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## The 8<sup>th</sup> Durban Forum on capacity-building

### Report by the secretariat

#### *Summary*

The 8<sup>th</sup> Durban Forum on capacity-building took place on 20 June 2019 during the fiftieth session of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation. Under the overarching topic of strengthening institutions at the national level to support capacity-building activities for the implementation of nationally determined contributions in developing countries, the discussions addressed the role of academia, research institutions and other national or subnational institutions in strengthening and retaining capacity in developing countries; enhancing coherence and coordination among national and international stakeholders (such as government institutions, support providers, civil society organizations, subnational authorities, academia and research institutions, and the private sector) for the design and delivery of capacity-building activities supporting nationally determined contribution implementation; and best practices and available tools and methodologies for assessing the impact and effectiveness of capacity-building activities in strengthening national institutions' capacity to implement nationally determined contributions.

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\* Session dates are tentative.



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## Abbreviations and acronyms

COP	Conference of the Parties
LDC	least developed country
LUCCC	Least Developed Countries Universities Consortium on Climate Change
NDC	nationally determined contribution
PCCB	Paris Committee on Capacity-building
SBI	Subsidiary Body for Implementation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNU	United Nations University

## **I. Introduction**

### **A. Mandate**

1. COP 17 requested the SBI to further enhance the monitoring and review of the effectiveness of capacity-building by organizing an annual in-session Durban Forum with the aim of sharing experience and exchanging ideas, best practices and lessons learned among relevant stakeholders regarding the implementation of capacity-building activities. It also requested the secretariat to prepare a summary report on the Durban Forum for consideration by the SBI.<sup>1</sup>

2. COP 24 requested the SBI to thematically align the meetings of the Durban Forum with the annual focus area of the PCCB,<sup>2</sup> which for 2019 is capacity-building activities for the implementation of NDCs in the context of the Paris Agreement. Thus, the lessons learned from and outcomes of the Durban Forum feed directly into the work of the PCCB.

### **B. Structure of the report**

3. This report is structured as follows: chapter II presents the outcomes of the 8<sup>th</sup> Durban Forum, including the key messages and information on their subsequent consideration by the PCCB; chapter III provides information on the organization of the meeting, including its scope and objectives; chapter IV summarizes the special address delivered at the meeting, the panel discussion and the breakout group discussions; and chapter V contains conclusions.

### **C. Possible action by the Subsidiary Body for Implementation**

4. The SBI may wish to consider the information contained in this report in its deliberations on capacity-building.

## **II. Outcomes of the 8<sup>th</sup> Durban Forum**

### **A. Key messages**

5. The following key messages emerged from the discussions at the 8<sup>th</sup> Durban Forum:

(a) In relation to effective context-driven capacity-building solutions, it is important to understand the substantive role and relevance of local, national and regional research institutions and universities, especially in the context of NDC implementation;

(b) Parties and non-Party stakeholders need to bridge the existing gaps between policy, practice and research at the regional, national and subnational level;

(c) Research methods are often not culturally and contextually responsive. If countries are to be empowered to develop results-based and actionable solutions, research should be local, bottom-up and inclusive of relevant stakeholders;

(d) Training and involving local citizens in research can support and enhance capacity at the local level;

(e) Currently, there are different organizations with similar mandates providing capacity-building support. It is important that bodies under the Convention identify, organize and build on existing work in order to avoid duplication of efforts, especially in the delivery of readiness and capacity-building support to developing countries;

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<sup>1</sup> Decision 2/CP.17, paras. 144 and 147.

<sup>2</sup> Decision 15/CP.24, para. 6.

(f) Focusing on supporting efforts at the national level is crucial to achieving long-term capacity in developing countries, as is strengthening collaboration, coherence and coordination through the UNFCCC process;

(g) In order to assess capacity-building action, a clear baseline or benchmark, with concrete goals that can be improved over time, needs to be established and clear outputs defined. The methodology to use will depend on the type of capacity being assessed;

(h) When assessing capacity-building action, it is important to consider how to retain national capacity and how to replicate and scale up action;

(i) The available support should be coherent and coordinated and should respond to national and local capacity-building needs already identified.

