

## Global Adaptation Progress Tracker (GAP-Track)

### Internal Note A – Positioning of the GAP-Track approach

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#### Introduction

Assessing global progress on adaptation will be a central topic at COP 26. This is because important discussions will take place on the approaches and modalities for reviewing collective progress under the provisions of the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) (Paris Agreement) in the lead up to the first Global Stocktake in 2023. So far the discussion is ripe with contention, tapping into debates about: how to assess progress across scales from the local to the national and even global (issues of aggregating vs. collating), how to account for the specific contexts and the myriad of approaches for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on adaptation measures, and the limitations of standardized metrics and indicators, especially given the lack of a reference baseline and lack of agreement on types of data and information to evaluate adaptation.

Indeed, the Adaptation Committee has prepared a technical paper, [‘Approaches to reviewing overall progress made in achieving the global goal on adaptation’](#) (April 2021) as requested by the CMA<sup>1</sup> to review existing approaches and address these challenges, with a view of opening up avenues to develop further methodological guidance.

IDDRI’s GAP-Track approach proposes an alternative and independent approach using an expert judgment method to contribute to capturing the global picture on adaptation progress. The approach is rooted in key questions to survey overall progress:

- (i) *Is scientifically-based knowledge on current and future climate risks available at the appropriate scale?*
- (ii) *Are there plans and policies in place?*
- (iii) *Is adequate action taking place at the relevant scale?*
- (iv) *Are there sufficient institutional, human and financial capacities in place (for planning and implementation)?*
- (v) *Is there evidence on climate risk (current and future) and long-term vulnerability reduction?*
- (vi) *Is a pathway-like approach considered?*

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<sup>1</sup> Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement.

In this way, the approach can be viewed as complementary to the Party focused modalities that will drive data collection process for the global stocktake – and most likely that will use existing UNFCCC communication instruments to avoid multiplication of efforts (ie. adaptation communications, for example). Therefore, the significance of the GAP-track is underlined by putting in place a progress tracker at the global level on *key risk areas* or *adaptation challenges* as opposed to a method derived from country-based contributions. Given the comprehensive review carried out by the Adaptation Committee, this note aims to position the development of the GAP-Track method in recognition of five main points outlined in the technical paper, while also giving foundation to the real opportunities of the expert judgement approach proposed by GAP-Track as a tool to answer: *are we on track globally?*

## **1. What to measure? The components of the Global Goal on Adaptation**

The Adaptation Committee technical paper firstly addresses the components of the GGA in the Paris Agreement (enhancing *adaptive capacity*, strengthening *resilience*, reducing *vulnerability to climate change*) by surveying the span of relevant scientific contributions to determine *what* is to be evaluated. Each concept is complex in itself and by drawing from a range of empirical studies; the paper shows how it is difficult to aggregate any type of data to reflect these components, the limitations of quantitative measurements and the hesitations about generalizing results.

→ The GAP-Track focuses on action on the ground and in particular, those measures in place to reduce vulnerability to climate change in the present and in the future (see question ii and iii). In this way, adaptation action is a practical lens to evaluate progress but does not necessarily equate to success (given the debate about what is effective adaptation). Given that flexibility and learning are important components of adaptation progress, two questions target this information: question (v) that asks about evidence of risk/vulnerability reduction, which assumes that some learning processes are in place, and question (vi) on whether a pathways approach has been adopted, encompasses flexibility and the capacity to adjust as inherent to such a long term approach. The expert judgment approach to answer these questions relies on the in-depth analysis of the existing literature (not only country reporting, but also scientific and grey literature); the identification of relevant indicators and data but without constraining the assessment to their availability nor seeking for exhaustivity (indicators as proxies); and the own experience and knowledge of the experts involved in the process in terms of the topics (i.e. various adaptation challenges) and the scale of analysis (global, country-level, local).

Therefore, together the questions informed by the expert judgment approach provide enough breadth to cover the components of the GGA without delving into the complexities of conceptual entry points.

## **2. Evaluating across scales and between contexts**

The technical paper puts forward the issue of evaluating progress across scales, and in particular that a standardized approach, especially one that uses aggregation of indicators and data could risk trade-offs with importance of sensitivities of national contexts both in terms of exposure and vulnerability to climate change and divergence of approaches to monitor, evaluate and report on adaptation action.

