the intersessional talks in Bonn and in December 2023 at COP28 in Dubai.

a) Expectations about the GGA framework and what it ought to achieve

Debates during the first year of the GGA work programme have shown that different views and expectations exist among negotiation groups and among members of academia, international organisations and civil society organisations about what a GGA framework ought to achieve and what it could look like.² Debate among Parties about these different views and expectations, and their implications for the content of the GGA framework, is a prerequisite for ultimately achieving convergence. The workshops in 2023 should therefore facilitate exchange on these aspects and seek input from the scientific community and other stakeholders to move towards concrete options for the framework.

b) Trade-offs

The development of a framework for the GGA will inevitably have to address trade-offs, including (drawing on Leiter, 2022: p.251-253):

- Global standardisation vs. flexibility in light of diverse national circumstances
- Being prescriptive vs. country-driven
- Prioritising without disregarding that a variety of diverse adaptation needs exists
- Providing detailed guidance vs. remaining manageable in length
- Information needs vs. avoiding undue reporting burdens, especially for least developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS)
- Simplicity vs. meaningfulness in tracking progress.

The existence of these trade-offs means that choices need to be made about the design of the framework. While solutions can often be found along the continuum between two opposing ends of a trade-off,³ it is not possible to solve a trade-off in a single, universal way.⁴ Deliberations are required given the various expectations placed on the GGA framework, informed by insights from the scientific community and relevant experiences under other global treaties.

c) Relation between global, national and sub-national governance

Another aspect is *whom* the GGA framework is targeting, i.e. which actors are expected to be reached through the framework. The most relevant governance level for adaptation is often not the global but the sub-national or local level, over which the UN climate change negotiations do

² Furthermore, some commentaries on the GGA work programme decision of COP27 contain incorrect statements: e.g., that the purpose of the framework would be to replace the existing GGA contained in Article 7.1 of the Paris Agreement or that a framework had already been adopted (examples are mentioned in footnotes 65 and 88 in Leiter, 2022).

³ For example, with regard to the trade-off between detailed reporting requirements and limited administrative resources, the transparency framework provides flexibility “to those developing country Parties that need it in the light of their capacities” (Article 13.2).

⁴ Similarly, it is not possible to determine which countries are “particularly vulnerable” without involving value judgements (Klein, 2009).

not have direct authority. It is therefore important to consider what can be regulated at the global level under international law and what needs to be undertaken by national and sub-national governments (Leiter, 2022; Hall and Persson, 2018). For example, adaptation can be facilitated through national climate framework laws (Rumble, 2019). A particular consideration during the development of the GGA framework will therefore be how it links to national policy processes, especially the National Adaptation Plan process.

d) Assessment of progress and relation to the Global Stocktake

The GGA decision of COP27 states that the framework, once adopted, “will guide [...] the review of overall progress in achieving [the GGA]” (paragraph 9). At the same time, the Paris Agreement states that its Global Stocktake (GST) shall “Review the overall progress made in achieving the global goal on adaptation” (Article 7.14). There is, therefore, a direct connection between the forthcoming GGA framework and the GST, but their exact relationship has yet to be specified. Furthermore, it has yet to be decided how the review of progress would be conducted. The Adaptation Committee (2021) has reviewed approaches for assessing global progress on adaptation and UNEP’s *Adaptation Gap Report* has been providing a global assessment since 2020.⁵ Countries are increasingly tracking their own adaptation progress, which provides a highly relevant source of information (Leiter, 2021; Adaptation Committee, 2023).

The GGA workshops could further discuss which approaches (or combination of approaches) used to review progress could be useful and feasible for different aspects of the GGA framework’s purpose. These discussions would benefit from prior convergence about what the GGA framework is supposed to achieve and how. The sequence of workshop themes could be orchestrated accordingly.

How could a global framework generate change?

Importantly, a global framework does not automatically advance adaptation: its potential to do so depends on its content and quality (Leiter, 2022). Deliberations should therefore be guided by considering *how the GGA framework could affect change*.

Former leaders of the UNFCCC secretariat have endorsed the concept of *governance functions* to analyse how the UN climate change negotiations have made a difference (Kinley et al., 2021). At least five governance functions can be distinguished (quoted from Leiter, 2022: p.248):

1. **Guidance and signalling:** Influencing actors’ behaviour through common goals and objectives and signalling of desired courses of action.
2. **Rules and standards:** Agreeing to obligations, norms and standards of behaviour.
3. **Transparency and accountability:** Agreeing on rules and procedures that facilitate transparency about actors’ behaviour (especially the implementation of commitments), and that enable accountability.
4. **Means of implementation:** Provision of financial, technological and capacity-building support.
5. **Knowledge and learning:** Generation and sharing of relevant knowledge, including scientific evidence, practical experience and traditional knowledge, and promotion of learning.

The concept of governance functions can help think through *how*, in concert with other Articles of the Paris Agreement (e.g. on support and transparency), the content of the GGA framework could make a difference. It is also relevant to consider the **experience of governing through goals under other UN treaties**. For instance, a systematic review of the implementation of the

⁵ The *Adaptation Gap Report* was first published in 2014 but has appeared under a new structure since 2020 (see Chapter 1 in UNEP, 2022).

