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# From COP29 to COP30: Accelerating adaptation and avoiding further delays

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As climate change accelerates, the gap between what is needed to adapt and what is being done is widening. The latest [IPCC report \(2022\)](#) highlights an urgent need for more ambition and faster action on adaptation. While international negotiations acknowledge this, translating ambition into concrete action remains a challenge. This blog post describes shortcomings of the current negotiation approach, and proposes ways to accelerate adaptation efforts, focusing on both increasing ambition and ensuring implementation. It calls for the development of a shared vision for adaptation, grounded in collective decision-making and strengthened by international cooperation.

## The implementation gap: a growing concern

The COP29 Presidency has called for [increased ambition](#) in both mitigation and adaptation, urging countries to submit “ambitious, comprehensive and robust” Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). Moreover, the outcome of the first Global Stocktake calls on Parties to have a national adaptation policy instrument in place by 2025, and to have made progress in implementation by 2030.

However, despite some progress, the risk of falling short on adaptation remains high. Current adaptation efforts are insufficient: as the IPCC warns, adaptation is too incremental, reactive and not at the scale required. The focus is often on planning rather than actual implementation, hindered by several barriers: data and knowledge gaps (for instance, on the nature of climate risk and vulnerability and on available adaptation options), lack of monitoring and evaluation tools, difficulties in accessing finance, and limited integration of adaptation priorities into broader plans and policies ([UNEP, 2023](#)).

The NAP process, established in 2010 under the [Cancun Adaptation Framework](#), was designed to help countries outline their medium-term priorities for managing climate risks. Yet, these plans often lack coherence and ambition, reducing their effectiveness. Too often, they consist of wish lists of desired actions without a clear programmatic approach ([UNDP, 2022](#)). This leads to delays in adaptation action, which can result in higher loss and damage (unavoidable and irreversible climate impacts) to livelihoods, infrastructure and ecosystems, and increase the future costs of addressing climate impacts.

## Fragmented negotiations: a major barrier

One of the biggest challenges to accelerating adaptation is the fragmentation of international negotiations under the UNFCCC, which has resulted in perpetual negotiation cycles and implementation inertia. Several adaptation-related processes are taking place in parallel with each other but clear connections are missing. For instance, when initial efforts to operationalize the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) had stalled, the two-year Glasgow—Sharm-el-Sheikh work programme was launched in 2021. This work programme led to the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience, which in turn initiated the two-year UAE-Belém work programme on indicators for measuring adaptation progress.

Also in 2023, Parties invited the [Adaptation Committee](#), in collaboration with the Consultative Group of Experts and the Least Developed Countries Expert Group, to support the implementation of the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience with technical guidance and training materials. In addition, the Least Developed Countries Expert Group was requested to update the NAP technical guidelines. A year earlier, Parties had invited the IPCC to consider updating its 1994 technical guidelines for assessing climate change impacts and adaptations as part of its seventh assessment cycle.

Though fragmented, these efforts could offer valuable insights. But the process of crafting guidance, updating guidelines and establishing indicators is likely to take years, as it requires methodological work to account for the outcomes of the GGA. Waiting for their completion will further delay the implementation of urgently needed adaptation measures. It could be considered ironic that so much time and effort is dedicated to developing guidance, guidelines and indicators while the adaptation they aim to inform and track continues to face delays, leaving the persistent implementation gap unaddressed.

## Misalignment in international policy

As of February 2023, 140 countries have submitted NDCs that include an adaptation component, and 130 have submitted updated versions ([TAAN](#)). Non-Annex I countries' <sup>1</sup> NDCs outline adaptation goals and strategies, while NAPs focus on the specific actions needed to achieve these goals ([NAP Global Network, 2019](#)). However, countries often fail to establish a clear link between their NAPs and the adaptation components of their NDCs, causing the two processes to be pursued separately, hindering progress. Moreover, while successive NDCs are designed to ramp up mitigation ambition over time, they do not achieve the same for adaptation. Yet, even if a ramping-up mechanism were introduced for adaptation, effective implementation remains crucial to accelerating progress. NAPs should provide a clear roadmap for what countries will do, supported by the necessary technical and financial resources. In line with this, the first Global Stocktake in 2023 reiterated the 2021 [Glasgow Climate Pact](#) call to at least double adaptation finance provided by developed countries to developing countries from 2019 levels by 2025.

However, as climate risks are experienced globally, and the consequences of risks and adaptation responses can cross borders ([Anisimov et al., 2023](#)), adaptation efforts must also extend beyond non-Annex I countries. Adaptation ambition must increase globally, and better alignment between NAPs and NDCs, while important, is not enough. As countries are requested to prepare national adaptation policies and plans by COP30, this will also provide an opportunity for developed countries to reflect on their strategy to adapt to climate change and align it with their NDCs, and to be at the forefront of ambitious adaptation planification and implementation.

## From global policy to national action

As countries update their NDCs and adaptation plans and policies by COP30 in 2025 in line with the COP Presidencies Troika's Roadmap to Mission 1.5, they must consider priorities at international, national and subnational levels that are actionable within broader regional and national development strategies. This will require a “whole-of-society” approach, where adaptation is seen not just as a technical challenge but as a societal and political one, possibly crossing borders.

Countries need to establish a collective vision of acceptable risk levels. That vision then deserves the highest political backing, and buy-in from all sectors and at all levels of society. Policymakers must lead and coordinate this effort by setting clear priorities and sequencing actions that reflect the collective vision. This raises questions on how to structure dialogue among stakeholders at various scales, to identify and overcome differences in perceived risks and adequacy of current adaptation efforts. Innovative tools are required to facilitate such multi-stakeholder processes to inform adaptation planning.

The collective vision for adaptation and its underlying processes need to be strengthened by international cooperation. Policymakers must take this into account when they provide support for international adaptation planning and implementation.

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<sup>1</sup> Mostly developing and least developed countries: [https://unfccc.int/process/parties-non-party-stakeholders/parties-convention-and-observer-states?field\\_national\\_communications\\_target\\_id%5B514%5D=514](https://unfccc.int/process/parties-non-party-stakeholders/parties-convention-and-observer-states?field_national_communications_target_id%5B514%5D=514)