



Submission of the Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee on the proposed UNFCCC Knowledge Platform for Indigenous Peoples and Local Community Climate Action

30 March 2016

Summary notes:

IPACC recommends that:

1. the primary aim is for the Knowledge Platform to facilitate Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge (ITK) holders to share approaches, innovations and best practices in addressing climate change, impacts and vulnerability;
2. the Knowledge Platform should focus on knowledge sharing and dialogue with scientists and policy makers and contribute to the synergistic implementation of ITK and science in national policy and implementation;
3. part of the mandate for the Knowledge Platform should look at the relationships between ITK and technology transfer and capacity building with regards to appropriate technology;
4. a rights-based approach to ITK and ITK holders is key to long-term success. UNDRIP should serve as a standards instrument in this regard;
5. knowledge management has a gender dimension, the Knowledge Platform should seek to have an equitable approach to women and men knowledge holders with due consideration for rights, customs and norms;
6. the outcomes of the Knowledge Platform dialogues, case studies and recommendations should be studied by the Adaptation Committee for further policy elaboration, norms and standards;
7. ITK has a particularly important role to play in Least Developed Countries where reliance on natural resources is relatively higher and vulnerability is greater than in Developed Countries. LDC participation in the Knowledge Platform should be prioritised;
8. the Knowledge Platform should work closely with the Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG) and other bodies working on adaptation and mitigation;
9. the Knowledge Platform should be distinguished from the Nairobi Work Programme with NWP holding an observer role and complementary functions;
10. the deliberations of the Knowledge Platform should be seen as a resource for Parties and civil society to improve education for sustainable development;
11. other relevant UN agencies and IUCN should be encouraged to attend and have a space to interact with the Knowledge Platform;



Introduction:

The 22nd Conference of the Parties (COP 22) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) agreed to adopt an incremental approach to developing the local communities and indigenous peoples' platform, referred to in decision [1/CP.21 paragraph 135](#). The Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) will undertake work on operationalising the platform for the exchange of experiences and sharing of best practices of local communities and indigenous peoples on mitigation and adaptation in relation to climate change. In this regard, Parties and relevant organizations are invited to submit their views on the purpose, content and structure of the platform by 31 March 2017.

This submission is made by the Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee (IPACC). IPACC is the regional African network of indigenous peoples' organisations with one hundred and forty member organisations in twenty-one African countries. IPACC is accredited with ECOSOC, UNFCCC, UNCBD, UNCCD and is a member of the IUCN.

Policy context for the Knowledge Platform

In Africa, where scientific capacity is relatively constrained by education and budgetary resources, and where the majority of the population relies on rain-fed agriculture, natural resource sustainability, traditional livestock husbandry and wild resources use, it is essential that different knowledge holders engage with one another. This provides opportunities for policy and decision making to be informed by the best available knowledge; it allows for exploring synergies and divergences between different systems of knowledge, and it empowers local decision makers and custodians of natural resources to see themselves as actors, rights-holders and influence makers in the global challenge of responding to climate change.

The principle that indigenous peoples and local communities have valuable knowledge to effectively respond to climate change, impacts and vulnerability as well as the stewardship of nature has been gathering importance in the UNFCCC since the adoption of the Cancun Adaptation Framework at COP16 in 2010. A series of decisions were taken by the COPs and an important best practices technical paper was submitted by the Nairobi Work Programme¹ which was accompanied by knowledge products, expert meetings and adoption and recommendations of the Adaptation Committee.

The decisions of the UNFCCC COP and subsidiary bodies with regards to Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge (ITK) speak to a broader policy process in the United Nations (notably under UNCBD, UNCCD and forums and policy processes within UNEP, UNDP and UNESCO) which recognise the importance of complementarity of different knowledge systems in dealing with the environment and climate. The UN is guided by the components of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), a global normative policy instrument adopted by the General Assembly in 2007 and adopted by the IUCN members in 2008.

When considering the purpose of the Knowledge Platform, it is worth starting with a focus on the interaction of different types of knowledge which can provide a more sophisticated, affordable and nuanced approach to problem solving and prediction; that science alone does not change human

¹ See Best practices and available tools for the use of indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices for adaptation, and the application of gender-sensitive approaches and tools for understanding and assessing impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change. Technical paper.
http://unfccc.int/documentation/documents/advanced_search/items/6911.php?preref=600007603#beg



behaviour and hence cultural frameworks need to be taken into account in policy; and that there needs to be a rights-based approach to dealing with climate change – a founding principle of the United Nations system.