6. The details of the panel and breakout group discussions can be found in chapter IV.B and C below, respectively.

## **B. Consideration of the key messages by the Paris Committee on Capacity-building**

7. COP 21 decided that the inputs to the PCCB would include the reports on the Durban Forum.<sup>3</sup> At its 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting<sup>4</sup>, held from 20 to 22 June 2019, the PCCB agreed that it will consider the outcomes of the 8<sup>th</sup> Durban Forum intersessionally when developing its recommendations for COP 25. It also agreed to consider the outcomes of the Durban Forum in designing forthcoming PCCB activities, including the capacity-building knowledge-to-action days to be co-organized by the PCCB and a consortium of partner organizations and held at the forthcoming regional climate weeks in 2019 and at the Capacity-building Hub at COP 25.

## **III. Organization of the 8<sup>th</sup> Durban Forum**

### **A. Background documents**

8. In accordance with the relevant provisions of decisions 2/CP.17 and 1/CP.18, the following documents were prepared and made available on the dedicated Durban Forum web pages<sup>5</sup> well in advance of the meeting to facilitate discussions:

(a) A compilation and synthesis of the capacity-building work of bodies established under the Convention and its Kyoto Protocol;<sup>6</sup>

(b) A synthesis report on the implementation of the framework for capacity-building in developing countries.<sup>7</sup>

### **B. Scope and objectives**

9. The overarching topic of the 8<sup>th</sup> Durban Forum, namely strengthening institutions at the national level to support capacity-building activities for the implementation of NDCs in developing countries, was selected taking into consideration views submitted by Parties<sup>8</sup> and the request of COP 24 for the SBI to thematically align the meetings of the Durban Forum with the annual focus area of the PCCB,<sup>9</sup> which for 2019 is capacity-building activities for

<sup>3</sup> Decision 1/CP.21, para. 79.

<sup>4</sup> [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/PCCB%203%20meeting%20report\\_FINAL.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/PCCB%203%20meeting%20report_FINAL.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> <https://unfccc.int/8th-durban-forum>.

<sup>6</sup> FCCC/SBI/2019/2 and Add.1.

<sup>7</sup> FCCC/SBI/2019/3.

<sup>8</sup> The submission from Australia, Japan and New Zealand is available at <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/SubmissionsStaging/Documents/201904052234---190405%20-%20Capacity-building%20-%20Australia,%20Japan,%20New%20Zealand.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Decision 15/CP.24, para. 6.

the implementation of NDCs in the context of the Paris Agreement. The topic was addressed through discussions on the following subtopics:

- (a) The role of academia, research institutions and other national or subnational institutions in strengthening and retaining capacity in developing countries;
- (b) Enhancing coherence and coordination among national and international stakeholders (such as government institutions, support providers, civil society organizations, subnational authorities, academia and research institutions, and the private sector) for the design and delivery of capacity-building activities supporting NDC implementation;
- (c) Best practices and available tools and methodologies for assessing the impact and effectiveness of capacity-building activities in strengthening national institutions' capacity to implement NDCs.

10. In line with its overarching topic and subtopics, the meeting was guided by the following objectives:

- (a) To provide a platform for various stakeholders to present their experiences and lessons learned and exchange knowledge;
- (b) To explore how better to engage academia, research institutions and other national or subnational institutions in capacity-building activities efforts to help build and retain developing countries' capacity for NDC implementation; to provide insights for partners to better align the support provided for capacity-building activities for the implementation of NDCs in developing countries;
- (c) To inform related thematic discussions of the PCCB in the context of its 2019 annual focus area or theme and its 2017–2019 rolling workplan;
- (d) To learn from best practices and available tools or methodologies used for assessing the impact and effectiveness of capacity-building activities in strengthening national capacity.

11. Stella Gama, Deputy Director of Forestry at the Ministry of Natural Resources, Energy and Environment of Malawi, and Russell Miles, Director of the Mechanisms and Adaptation Section of the Sustainability and Climate Change Branch of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia, were invited to co-facilitate the meeting.

## **C. Proceedings**

12. The 8<sup>th</sup> Durban Forum was held on 20 June 2019 during SBI 50. The Chair of the SBI and the Durban Forum, Emmanuel Dumisani Dlamini, opened the meeting. Introductory remarks were provided by Mr. Miles.

13. Subsequently, a special address on strengthening institutions at the national level to support capacity-building activities for the implementation of NDCs in developing countries was delivered by Jakob Rhyner, Scientific Director of the Bonn Alliance for Sustainability Research and the Innovation Campus Bonn. This was followed by a panel discussion, moderated by Ms. Gama, with the panel comprising:

- (a) Sonam Phuntsho Wangdi, Chair of the LDC Group and Secretary of the National Environment Commission of Bhutan;
- (b) Pierre Jacquet, President of the Global Development Network;
- (c) Roberta Ianna, Senior Advisor at the Italian Ministry for Environment, Land and Sea Protection;
- (d) Mizan R. Khan, Programme Director of LUCCC;
- (e) Rebecca Carman, Technical Climate Specialist at UNDP.

