



Summary of Key Messages – Day 1, 21 October 2010

Over 500 policymakers, scientists, representatives of Asia-Pacific governments and representatives from bilateral and multilateral donors gathered in Bangkok on 21 October 2010 for the first day of the Asia-Pacific Climate Change Adaptation Forum 2010. Knowledge-sharing, capacity development and financing were the key themes of the day, as participants debated the critical issues of how to best approach climate change adaptation and how to integrate adaptation into development.

The Forum was opened by Young-Woo Park, Regional Director and Representative for Asia and the Pacific for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), who reminded the audience that responding to climate change – “the defining issue of our time” – was particularly critical for developing countries and the Asia-Pacific region.



This was followed by a video message from UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner, who emphasized building resilience, the centrality of science to effective adaptation programming, and the power of partnerships. “Adaptation is not the poor cousin of climate change mitigation,” said the Executive Director, who forcefully argued for moving forward together on both adaptation and mitigation. “We have to build the strength to deal with change,” he said.

H.E. Virachai Virameteekul, the Minister of Science and Technology for Thailand called for cooperation of all countries to combat climate change quoting, “If you want to go somewhere fast, you go alone; if you want to go far, then we go together”

H.E. Staffan Tillander, the Swedish Climate Ambassador emphasized on the unique and important role that United Nations has to play in handling complex issue like climate change. He also added, “UN must be strong, efficient and united, working as ‘One UN’ at country level, drawing on its strength and comparative advantage in different areas and supporting public and private institutions at different levels”. In conclusion, he said, “All adaptation programmes should be integrated into national development policies. We need to start by enhancing and strengthening our existing coping capacities not only for climate adaptation but also for climate resilience which is the key to address the impacts of climate change”.

H.E. Faumunia Tiatia Liuga, the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment for Samoa, gave the Forum a “perspective from the Pacific”, reiterating the need for mainstreaming adaptation into national development plans and for technical capacity development. “Meetings such as this are a thing of the past,” he told the Forum. “It’s time to take action.”

Ursula Schaefer-Preuss, Vice President of Knowledge Management and Sustainable Development at the Asian Development Bank (ADB) pointed out that 80 percent of people affected by natural disasters live in the Asia-Pacific region. Without adaptation responses, climate change is expected to seriously impact the region’s growth, development gains and progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), she said.



Integration, Planning and Financing

Following the opening plenary, the Forum broke into three parallel sessions covering ‘vertical integration’ of governance, science and policy; ‘horizontal integration’ of policy planning and implementation across sectors; and financing of adaptation.

The key messages of these sessions included:

(1) Vertical Integration Multi-level Governance, Science and Poverty

- Climate change adaptation can be considered as “development done right”, but there are also specific aspects of adaptation that distinguish it from traditional development approaches.
- In particular, adaptation integrates and depends on science and scientific findings to a degree not seen in traditional development.
- Development is also “learning” from adaptation. A lot of work has been done on disaster risk reduction in recent years, for example, and this is being integrated into development.
- The voices of developing countries, and of the poor within countries, must be heard and taken into account for adaptation to succeed.

(2) Horizontal Integration – Cross-Sectoral Policy Planning and Implementation

- There is still a gap between advocates for climate change adaptation and affected communities, between creators of knowledge and users of knowledge. Both must work together for adaptation to be effective.
- Adaptation cannot wait for “perfect information” or scientific certainty. Policymakers and decision-makers operate under uncertainty all the time, and must do so in this case as well.
- All sectors have a role to play in adaptation. Incentives must be in place to ensure participation from government, private sector and civil society.

(3) Financing Adaptation and Aid Effectiveness

- It is still unclear how funds committed at Copenhagen will be allocated – how much will go to mitigation and how much to adaptation – as well as the funding channels that will be used.

- There are important lessons for climate change adaptation funding, both positive and negative, to be learned from the management of Official Development Assistance (ODA) over the past 60 years.
- The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness contains important guidelines that also can be applied to adaptation funding.
- Participants agreed that funds committed at Copenhagen should be in the form of grants, not loans, and that these funds should be additional to existing ODA.

Science, Vulnerability and Market Mechanisms

Three parallel sessions were held in the afternoon, on the role of science, on vulnerability-based adaptation and on market-based mechanisms to help mitigate adaptation-related risk. Key messages included:

(4) Role of Science in Adaptive Development

- There is much work to be done in communications between scientists and decision-makers, and in translating scientific findings into policies and programs.
- The current incentives are skewed against collaboration between scientists and policymakers and even among scientists from different disciplines; new incentives are needed.
- Uncertainty in climate science should not be an impediment to action; there is a need to learn and act iteratively.

(5) Vulnerability-Based Adaptation

- It is very difficult to compare vulnerability across countries. Attempts to compare whether the Maldives or Bhutan, to take two examples, are “more vulnerable” to climate change are not constructive.
- That said, relative vulnerability must be taken into account when allocating resources – both among countries and in assessing regions and communities within countries.
- There is a justice dimension to climate change impacts that must be taken into account when allocating resources.
- Adaptation incorporates conservation of resources, but conservation alone is not enough.

(6) Market-Based Mechanisms for Adaptation

- The consensus is that the private sector is unlikely to fund adaptation directly
- However, the private sector understands that business as usual is not possible and that they will play a role in adaptation.
- There is a need for innovative risk transfer mechanisms to support adaptation.

Landmark Event for Adaptation

The day wrapped up with the launch of a new web portal for adaptation by the Swedish Environmental Secretariat for Asia (SENSA) and a synthesis of the day’s findings. There was consensus that the forum was one of the largest adaptation events ever held in the region, and that by bringing in many new participants, the event marked a watershed in new approaches to climate change adaptation.



The Asia-Pacific Climate Change Adaptation Forum 2010 was organized by the Regional *Climate Change Adaptation Knowledge Platform for Asia* and the *Asia Pacific Adaptation Network*, with the support of the UN Environment Program, the Swedish Environmental Secretariat for Asia, the Stockholm Environment Institute, the Asian Institute of Technology – UNEP Regional Resource Centre for Asia and the Pacific, the Asian Development Bank, the Ministry of Environment of Japan, and the Institute of Global Environment Strategies.

Saleemul Huq of the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) remarked at the close of the forum's first day: "We are just at the beginning of what is going to be a very long journey. Adaptation policy and practice is at the nursery [school] stage. There are no experts – but we are beginning to ask the right questions."

The Adaptation Forum 2010 Secretariat at,
AIT-UNEP Regional Resource Center for Asia & the Pacific
Outreach Building, P.O. Box 4, Klong Luang
Pathumthani 12120, Thailand
Tel: +66 2 524 5386/5384
Email: info@climateadapt.asia
Web: <http://www.asiapacificadapt.net/adaptationforum2010>

