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Climate change adaptation : the encouraging signal of the Paris Conference

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For many observers, the critical issues of the climate negotiations underway include the monitoring of greenhouse gas emissions reduction commitments and the progressive increase in their ambition. One of the dimensions of this kind of negotiation concerns the clear commitments the countries of the North must make in terms of financing, especially for adaptation in developing countries. More broadly speaking, the Paris agreement may be considered as a major step forward if it succeeds in ensuring international cooperation for adaptation receives as much attention as mitigation. So what is the situation today?

Where mitigation is concerned, [the architecture of the future climate regime is taking shape](#). Where adaptation is concerned, although some sticking points also remain for this issue, the draft text of 5 December already showed

some considerable progress. This mainly consists in the emergence of an approach that is no longer limited to the traditional issue of financing.

The principles

Naturally, the issue of “financing” is found throughout the text, but different formulations have emerged that demonstrate an apparently shared desire to take this issue to a new level. Certain phrases in the draft agreement, which clearly need to be clarified, set this out explicitly: “Parties hereby establish the global goal of enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change...” (art. 4.1). Adaptation is now seen as a global challenge, in other words one with international dimensions rather than simply national or local dimensions: “Parties recognize that adaptation is a global challenge faced by all with local, subnational, national, regional and international dimensions, and that it is a key component of and contribution to the long-term global response to climate change to protect people, livelihoods and ecosystems” (art. 4.2). We are therefore gradually moving away from a restricted view of the problem, and many countries are requesting that adaptation now be considered within the UNFCCC framework on an equal basis with mitigation. The parties recognise “that adaptation [will][may] be needed regardless the level of mitigation reached...” (art. 4.4) and that a “global goal for adaptation shall be the basis...” (art. 4.3). The idea of a global adaptation goal (see« [What adaptation chapter in the New Climate Agreement?](#) », and « [National adaptation is also a global concern](#) ») is therefore gaining momentum, and the concept of regular assessments of progress made is also emerging, for example in article 4.11, “Updated or submitted [periodically] [in conjunction with mitigation cycles]”, or in article 4.14, “[There shall be a [high-level session][global stocktake] on adaptation every [X] years”. Although the nature of these “metrics” is not specified, the current text in fact paves the way for a new initiative for the UNFCCC in the post-2015 climate regime. Further on, in part B of the text on decisions, draft decision 38 proposes developing “[...methodologies and approaches to recognize the adaptation efforts of developing countries to respond to climate change]”.

Implementation challenges : the food security case study

Little by little, we are therefore moving towards a climate regime that takes full account of the complexity of the adaptation dimension of the problem, and this is to be commended, even if parentheses and square brackets will be removed in the coming days. Specifically, behind these general principles of cooperation for adaptation lie some key issues, such as food security and the transformation of agricultural systems, in a context in which the climate will change, even in the case of a pathway close to +2°C. Many INDCs already contain significant measures for the adaptation of agricultural systems, with co-benefits where mitigation is concerned. The provisions that make adaptation a priority in the agreement must help to support these national initiatives in all areas of international cooperation, whether the transfer of public funds, steering private investment towards the transformation of food systems to achieve sustainable, resilient food security, or the definition of lines of cooperation in terms of research and innovation, training and the capacity to design and implement the public policies needed for this transformation. Even if food security is not central to the negotiations at present, the Paris agreement must also help to establish rules for the review and evaluation of adaptation commitments, as these rules will enable a real learning process in terms of arrangements for cooperation, financial transfers, innovation or suitable ways of making governments accountable for their commitments.