14. The panellists engaged in an interactive discussion on different aspects of the meeting's overarching topic. This was followed by three parallel breakout group discussions

dedicated to the three subtopics referred to in paragraph 9 above and facilitated by, respectively:

(a) Edith Ofwona Adera, Senior Program Specialist at the International Development Research Centre;

(b) Robert Bradley, Director of Knowledge and Research at the NDC Partnership;

(a) Benito Müller, Managing Director of Oxford Climate Policy.

15. Daniele Violetti, Director of the UNFCCC Finance, Technology and Capacity-building Programme, and Mr. Miles provided closing remarks to conclude the meeting.

16. The meeting agenda, presentations, biographies of resource persons, and guiding questions and report slides of the breakout groups are available on the Durban Forum web pages.

## **IV. Special address and discussions**

### **A. Summary of special address**

17. The special address focused on the role of academia in enhancing capacity-building for NDC implementation and referred to the existing relevant systems, for example capacity-building information and outreach tools such as the NDC Partnership knowledge portal and the UNFCCC capacity-building portal.

18. UNU and the University of Bonn offer an internationally recognized joint master's degree course on the geography of environmental risks and human security for a diverse range of 25 students per year representing a balanced geographical distribution to ensure that different perspectives are brought together. Information from the capacity-building portal and the NDC Partnership knowledge portal can be used as a basis for finding resources to support research in universities. Meanwhile, the UNFCCC–UNU Early Career Climate Fellowship Programme offers young people, mostly females, from developing countries the opportunity to start their career at the interface between international climate policy development and research. To experience the work of the United Nations, fellows spend time at the UNFCCC and UNU.

19. The special address concluded with the following recommendations on enhancing the capacity-building resources available to stakeholders:

(a) To combine educational tools, such as programmes and platforms, for medium- and long-term cooperation with academia;

(b) To utilize the potential of the capacity-building portal by extracting information from NDCs and transferring it to the capacity-building portal;

(c) To make the NDC Partnership knowledge portal compatible with the capacity-building portal.

### **B. Summary of the panel discussion**

20. Addressing the subtopics as detailed in chapter IV.B.1–3 below, the panellists responded to the following questions:

(a) How better to engage academia, research institutions and other non-Party stakeholders in strengthening and retaining capacities?

(b) What are the challenges and opportunities for enhancing coherence and coordination in the design and implementation of capacity-building activities?

(c) What needs to be done to better monitor and assess the impact of capacity-building activities?

(d) What type of support is needed for strengthening national institutions to support capacity-building activities?

**1. The role of academia, research institutions and other national or subnational institutions in strengthening and retaining capacity in developing countries**

21. The representatives of the Global Development Network and LUCCC touched on the relevance of knowledge-sharing among universities and the need to empower people at the local level. Capacity-building needs to be reframed to make it more effective at empowering people to take ownership of addressing local and global issues. So far, local empowerment and links to academic research are lacking.

22. LUCCC is a South–South long-term capacity-building platform comprising 10 LDC universities as founding members. Within the network, faculty members and students share experience and knowledge of climate change aiming to build capacity through education, training, research and communication. This LDC-wide initiative was endorsed at the LDC ministerial meeting in Addis Ababa in October 2018.<sup>10</sup>

23. Tackling climate change requires a long-term perspective. In the governmental sphere, frequent changes in political appointment can cause distinct changes to policy and approach, making it hard to retain institutional memory. One key advantage of academia is that there tends to be a slower turnover of actors. Therefore, priority should be given to strengthening the capacity of academia. Furthermore, academia is instrumental to integrating climate change into curricula.

24. The needs to fund local research to strengthen local capacity, to pay particular attention to indigenous capacity, and to support research-oriented action to understand local demands and to empower developing countries were emphasized.

**2. Enhancing coherence and coordination among national and international stakeholders for the design and delivery of capacity-building activities supporting the implementation of nationally determined contributions**

25. The representatives of the LDC Group and UNDP highlighted that enhancing coherence and coordination in the design and implementation of capacity-building activities, which is essential for supporting NDC implementation, is a major challenge for the LDCs. Capacity-building efforts should not be undertaken in silos but should be integrated into a broader sustainable development agenda for the LDCs.

