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Submission by the United States on further guidance in relation to the adaptation communication

The United States welcome this opportunity to submit views related to APA agenda item 4, “Further guidance in relation to the adaptation communication, including, inter alia, as a component of nationally determined contributions, referred to in Article 7, paragraphs 10 and 11, of the Paris Agreement”. Our submission focuses on the following topics: the role of the adaptation communication, the nature of the communication, the relationship between the communication and the vehicle through which it is submitted, and a menu of options that could be included as elements of a communication.

The Paris Agreement, in its Article 7, provides as follows:

- Each Party should, as appropriate, submit and update periodically an adaptation communication, which may include its priorities, implementation and support needs, plans and actions, without creating any additional burden for developing country Parties (Article 7, paragraph 10).
- The adaptation communication referred to in paragraph 10 of this Article shall be, as appropriate, submitted and updated periodically, as a component of or in conjunction with other communications or documents, including a national adaptation plan, a nationally determined contribution as referred to in Article 4, paragraph 2, and/or a national communication (Article 7, paragraph 11).
- The adaptation communications referred to in paragraph 10 of this Article shall be recorded in a public registry maintained by the secretariat (Article 7, paragraph 12).
- The global stocktake referred to in Article 14 shall, inter alia: Enhance the implementation of adaptation action taking into account the adaptation communication referred to in paragraph 10 of this Article (Article 7, paragraph 14, sub-paragraph b)

Role of the adaptation communication

The adaptation communication offers a unique opportunity for countries and the global community to advance adaptation efforts. The United States sees value in the APA elucidating the benefits of the communication, while maintaining the flexibility Parties need to effectively communicate about their adaptation actions. The guidance on the adaptation communication could acknowledge the various roles or purposes that the adaptation communication can play in advancing adaptation, and in doing so, can help inform the contents of the communication. For example, the adaptation communication could serve as the vehicle for showcasing, in a distilled manner that is accessible to a wide range of readers, a country’s national adaptation planning process. National adaptation planning is the bedrock for successful adaptation, and enables coherent whole-of-government approaches as well as effective national-subnational coordination. Adaptation planning is also an important element in the Paris Agreement and in many of the NDCs submitted by Parties. National adaptation planning processes, whether captured in a National Adaptation Plan (NAP) process, national climate change response strategy, a climate resilience action plan, or in another form, are often too long, too technical, or too detailed to be accessible to a broad audience. Using the adaptation communication to provide an “executive summary” can be an invaluable communication tool in this regard.

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The adaptation communication also offers a unique opportunity to maintain the high profile of adaptation achieved in the Paris Agreement, by spotlighting, on a global stage, the importance that countries place on adaptation and the leadership they are taking in addressing their climate risks. It offers an opportunity to send a signal to both domestic and international audiences on why adaptation is critical for achieving climate goals and safeguarding development gains. Like mitigation contributions, which represent political commitments at the highest levels, adaptation communications can offer the opportunity to rally a broad array of domestic stakeholders, including planning and finance ministries, subnational actors, civil society and the private sector, behind the importance of the issue.

In terms of the impetus they can create, bringing together relevant domestic actors and garnering high-level domestic attention, the adaptation communication provides an additional opportunity for a country to set goals and priorities. For any given country, climate vulnerabilities will be many and varied. The adaptation communication can be an opportunity for a country to think through its various vulnerabilities and develop priorities and sequencing, and to set overarching goals for achieving those priorities.

Insofar as the communications serve as clear articulations of country's priorities, domestic decision-makers and bilateral and multilateral donors may find the communications as offering useful information on a country's plans and efforts. Given the voluntary nature of adaptation communications, however, the United States would like to stress that it will continue to provide adaptation support to vulnerable developing countries, regardless of how they choose to communicate about their adaptation activities. We also stress that we will continue to rely on our long-standing process of joint discussions with developing country partners to inform the nature of adaptation support provided.

Finally, article 7, paragraph 14 of the Paris Agreement states that the adaptation communication will be taken into account in the global stocktake, which will enhance the implementation of adaptation action. Details on how the adaptation communications will be taken into account in the global stocktake will be discussed in the context of technical work on the stocktake work.

