



Summary of technical workshop on water and climate change adaptation

Mexico City, July 17, 2012

Two events of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) were held in Mexico City in July 2012, hosted by the Mexican Federal Government through the National Water Commission (CONAGUA):

- *A global technical workshop on water and climate change impacts and adaptation strategies, under the Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA), held on July 18-20.*
- *A regional expert meeting to address issues related to a range of approaches to address loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, including impacts related to extreme weather events and slow onset events, under the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI), held on July 23-25.*

In line with these two events, the Mexican government organized [a panel](#) and a [technical workshop and on water and climate change adaptation](#), on **July 17**, in order to raise awareness about the importance of the issue and to provide input for the formal UNFCCC events. The two events brought together around 100 participants from the different agencies of the Mexican Federal Government related with this issue, UNFCCC negotiators, related international experts and the media.

The workshop opened with three presentations of initiatives which aim to tackle this issue from different perspectives. First of all, a presentation by the [Water and Climate Coalition](#) (WCC) showed how the international water community is coming together in order to lobby for the formal recognition within the UNFCCC of the importance of water for climate change, under the slogan “climate change is water change”. The second presentation, from the [Alliance for Global Water Adaptation](#) (AGWA) is an attempt to promote best practices in water-based climate change adaptation through the exchange of experiences between experts. Finally, the [Regional Policy Dialog \(DRP\) on Water and Climate Change Adaptation in the Americas](#) was presented, a multi-stakeholder platform for reflection which serves to establish a united and coherent position between the water, development and climate change communities on the continent.

Following the initial presentations, the debate in the workshop focused on three key questions for water-based climate change adaptation, directly linked to the theme of the UNFCCC’s technical workshop on water and climate change impacts and adaptation strategies:

1. Information for assessing water-related climate change impacts and vulnerabilities;
2. Adaptation planning and practices; and
3. Stakeholder engagement and knowledge sharing.

Although the discussion on these questions was divided into three breakout groups, in the plenary report back, some key issues of consensus came out from these discussions:

- The importance of coordination between different government levels and agencies, civil society, indigenous representatives, the most vulnerable sectors in extreme poverty, the private sector, intergovernmental organizations and academia, to face the challenges imposed by climate change.
- Reinforcing hydro-climate information systems to have relevant information for decision making, but at the same time the importance of accepting that decision making will have to be carried out under conditions of incomplete and not always reliable information.
- Communicating much better to a broader public on the social and economic benefits of adopting a more proactive approach towards water-based adaptation and mitigation.
- Creating a demand for capacity development, with the active participation of stakeholders and the inclusion of climate change in high school and university curricula and in professional training.

Regarding the issue of information for assessing water-related climate change impacts and vulnerabilities, it was underlined that the relevant information is often dispersed between different networks, platforms and systems, and the need is thus manifest for this information to be harmonized and integrated through crosscutting and long-term public policies. Additionally, participants highlighted the need to have enhanced human resources, and investments in operation and maintenance, not just for the installation of observation and monitoring infrastructure, as well as facilitating access to primary data and information analysis.

Regarding the issue of adaptation planning and practices, it was underscored that there are many different adaptation efforts going on with differing degrees of success, and that synergy should be sought and experiences (and other resources) should be shared between these experiences. It was mentioned that we do not currently have, and will surely not have in the future, precise information on the impacts of climate change, and in all disciplines we are in an initial planning phase regarding adaptation measures, which should however not prevent us from acting.

Finally, on the issue of stakeholder engagement and knowledge sharing, it was stated that the starting point should be defining who the stakeholders that should be involved are, which as regards water and climate change is wide-ranging, including the drinking water sector (efficient use of water in supply systems), agriculture, livestock and energy sectors, and vulnerable sectors, among others. The second point is how to involve these stakeholders in exchanges on water issues, and how to ensure that water is also present in exchanges among these other sectors. In this sense, capacity development, stakeholder involvement in monitoring and crosscutting communication were defined as key tools, as well as dialogues between governments, civil society and other stakeholders at different levels.

Throughout the workshop, many useful initiatives were presented, with interesting lessons to be shared. At the close of the session, the CONAGUA invited in particular the stakeholders from the Americas to share their activities through the Inventory of Water and Adaptation Actions in the Americas on www.aguaaaa.org, a continual effort as part of the Regional Policy Dialog (DRP) on Water and Climate Change Adaptation in the Americas which aims to foster the exchange of experiences between different stakeholders throughout the continent.