

Submission by the Stockholm Environment Institute on behalf of the Adaptation Without Borders global partnership, relating to the Glasgow–Sharm el-Sheikh work programme on the global goal on adaptation

28 April 2022

The Stockholm Environment Institute is grateful for the opportunity to share with the chairs of the UNFCCC subsidiary bodies as well as all Parties its views on the Glasgow–Sharm el-Sheikh work programme on the global goal on adaptation. We are aware that the invitation for submissions in Decision 7/CMA.3 is directed to Parties, but we feel that at this early stage of the work programme, voluntary submissions by non-Party stakeholders could also offer useful perspectives.

Transboundary climate risks

The impacts of climate change are not confined by national borders: they affect and are amplified by trade and supply chains, capital flows, human mobility, and the sharing of natural resources among countries, regionally and globally. Likewise, actions to adapt to climate change can have impacts far beyond the jurisdiction where they are implemented. Thus, while the consequences of climate change are felt and addressed at the national and subnational levels, they also require a multilateral response that current approaches to adaptation rarely provide.

Cross-border climate risks can reverberate through the global economy, impacting all countries all around the world, often far away from the original source. These risks are poised to become larger and more significant with time. Yet many countries, businesses and organisations are unaware of these risks and underprepared for their potential effect on fragile systems and the people relying on them.

Building on the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report

The IPCC concluded with high confidence in the summary for policymakers of its Working Group II contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report that climate change impacts and risks are becoming increasingly more complex and more difficult to manage. Complex, compound, cascading and cross-border climate risks were all but overlooked in previous IPCC reports. Information on these risks was therefore not readily available to guide adaptation deliberations under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, including on the global goal on adaptation. Likewise, it was not available to inform adaptation planning by Parties and non-Party stakeholders.

The IPCC also concluded that adaptation progress to date is unevenly distributed and not fast enough. The Sixth Assessment Report identified “adaptation gaps” between current levels of adaptation and levels needed to respond to impacts and reduce climate risks. At the current rate of planning and implementation, these gaps will continue to grow. This finding is of concern not only to next year’s global stocktake of collective progress towards achieving the Paris Agreement, but also to how Parties interpret, define and operationalise the global goal on adaptation.

A global challenge requires global ambition

Article 7 of the Paris Agreement not only establishes the global goal on adaptation. In Article 7, Parties also recognise that adaptation is a global challenge faced by all, with local, subnational, national, regional and international dimensions. Nothing demonstrates the global nature of the adaptation challenge more than the need to address transboundary climate risks.

The IPCC Sixth Assessment Report begins to answer the question: *What are transboundary climate risks and how can we assess exposure to these risks?* However, much additional work is needed to answer two other key questions: *What options are available to manage transboundary climate risks?* and *Whose responsibility is it to initiate and implement adaptation action to reduce these risks?* The Adaptation Without Borders global partnership was established in 2019 to shed light on these critical questions, and to support countries and other stakeholders in assessing and managing transboundary climate risks.

Adaptation Without Borders seeks to update the narrative of adaptation from a predominant local to national focus on single hazards to one that recognises adaptation as a global challenge to address complex climate risks that are compound, cascading and cross-border. In our view, this updated narrative must guide the work on the global goal on adaptation under the Glasgow–Sharm el-Sheikh work programme. In addition, it should help to define adaptation ambition, and what would be involved in ramping it up. Recent and ongoing analysis on transboundary climate risks by Adaptation Without Borders and others can inform deliberations under the Glasgow–Sharm el-Sheikh work programme by revealing global interdependencies and governance challenges faced by all Parties.

Ways forward

The Stockholm Environment Institute, on behalf of the Adaptation Without Borders global partnership, encourages the chairs of the subsidiary bodies of the UNFCCC to explicitly consider transboundary climate risks, and the need for enhanced regional and global cooperation in adaptation, in the Glasgow–Sharm el-Sheikh work programme on the global goal on adaptation. We recommend that at least one of the workshops deal specifically with transboundary climate risks. We would be happy to co-organise this workshop, together with any interested Party and the UNFCCC Secretariat. We would also welcome the opportunity to present at any of the other workshops and Ministerial meetings that are held under the work programme.

Beyond the workshops and meetings, we are available to engage in consultations with the chairs of the subsidiary bodies, the Adaptation Committee, the UNFCCC Secretariat and others on the implementation of the work programme. For more information on Adaptation Without Borders, please refer to <https://adaptationwithoutborders.org>.