Nature of the adaptation communication

In keeping with Article 7, paragraphs 10 and 11, it is important that further guidance preserve flexibility as a fundamental principle of the adaptation communications. This is reflected in the voluntary nature of the communications, and the injunction that they not create additional burden for developing countries. The Paris Agreement also specifically provides for flexibility on the content of communications, highlighting a few possible topics (priorities, implementation and support needs, plans and actions). Flexibility is further apparent in the multiple vehicles with which a communication can be submitted. The Agreement highlights the national adaptation plan, the nationally determined contribution and the national communication, but some Parties may see value in choosing another vehicle or in submitting a standalone communication. And finally, flexibility is accorded in the periodicity of the communication. A Party that sees value in submitting an adaptation communication every few years may decide to submit one in conjunction with its national communication or nationally determined contribution. For other Parties, including those that choose to submit standalone adaptation communications, the

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periodicity may be more frequent, or may occur at irregular intervals. The United States, for example, reviews and updates its national adaptation priorities on a yearly basis but may choose to communicate about our efforts at different intervals.

Menu of possible elements that could be included in an adaptation communication.

Further guidance on the communications could highlight the value of a menu of options or elements that could be included in communications, in order for the communications to fulfill the roles or achieve the purposes described above. In order to preserve the flexibility provided in the Agreement, any guidance on elements should be fairly high-level and general in nature.

The Agreement highlights that, as a non-exhaustive list, communications may include priorities, implementation and support needs, plans and actions. More specifically, and in keeping with the potential value of using the communication to provide a high-level summary of a national adaptation planning process, Parties might see value in using the communication to highlight some of the fundamental topics included in an adaptation planning process, such as:

- The development context in which adaptation actions take place, e.g., key sectors for growth – adaptation actions should help to safeguard development gains and also present an opportunity to pursue economic development activities.
- Climate risks and vulnerabilities, in both the short and long-terms – while focusing on present risks is essential, incorporating likely future risk into decision-making and prioritization helps ensure that Parties don't lock themselves into maladaptive behaviors in the long term.
- Adaptation options identified in relation to the development context and risks and vulnerabilities, e.g., process to prioritize addressing vulnerabilities and to pursue specific adaptation options
- Implementation strategies, e.g., an overview of the main aspects of a country's plan to go from adaptation goals and priorities to action.
- Monitoring and evaluation process, e.g., how a country ensures that its adaptation actions are effective.

Relationship between adaptation communication and the vehicles named in the Paris Agreement

In light of the need to avoid undue burden, and given the undesirability of duplication of efforts, the United States offers the following views on how the adaptation communication can enhance the named vehicles with which it may be submitted.

- **National adaptation plan** – as with the adaptation communication, national adaptation planning is a country-driven process. As such, each country that produces a national adaptation plan and decides to undertake a communication will have to decide how to avoid duplication of efforts. As described above, we suggest using the communication as an executive summary of the more in-depth plan or planning process. As such, Parties

avoid duplication of efforts while increasing their ability to reach a broad audience with details about their adaptation actions.

- **Nationally determined contribution** – Article 4 highlights that Parties must prepare, communicate and maintain successive mitigation contributions. To the degree a Party sees value in submitting or updating an adaptation communication, as a component of or in conjunction with its nationally determined contribution, the Party should clearly delineate the adaptation communication to avoid obscuring the mitigation contribution and to ensure that its adaptation efforts are clearly recognizable to interested audiences.
- **National communication** –many of the adaptation elements included in a national communication overlap with central elements of a national adaptation planning process. When submitted with a national communication, the adaptation communication could be a summary of national adaptation planning or a national adaptation plan. At the least, Parties should avoid duplicating their national communication when undertaking an adaptation communication.

Regardless, when submitting an adaptation communication as a component of or in conjunction with another vehicle, Parties should clearly delineate their adaptation communication so that it can be appropriately uploaded by the secretariat to the adaptation registry called for in Article 7, paragraph 12¹.

The United States appreciates the opportunity to share its views on the APA agenda item “Further guidance in relation to the adaptation communication, including, inter alia, as a component of nationally determined contributions, referred to in Article 7, paragraphs 10 and 11, of the Paris Agreement”. We look forward to further discussing these concepts at COP22 and beyond.

¹ It should be noted, of course, that Parties that choose to communicate about adaptation efforts with mitigation co-benefits should be able to have their communications reflected in the registry called for in Article 7, or the one called for in Article 4 (or both).