→ The GAP-Track aims to be a scientific assessment tool based on literature, selected indicators/proxies and accumulated practical experience and observations on the ground. Since the GAP-Track steers away from country based inputs and the UNFCCC framing, the evaluation offers an alternative entry point using an expert judgement method and a focus on key risk areas/adaptation challenges. The former is rooted in key questions (i-vi as listed above) that can be applied across scales, while the latter allows a departure from an analysis that compares countries to one that looks deeper into key climate change and adaptation issues. Such a framing is inspired by previous exercises, especially the work carried out by the UK Climate Change Committee (see

2015 [progress report](#)). Using such a framing is innovative in that questions are applicable across scales Methodologically speaking, each is informed by a set of sub-questions that aim to reflect the context-specificities and guide the expert judgment exercise to ensure that results are ground rooted. The set of sub-questions can vary depending on the specific circumstance of the study context, but at the end they will reflect the overall guiding questions, which will be the same across contexts and scales. Similarly, the expert judgment approach will consist of answering the questions through a scoring system that essentially aims at creating a shared language across experts as well as across scales.

### **3. *Type of information***

The AC technical paper as well as scientific studies suggest that usually, a given approach relies on a very limited number of types of information --not to say a single one in many cases--, for example national communications or indicators/datasets.

→ The main added-value of the GAP-Track here is that its core components (key questions and risk areas) as well as its methodological approach (expert judgment) allow for inclusiveness because no type of data is dismissed. Rather, it provides a unique opportunity to include a wide range of information (both qualitative and quantitative, both scientific and policy, and also accumulated practical experience and observations on the ground) and their calibration into a shared language (scoring system). This means that experts base their evaluation on a variety of sources of information, which they are asked to provide proof of. Therefore, there is no issue on agreeing on the type of evidence provided by stakeholders (institutions, sectors, practitioners, projects units, etc.) to track progress because the GAP-Track permits an open resource method and is not based on a specific type of reporting mechanism, such as national reporting schemes. Therefore, subnational evidence also has a space in the data collection process among other types. This leads to two other points raised in the AC technical paper: type of knowledge, including multilateral, informal knowledge-exchange and questionnaires. All of these may be useful to appraise collective progress, and the GAP-Track allows for gathering them into one consistent way.

### **4. *Limitations of indicators and metrics***

When it comes to evaluating adaptation progress, the idea of indicators are rife with debate because adaptation “does not easily lend itself to a universal, objective, quantifiable measure to success or effectiveness” (AC/2021/TP/GGA: pg 13), a point also raised in other documents such as the UNEP Adaptation Gap Report series.

→ The GAP-Track method recognizes this limitation as put forward in the technical paper and does not propose any kind of metrics to be applied systematically. While it remains open to the use of metrics when they make sense --because they are relevant to describe an adaptation-related process or outcome, and related data is available--, it is not constrained by the lack of data and relevant metrics, and uses other types of information, including accumulated practical experience and observations and, depending on the scale considered, different worldviews such as from indigenous communities.

### **5. *Adaptation and mitigation in the Paris Agreement: shared adaptation goals***

The question: “are we on track globally” hinges on mitigation pathways - that is the validation that the well below +2 C target is sustainable for humankind over the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The framing of the GGA also touches upon the relationship between adaptation and mitigation in the Paris Agreement, and the uncertainty about which world we should be adapting to. However, there is still a gap in bringing mitigation and adaptation together in terms of climate action goals, and the temperature target and the GGA remain a bit disconnected.

→ Besides paying attention to current progress on risk and vulnerability reduction, the GAP-Track takes the 1.5-2 degree Celsius as the backbone to the evaluation because, to date, it is the most

agreed upon reference in the policy community; yet, the GAP-Track aims at informing policy processes and decision-making. Indeed, both of these parts of the puzzle open up a question about where we are trying to get with the GGA? Parties have expressed that a fundamental obstacle is the entry point for evaluating progress when the GGA lacks structured and clearly defined goals. To say it differently, besides practical challenges (e.g., technical, financial, institutional, etc.), we do not have clear and risk-oriented frameworks and goals to refer to, and that could be relevant across scales (and henceforth help assess whether we are collectively on track to adaptation or not). As the GAP-Track aims to develop an understanding and framing (through the six key questions above, the inclusion of multiple sources of information, and the expert judgment method) that can be applied across scales, it could eventually lead to the development of *shared adaptation goals*, i.e. more precise goals that could be seen as sub-components of the GGA. This could then be a valuable contribution to guiding progress evaluation in the global stocktake every five years.