



Expert Group Meeting: Population Dynamics and Climate Change

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Population Issues in the International Climate Change Negotiations – the Adaptation Context

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The UNFPA and UNFCCC contexts share a common concern for the human impacts of climate change and the changes it will bring to the drivers of sustainable development. UNFPA's prominent role in the enhancement of reproductive health, in the management of population trends and in the promotion of those parts of the Millennium Development Goals that relate to population questions can be invaluable as a contribution to efforts enabling communities to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change. The population data gathered by UNFPA will be an indispensable contribution when governments programme their adaptation actions with a view to ensuring their sustainable development in the long-term.

UNFCCC negotiations are currently at an important crossroads following the presentation of a negotiation text by the Chair of the AWG-LCA at the most recent Bonn negotiations (AWG-LCA 6), and the commencement of intense negotiations in pursuit of an agreement on a future climate change regime. UNFCCC Parties are intent that adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change be aimed at reducing vulnerability and increasing the resilience of ecological, social and economic systems to present and future climatic changes, in order to minimize the threat to life and livelihoods, assets, amenities, ecosystems and sustainable development. Parties are also converging that adaptation action should be prioritized, and possibly sequenced, with a view to placing a focus on the poorest and most vulnerable countries, or groups within countries, that are least capable to address climate change.

There is growing awareness that differences exist not only between Parties but also within them, and that, therefore, adaptation should be further prioritized – the effects of climate change will be felt most acutely by those segments of the population that are already vulnerable owing to factors such as geography, poverty, gender, age, indigenous or minority status and disability. Demographic information will be crucial in enabling governments and international organizations to develop adaptation plans in line with the best available scientific information. Only if such information is available will adaptation action be accurately planned and maladaptation avoided. Population information can also be instrumental in programming those sectors of adaptation action that relate to demographic trends, and to the human and social dimensions of climate change at large. Only if we can better predict how patterns of reproduction, migration and reproductive health will evolve, will we be able to solve what may quickly evolve into a series of the most severe humanitarian catastrophes of the 21st century.

Parties are recognizing that adaptation to climate change deserves the same level of attention as mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions in the climate change negotiations. Now that



scientific certainty has improved on the underlying natural scientific dynamics that cause the problem of climate change, Parties are increasingly moving towards the concrete implementation of adaptation actions, and are putting into place a comprehensive framework for adaptation that will guide and enable adaptation in all countries, particularly the most vulnerable. This adaptation framework will be accompanied by new modalities for the provision of financial and technological support and the necessary guidance to the financial mechanism. The implementation of adaptation actions and of the process of provision of associated financial and technological support also needs to be monitored and reviewed. Regional centers would be strengthened or established if needed, enabling environments will be created, and, crucially, a new knowledge-sharing mechanism will be established under the Convention that brings together the disparate and multidisciplinary strands of adaptation science and good practice.

Improved population information will play a crucial role in this emerging adaptation regime. The population community should share its information and wisdom with the wider adaptation community, making the best possible use of the Nairobi Work Programme on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation, and of its catalytic role. In particular, adaptation practitioners need to be better informed of how demographic trends may be changing in response to the impacts of climate change – how will demographic patterns change under the auspices of a changing environment, particularly if the underlying socio-economic drivers, such as food production, are impacted by climate change? It is these questions that the UNFPA can answer in their contribution to our joint adaptation efforts.