26. Capacity-building support is usually a short-term intervention, and ensuring a longer-term programme is a challenge. However, if capacity is built within universities, other stakeholders could also benefit.

27. Stakeholder consultation affects the implementation of a project, the impact of any capacity-building project depends on the extent of stakeholder involvement and stakeholder mapping for each project is a challenge in developing countries. Capacity-building will help to strengthen the development and implementation of NDC long-term strategies and national planning processes to identify the type of support needed. There are three crucial elements of the provision of capacity-building support:

(a) The process must be responsive, ensuring that the support is based on needs and fosters ownership of action;

(b) The support should be context specific and not ‘one size fits all’;

(c) The support must be sustainable.

28. Capacity-building must be tailored to support women and local communities and indigenous peoples to enhance their participation in climate action given their important knowledge of ecosystems.

29. Providers should focus on achieving national ownership of capacity-building activities to ensure success in enhancing institutional arrangements that support long-term

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<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.icccad.net/luccc>.



and self-sustaining capacity-building, which in turn provides a good basis for a sustained flow of resources from the providers to the recipients of capacity-building.

### **3. Best practices and available tools and methodologies for assessing the impact and effectiveness of capacity-building activities**

30. The representative of the Italian Government stressed the importance of capacity-building as an essential tool for strengthening the global response to climate change and for monitoring and assessing progress. The Italian Government is supporting such capacity-building initiatives as the Capacity-building Initiative for Transparency, devoted to strengthening developing countries' monitoring and reporting capacity, and a capacity awards programme targeting young and mid-career professionals already in government service who are nationals of and working in a small island developing State or LDC.

31. The Italian Government is also involved in bilateral capacity-building activities, including collaboration with the Carbon Disclosure Project on clean development mechanism projects in Africa. In 2013, the Italian Government launched a training programme on environmental management and sustainable development with a special focus on climate change in collaboration with the Chinese Government that attracted over 10,000 participants from all Chinese provinces.

32. The representative of UNDP underscored the importance of assessing the impact of capacity-building action, for which UNDP has an internal toolkit. Currently, UNDP is working with a group of countries on support for NDC implementation and conducting an in-depth gender analysis as a baseline for assessing the needs of women and girls in terms of integrating them into policy and programme development.

33. Capacity development is needed for designing bankable projects, whether short, medium or long term. The current capacity development plan of UNDP is aimed at understanding how to monitor and assess impacts beyond just counting the number of people trained in a workshop. It takes into account engagement of stakeholders, establishing a vision, implementation of policies and programmes that will help to achieve that vision, integration of capacity-building activities into budgets and sector programmes, and management and evaluation of the process. This information can be used to address common issues around institutional arrangements and coordination (e.g. leadership assessment and technical knowledge). It is also important for the government and its supporting partners to discuss how better to determine the support that is needed.

34. The need to better understand capacity-building action by undertaking a capacity development assessment of what is already in place was highlighted.

### **4. Question and answer session**

35. Following the panel discussion, the floor was opened for questions from participants. The importance of capacity-building for NDC implementation was reiterated. The panellists were requested to elaborate on the UNU initiative and how it takes into consideration the capacity gaps and the needs of the visiting researchers, and on how to ensure that capacity-building goes beyond knowledge-sharing and leads to concrete action. In addition, the panellists were asked how to assess the effectiveness of capacity-building activities. The need to include the private sector in the Durban Forum was mentioned.

36. In response, the panellists emphasized the need for a more systemic approach to addressing multidimensional global environmental challenges. In order to achieve systemic change, there is a need to involve the private sector, academia and the local community.

37. To be effective, research should address the needs of local populations in developing countries by involving them in defining the research questions.

38. Regarding the UNU initiative, it was stated that the University of Bonn strives to take students from diverse backgrounds, but this can be quite challenging.

## C. Summary of breakout group discussions

### 1. The role of academia, research institutions and other national or subnational institutions in strengthening and retaining capacity in developing countries

39. The discussion of the first breakout group was guided by the following questions:

(a) What role can academia, research institutions and other national or subnational institutions (civil society organizations, community-based organizations, etc.) play in building the required capacities to support the implementation of NDCs in general and in tracking progress towards established national goals or targets?

(b) One of the main challenges developing countries face is retaining capacity within the country. In times this is due to fly-in and fly-out consultants providing capacity-building. How can national and subnational institutions engage more effectively with organizations that provide support to strengthen and retain national capacities?

