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Time to spell out the Global Goal on Adaptation

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There are only a few weeks left before UNFCCC COP28 settles the bases of the framework on the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA), hence laying foundations for the second Global Stocktake in 2028 to assess adaptation progress globally. However, discussions at the eighth and last workshop (Botswana, September 27-29) of the 2-year Glasgow-Sharm el Sheikh work programme on the GGA (GlaSS) showed that countries still have diverging views on the structural elements (targets, metrics, means of implementation & enabling conditions, follow-up) of the [GGA framework](#). This blogpost outlines the main areas of non-alignment and suggest seven globally-relevant targets for consideration.

Main areas of non-alignment

A first element of disagreement touches on the definition of globally-relevant targets—i.e. applicable to all countries—and subsequently, a metric system to track progress/gaps against them. Some countries are reluctant to get into the details of this discussion and would prefer to avoid setting any target that could then lay the basis for calls towards additional funding. And indeed, other countries advocate for global targets that explicitly reflect the specific situation of “particularly vulnerable countries”. In addition, there is a general view that because targets should be informed by quantitative indicators at the national level, the availability or non-availability of datasets is a blocking factor to, not to say a determinant of, the design of targets.

Beyond diplomacy, however, one must acknowledge, first, that the scope of the GGA framework is global in essence, meaning that it needs to consider all countries together whatever their development status. Second, establishing globally-relevant targets is an unavoidable starting point for the GGA framework and ultimately the whole Global Stocktake cycle. Finally, identifying relevant metrics is not an insurmountable obstacle and should happen after shared objectives are designed, and not the other way around. Alternative assessment methods exist ([Canales, 2023](#)), such as structured expert judgments ([Morgan, 2014](#); [Magnan, 2023](#)) for example, that can help overcome the classical quantitative indicator bottleneck (Magnan, 2023b). Some countries also advocate for exploring the opportunity to use indicators that have been set in other arenas, such as for the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) for example, provided they can be better tailored to inform adaptation action.

A second major area of non-alignment among countries relates to how to consider the means of implementation relating to finance, technology transfer, and capacity building. Some countries advocate for means of implementation to be kept specific to the circumstances of the “particularly vulnerable countries” and prominent in any set of adaptation targets. Other countries prefer to avoid putting the light on means of implementation and rather refer to broader enabling conditions. The issue is that, here again because of the global scope of the GGA, one needs to acknowledge that developed countries also do not invest enough in their own adaptation action and lack capacities from the national to sub-national levels. As a result, “means of implementation”, which in the UNFCCC context is a more precise language than “enabling conditions”, are to be understood not only from an international support perspective, but also from a domestic one. Yet, nothing in the Paris Agreement prevents from formally highlighting the need to enhance international support to non-Annex I countries (Article 7.6) together with having a complementary target being applicable to all countries and also calling for governments in Annex I countries to further invest in adaptation (Article 7.9).

Priorities for now

The perspective of reaching a consensus on all the structural elements of the GGA framework in the next few weeks looks overoptimistic, even more so considering only seven hours are planned at COP28 for this discussion. The focus should therefore be on the highest priorities, namely the establishment of globally-relevant adaptation targets and the identification of clear bases for an ambitious roadmap towards the second Global Stocktake.

Second-order priorities could be addressed within two years—but no more—after COP28. They refer to more technical aspects including the identification of relevant metrics, efficient reporting systems under the UNFCCC, guidance for countries to implement the GGA framework, role of non-UNFCCC stakeholders, and modalities for synthesizing information.

Towards clear GGA targets

Building on inputs and wording by Parties and groups of Parties ahead of ([Bueno Rubial, 2023](#)) and during the Botswana workshop, as well as on recent scientific insights ([Magnan, 2023](#)), some wording for a “high-level political message” and “specific targets” are proposed here that could serve as a basis for discussions at COP28.

Seven globally-relevant targets are proposed below that encompass important policy and scientific considerations (Table 1). First, they reflect some agreement that emerged throughout the GlaSS workshops around the need to assess adaptation efforts against four stages of the adaptation policy cycle: impacts, vulnerability and risk assessments; planning; implementation; and monitoring, evaluation and learning. Second, they reflect six core physical and human dimensions that, together, help describe adaptation in a comprehensive way (Magnan, 2023; Magnan, 2023b): knowledge about current and future climate risks; planning; action; capacities; evidence towards risk reduction; and long-term strategising. The seven globally-relevant targets could be set towards 2050 and are presented in the table below; all are to be informed based on reporting by countries (e.g. Adaptation Communications) and by non-UNFCCC stakeholders (e.g. UNEP Adaptation Gap Report, IPCC reports, etc.).

Policy cycle — IVR: impacts, vulnerability and risk assessments; P: planning; I: implementation; MEL: monitoring, evaluation and learning.

Adaptation dimensions — (1): knowledge about current and future climate risks; (2): planning; (3): action; (4): capacities; (5): evidence towards risk reduction; (6): long-term str

Based on this, follow-up technical work should consist, first, in establishing a metric system to measure and track the various component of the global targets (Magnan, 2023b). Second, it should develop guidance for countries and non-UNFCCC stakeholders on how to take stock of climate risks (target 1), ensure there is a knock-on effect from the national to the sub-national levels (target 2), account for adaptation undertaken on the ground and effectiveness to reduce risks (targets 3 and 5), set up long-term adaptation pathways (target 6), and consider transboundary adaptation (target 7).