Climate change has substantially destabilised the interaction between the atmospheric conditions and the terrestrial and marine ecosystems and biology. Indigenous peoples have been reporting major changes in weather, precipitation, animal behaviour, species changes, species extinctions, botanical regenerative capacity (e.g. germination, fruiting, pollination) and migratory patterns. Given the high dependence of indigenous peoples and local communities on natural resources and nature-based processes, it is important that Least Developed Countries receive particular opportunity and support to engage in the Knowledge Platform.

Owing to dynamics during the colonisation of the countries of the South, there remain tensions between the status of formal science and the valorisation of robust indigenous knowledge systems. These indigenous and traditional knowledge systems are usually closely associated with specific ecosystems and biological contexts, where the local languages have refined taxonomic and systemic frameworks for understanding how nature functions and how humans must behave to ensure sustainability of the biological system.

IPACC has produced an introduction to climate adaptation and indigenous knowledge for the UNFCCC:

http://ipacc.org.za/images/reports/climate_and_environment/climate/indigenous_knowledge.pdf

(also available in French).

Paris Agreement and the Knowledge Platform mandate

During COP21, the Parties agreed to include a decision in the Paris Agreement to establish a knowledge 'platform' for sharing experiences in mitigation and adaptation. The decision builds on the previous COP decisions and was adopted within the historic text agreement to explicitly recognise human rights and the rights of indigenous peoples' within the UNFCCC treaty.

135. Recognizes the need to strengthen knowledge, technologies, practices and efforts of local communities and indigenous peoples related to addressing and responding to climate change, and establishes a platform for the exchange of experiences and sharing of best practices on mitigation and adaptation in a holistic and integrated manner;

The Paris Agreement of COP21 includes five references to indigenous peoples, their knowledge systems and their rights which should be considered as mutually reinforcing when considering the knowledge platform:

- Preamble refers to both the recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples (repeated in the appendix) and their participation in international climate cooperation;
- Article 7.5 Recognition of the importance of traditional, indigenous and local knowledge systems for adaptation relevant to socioeconomic and environmental policies and actions;
- V. Art 135 calls for the establishment of the indigenous and local knowledge platform

IIPFCC and the Knowledge Platform

At COP22 the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC), the organised coordination body of the indigenous peoples' global caucus, engaged with Parties on the platform initiative. Parties decided to adopt an incremental and participatory approach to developing the local communities and indigenous peoples' platform.



Indigenous Peoples' Constituency is one of the nine Major Groups of the Rio Conventions as agreed in 1992. Indigenous peoples have established IIPFCC in 2008, as the caucus for indigenous peoples participating in the UNFCCC processes. IPACC is a member of IIPFCC and endorses its submission on the knowledge platform.

As per indigenous peoples' norms in other UN forums, the IIPFCC is organised to represent seven geographical regions (i.e. Africa, Asia, Arctic, Pacific, Latin America and Caribbean, North America, Eastern Europe and Russian). The regions are vastly different, with major differences in the numbers of indigenous peoples, the numbers of state parties in the region, and major variances in resources and vulnerability to climate change.

Knowledge Platform Purpose

The overt purpose of the Knowledge Platform is to share innovative solutions, methodologies and national or local experiences of indigenous peoples and local communities which contribute to the mission of the Convention, namely the reduction of Greenhouse gas emissions and effective adaptation to climate impacts, including the reduction of vulnerability and the promotion of resilience strategies.

Some consideration needs to be given to the already existing knowledge forums within the Convention which are discussed in Structure / Architecture below. The Parties will expect the new Knowledge Platform to be distinct, not reproduce existing mechanisms and forums, and to contribute to the ability of the Parties to improve their climate responses by seeing how other knowledge systems are being put to use.