Millennium Development Goals (MDBs) found that “globally agreed goals do not easily trickle down from the global to the national level” (Hickmann et al., 2022). The study identified six factors, including national administrative capacity, resource availability and effective international support, that enabled or hindered national implementation of the MDBs. Furthermore, experience with global land use targets show that global targets that are disconnected from local realities do not necessarily drive transformative change and might in fact reinforce existing vulnerabilities or inequality (McDermott et al., 2022).

It is therefore important for the GGA framework to avoid **unintended consequences** such as incentivising maladaptation⁶ or establishing ways of tracking progress that are superficial, that mask underlying inequalities or that direct resources to what is easy to measure rather than what reduces climate risks effectively.⁷

⁶ For details about maladaptation see IPCC (2022), Chapter 17.5.1: ‘Adaptation Success and Maladaptation’.

⁷ For example, by counting ‘number of beneficiaries’ without considering differences in vulnerability among those beneficiaries and across the population (e.g. not reaching the most vulnerable).

3. Recommendations for the workshops in 2023

Towards a structured approach

The following comments refer to the information note on the GGA work programme by the Chairs of the Subsidiary Bodies published on 8 February 2023⁸ and the preliminary workshop themes contained therein. While the information note draws on the objectives of the GGA work programme as agreed at COP26 (Decision 7/CMA.3), it does not directly outline **how the workshops could be used to develop a GGA framework**. In other words, the information note does not elaborate what the 'structured approach' that is mentioned in the decision from COP27 could look like, beyond proposing a timeline for the workshops and for associated reports and submissions. The following recommendations are therefore offered for the effective orchestration of workshop themes **to promote agreement on a useful GGA framework by COP28**.

1. Targeting the workshops towards the development of a GGA framework

Learning from the experiences of the four GGA workshops conducted in 2022, it will be important to structure the workshop agendas in a way that directly enables exchanges about aspects of the framework. **Each workshop should feature dedicated sessions on the framework and/or should directly link the topics under discussion to the development of the framework**. If the workshop topics as proposed in the information note remain detached from the development of a framework, and the latter is postponed until the negotiations at COP28, it would likely lead to a situation similar to what occurred at COP27, with insufficient time to debate or agree. It is therefore **recommended that the approach outlined in the information note is amended in a way that facilitates discussions on key aspects of the framework earlier, i.e. during the first half of 2023**.

2. Seeking convergence on key aspects of the framework

The information note uses the phrases "zooming in" and "zooming out" as headlines for workshops 6 and 7. In the sense that "zooming in" refers to the development of the framework, it is recommended that *all* workshops address this intention, as it is unlikely that one workshop will be sufficient for this task. In particular, it is **recommended that the first two workshops provide space for debating key aspects of the framework**. Achieving a common understanding early on would greatly facilitate discussions on further details, including on how to assess progress. For example, the information note proposes that workshop 6 should cover, among other things, "metrics, methodologies and indicators". Covering these topics without first having debated the different views and expectations of the framework would likely result in generic discussions that would just repeat deliberations from the third workshop of October 2022.

3. Linking effectively to the parallel discussions on the first Global Stock Take (GST)

The information note states in paragraph 24: "The GGA must provide at least some substantial input to the first GST this year". If the words "The GGA" are intended to refer to the GGA framework, then this demand would be impossible to fulfil, since the GGA framework is only set to be adopted at COP28, i.e. at the very end of the first GST cycle. Nevertheless, debates on how to review progress towards the GGA are relevant for both the GST and the development of the GGA framework. The sequence of the workshop topics should therefore be aligned where possible with relevant events of the parallel GST process. The alignment could create synergies for those topics that are immediately relevant for the first GST. Any matters that would inevitably only concern

⁸ Available at: <https://unfccc.int/documents/626532>

the second GST (because the GGA framework will not be in place before the end of the year), could be moved to the workshops 7 and 8.

4. Using workshop 8 to prepare for COP28

The information note proposes that workshop 8 should take stock of the GGA work programme and cover the theme 'Recent scientific research relevant to the global goal on adaptation'. However, respective **insights from the scientific community should be included in every workshop** rather than being relegated to the last. Furthermore, **workshop 8 should help prepare for the negotiations at COP28**. It is therefore suggested that the agenda of this workshop is flexible to respond to how discussions unfold throughout the year. Finally, with regard to the dates of workshop 8, it is suggested that they should not overlap with the Adaptation Futures conference that takes place from 2-6 October 2023 in Montreal, Canada.⁹ The Adaptation Futures conference is the largest global gathering of adaptation experts and typically features the 'Adaptation Forum', an event organised by the Adaptation Committee.

⁹ See the conference website for further details: <https://adaptationfutures.com>

4. Conclusion

Reflecting on Parties' positions at COP27, there are still many open questions that require further debate. If a framework is to be adopted at COP28, it is essential that the workshops taking place throughout the year provide the groundwork for a decision in December 2023. Given the possible implications of a framework for the GGA, including for the direction of investments, it is important that the essence of any adopted framework is thoroughly considered rather than hastily put together during the final nights of the COP.

To this end, this submission provides recommendations on how to arrange the workshops and their themes in a structured way that will assist agreement being reached at COP28. It also emphasises the overarching consideration of the need to reflect on *how* the framework could make a difference. After all, "the content and quality of the framework critically determine its ability to affect positive change" (Leiter, 2022: p.252). Importantly, evidence and insights from the scientific community are vital for the development of a solid framework and should be featured in every workshop.

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