(c) What can be done to support efforts at national level achieve long-term capacity in developing countries through the UNFCCC process (policy guidance, work of constituted bodies, etc.)?

40. The need to focus on the role of academia and the importance of strengthening the capacity of universities and research organizations to provide practical advice to policymakers in support of their communities were discussed.

41. Research methods are often not culturally and contextually responsive. If countries are to be empowered to develop results-based and actionable solutions, research should be local, bottom-up and inclusive of relevant stakeholders integrating environmental consciousness and climate change issues into curricula across different faculties, including those supporting business courses.

42. Universities must make the outputs of their research accessible to communities and policymakers to support the in-country institutionalization of capacity-building. In some cases, they are moving in that direction, using community mobilizers where feasible and promoting linkages between policy, practice and research.

43. There is also a need to enhance coherence and coordination under the UNFCCC. In this regard, the PCCB could play a helpful role by using the PCCB network to involve capacity-building experts as well as government representatives.

### 2. Enhancing coherence and coordination among national and international stakeholders for the design and delivery of capacity-building activities that support the implementation of nationally determined contributions

44. The discussion of the second breakout group was guided by the following questions:

(a) One of the key elements for the implementation of NDCs is the provision of capacity-building support. Currently, there are different organizations providing capacity-building support. How can we make sure that there is coherence in this regard at the national level?

(b) What incentives can be provided to organizations providing capacity-building support to strengthen collaboration, coherence and coordination in the delivery of readiness and capacity-building support to developing countries?

(c) What can be done to strengthen collaboration, coherence, and coordination of support for efforts at national level to achieve long-term capacity in developing countries through the UNFCCC process (policy guidance, work of constituted bodies, etc.)?

45. Different challenges that vary across countries with regard to the design and delivery of capacity-building activities supporting NDC implementation were discussed. The need to view capacity-building as a long-term process in order to keep track of the results and outcomes of the process was emphasized. In this regard, it is essential to build national capacity based on country-driven approaches.

46. In addition, different organizations with similar mandates are providing capacity-building. It is vital that these organizations collaborate and establish partnerships for innovating and delivering capacity-building activities with a view to avoiding duplication and enhancing coherence and coordination in the design and delivery of capacity-building activities.

47. Practices and methodologies exist at the national level for achieving coherence and coordination, including the development of a long-term agenda for capacity-building, and the establishment of a national committee for capacity-building, which should involve the participation of different stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector.

### **3. Best practices and available tools and methodologies for assessing the impact and effectiveness of capacity-building activities**

48. The discussion of the third breakout group was guided by the following questions:

(a) What elements should be looked at to assess the effectiveness and impact of capacity-building actions, particularly in the context of NDCs?

(b) Are there any existing methodologies used for assessing the effectiveness and impact of capacity-building actions?

(c) How can we best monitor the capacity-building support provided in light of the evolving nature of capacity building needs? Are there any best practices you suggest?

49. Gaps related to collecting, centralizing and reporting data and information were identified.

50. The importance of defining what constitutes capacity-building in order to assess the action taken was discussed. Once that is defined, setting a benchmark with a defined time frame will help to assess the effectiveness of a capacity-building action.

51. Existing methodologies for assessing the effectiveness and impact of capacity-building action include results-based management approaches, qualitative self-assessment (where the recipient of the capacity-building assesses the impact of the action) and comparative review of peer-to-peer sharing of lessons learned.

52. Possible means of monitoring capacity-building support provided were also discussed. The need to monitor capacity-building action was mentioned, stressing the importance of retaining capacity and enhancing coherence and coordination of action.

## **V. Conclusions**

53. The 8<sup>th</sup> Durban Forum provided an opportunity for Parties and non-Party stakeholders to openly and constructively discuss strengthening institutions at the national level to support capacity-building activities for the implementation of NDCs in developing countries.

54. Several participants expressed their appreciation that the meeting highlighted the importance of capacity-building in developing countries for NDC implementation.

55. The meeting, which brought together a broad range of stakeholders, delivered clear messages on key factors in enhancing capacity for NDC implementation, as outlined in chapter II.A above. Furthermore, its thematic alignment with the annual focus area of the PCCB allowed the PCCB to effectively leverage the outcomes of the Forum. Besides actively participating in the meeting, the PCCB took stock of the outcomes at its 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting and agreed on concrete follow-up actions and recommendations, as outlined in chapter II.B above.