From IPACC's perspective, the new platform creates certain unique opportunities:

- 1. Knowledge synergies:** There is a need for interaction between different human knowledge systems. Science does not easily play a role in shifting human behaviour. Cultural systems are resilient over long periods of time and it requires sustained interaction for new information to be absorbed in human behaviour. Most people do not understand science, much less complex meteorological modelling. Indigenous peoples and other rural communities are reliant on their own knowledge and culture, even when the climate system is becoming more unstable.
People are making livelihood, food security, climate and biodiversity related decisions all the time without the benefit of science. The current behaviour of people, particularly those in rural areas, needs to be understood, analysed and ideally informed by interaction with different forms of science.
Scientists, from IPACC's experience, are often not trained in human sociology and in Africa often do not have budgets to go to rural areas to see what people are doing, the solutions they have identified, and the knowledge gaps that science could help with.
The UN Knowledge platform should ideally be a space where scientists, sector experts and indigenous peoples interact with each other about trends in adaptation (including maladaptation), documentation, transformative approaches to national policy, communications and nature-based mitigation.
- 2. Knowledge and Technology:** Indigenous peoples have been using GPS and GIS technologies (Geo-spatial information technologies) for participatory land mapping and natural resource governance in many different countries. A Knowledge Platform could promote best practices



in GIT / GIS use in responding to climate impacts, vulnerability, adaptation and mitigation. This would also contribute to bridging the gaps in moving between knowledge and data required for national policy and decision-making. This also helps guide the Convention in appropriate technology and technology transfer and capacity building.

3. **Conflict Sensitive Adaptation & Natural Resources Governance:** IPACC and IUCN have promoted the position that climate impacts need to be considered within a framework of human conflict, and human-wildlife conflict. There has been little space in the Convention to look at social harmony and preventative approaches to climate sensitive conflict, or as we have put it, conflict-sensitive adaptation. Here, we can see indigenous peoples providing examples of how traditional and local institutions can play an effective role in reducing conflict over natural resource stresses; including facilitation of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.
4. **Non-farming land uses:** Much international policy on food and agriculture is locked into Western or agricultural paradigms. Many indigenous peoples rely on a mix of wild food harvesting, pastoralism, small-scale and often specialised horticulture (drylands, swamps, riverine and lagoon fisheries, high-altitude agriculture, swidden, and harvesting and cultivation of semi-wild crops) which may not feature at all in national agricultural policy. Wild foods typically are not registered as foods or medicines and hence are left out of national adaptation planning and conservation strategies. Indigenous food and pharmaceutical knowledge in adaptation and mitigation could be usefully considered in the Platform and fed back into the UN and national policy spaces.
5. **From REDD+ to Forest Governance:** UNFCCC has spent years on REDD+ design. It has created important spaces for indigenous peoples from forest environments. A new Knowledge Platform could increase attention to forest stewardship and conservation as a key approach to climate responses. Issues of forest tenure, carbon measurement, sustaining forest biodiversity are all important to IPACC's members. This includes in different types of forests: tropical rainforests, semi-arid forests and oasis-based forests.
6. **Indigenous Peoples & Renewable Energies:** Many indigenous peoples live in remote rural areas where electrification is difficult. A Knowledge Platform does not only have to deal with traditional knowledge of biodiversity, it can also look at innovative practices and new knowledge opportunities which fit within indigenous economics. This would create greater synergies between the UNCBD Article 10c and the Paris Agreement.
7. **Gender equality and equity:** Knowledge is distributed according to diverse gender roles, norms and customs around Africa and across human societies. UNFCCC has launched its ITK and gender work in parallel. IPACC recommends that a gender dimension to the Knowledge Platform should be considered, given the ways in which knowledge is held, shared and reproduced in diverse ways. A male bias in considering ITK would undermine the rights of indigenous women and remove a major constituency of knowledge holders from international dialogue.



Structure / Architecture

The UNFCCC is calling for contributions about the structure or architecture of the new Knowledge Platform. A first point of departure is to consider the already existing bodies and how effective they are. Efficacy can be considered in terms of a) ability to involve indigenous peoples' and local communities' knowledge b) ability to contribute to and shape national policies and practices.

- **Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA):** This is a key body to receive advice and recommendations from the Knowledge Platform. The IIPFCC is recommending a co-Chair arrangement where the IIPFCC and SBSTA both chair the Platform. This would assist in communication flow and ownership.
- **Nairobi Work Programme (NWP):** NWP has housed most of the information, tools, reports and recommendations on indigenous and traditional knowledge. NWP's relationship with the new Knowledge Platform requires attention. A Knowledge Platform would enjoy more 'ownership' from indigenous peoples. NWP may still be able to play the clearing house role and see how some of the Knowledge Platform material can be used in national adaptation;
- **Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG):** LEG and NWP work together on the NAPs processes. In practice LEG has been the host of the indigenous and traditional knowledge workshops for NAPs in LDCs. This is in part due to the funding available to the LEG. Given the high level of public dependence on natural resources in LDCs, IPACC is recommending that the Knowledge Platform prioritise participation of LDC states and indigenous peoples from LDC countries;
- **Adaptation Committee:** Adaptation Committee contributed greatly to the Convention when it took the NWP technical papers and recommended them to the Parties during COP19. This helped accelerate a whole line of work eventually leading to the Paris Agreement texts and Article 135. The AC should be considered an important interlocutor for the Knowledge Platform.

The **structural recommendations** include that:

- The SBSTA and IIPFCC co-chair the Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Knowledge Platform;
- The LEG should have a special liaison to the Knowledge Platform and emphasis should be placed on helping LDC's engage with and draw from the Knowledge Platform recommendations, tools and best practice contributions. This should also include the LEG helping to hold sub-regional workshops with the Knowledge Platform in LDC countries.
- NWP should have a permanent ex-officio seat at the Knowledge Platform. NWP should remain the repository of materials relevant to adaptation and knowledge. The Knowledge Platform should focus more on problem solving, interactive dialogue between expert knowledge holders and increasing attention on the relationship between knowledge and data.
- The AC should study the results of deliberations of the Knowledge Platform. The AC should be able to ask LEG, Knowledge Platform and NWP to
- The Knowledge Platform should be able to have an analytical function of identifying NAPs, NAMAs and NAPAs which could do with more attention to knowledge systems and modalities.



- The Knowledge Platform should encourage regular attendance of focal points from regional networks of indigenous peoples, farmers, herders and fishing peoples.
- The Knowledge Platform should be cautious not to create a 'closed shop' where a small number of individuals attempt to control the platform through the exclusion of other legitimate knowledge holders.
- Agencies including IUCN, FAO, UNDP, UNEP, UNCBD, UNCCD, the World Bank, the Regional Multilateral Banks and UNESCO should be encouraged to have standing representation at the Knowledge Platform.

Conclusion

IPACC supports the creation of the proposed Knowledge Platform. It encourages both Developing and Developed Countries to see the value of knowledge exchange and synergies in responding to climate change. IPACC emphasises the need for a rights-based approach to climate change. Gender equality and equity should be considered as significant to the establishment of an effective knowledge platform. IPACC notes the particular importance of ITK for Least Developed Countries. IPACC makes its network and capacities available to assist in the work of the Knowledge Platform.

Une version française de ce document est disponible

ipacc@iafrica.com

www.ipacc.org.za



Appendix

COP Decisions relating to knowledge systems:

Decision 1/CP.16 The Cancun Agreements: Outcome of the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention

II. Enhanced action on adaptation

12. Affirms that enhanced action on adaptation should be undertaken in accordance with the Convention, should follow a country-driven, gender-sensitive, participatory and fully transparent approach, taking into consideration vulnerable groups, communities and ecosystems, and should be based on and guided by the best available science and, as appropriate, traditional and indigenous knowledge, with a view to integrating adaptation into relevant social, economic and environmental policies and actions, where appropriate;

20 (b) Strengthening, consolidating and enhancing the sharing of relevant information, knowledge, experience and good practices, at the local, national, regional and 2 . FCCC/CP/2010/7/Add.1 6 international levels, taking into account, as appropriate, traditional knowledge and practices;

2013: Best practices and available tools for the use of indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices for adaptation, and the application of gender-sensitive approaches and tools for understanding and assessing impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change Technical paper <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2013/tp/11.pdf>

Decision 17/CP.19

Welcoming the report of the Adaptation Committee,

1 1. Decides to continue the **Nairobi work programme** on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change within the framework of the provisions of decision 2/CP.11, addressing the knowledge needs arising from, inter alia, the Cancun Adaptation Framework and other relevant work streams and bodies under the Convention and the knowledge needs identified by Parties;

Mandate of the Adaptation Committee

Decision 2/CP.17 III.94. Decides that the Adaptation Committee should make use of the following modalities in exercising its functions: (a) Workshops and meetings; (b) Expert groups; (c) Compilation, review, synthesis, analysis reports of information, knowledge, experience and good practice; (d) Channels for sharing information, knowledge and expertise; (e) Coordination and linkages with all relevant bodies, programmes, institutions and networks, within and outside the Convention;