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Social Dimensions of Climate Change

UN system-wide response to climate change

Under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General, the Chief Executives Board (CEB) brings together 29 UN system organizations to jointly support Member States in meeting global challenges.

In 2007, the CEB adopted the Climate Change Actions Framework, a joint action-oriented approach in line with the decisions of the UNFCCC Parties. The UN system supports Member States in implementing their commitments and in responding to the emerging challenges.

At COP 17 / CMP 7, the UN system is presenting its ongoing work and practical solutions and tools at side events, exhibits and by sharing a joint package with thematic information.

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www.unsceb.org/ceb/priorities/climate-change/

Article 1 of the UNFCCC states that the adverse effect of climate change will not only be felt in natural and managed ecosystems, but also have "significant deleterious effects" on the "operation of socio-economic systems or on human health and welfare".

The threats of climate change also constitute an opportunity to leverage positive social transformations with a particular focus on the needs of the most vulnerable within a comprehensive sustainable development framework.

The UN system highlights the key social impacts related to climate change in close collaboration with governments, civil society and the private sector, and in accordance with article 4.f. of the UNFCCC, which calls for assessing social benefits or negative impacts together with environmental and economic considerations, before proposing new adaptation or mitigation initiatives.

At the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 16) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Parties included specific references to the social dimension of climate change such as the need to assure gender equity in all aspects of climate change, assure a just transition of the workforce that creates decent work for all, considering impacts on health; agriculture and food security and socioeconomic activities while developing adaptation programmes and the need for climate-related actions to fully respect human rights.

United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination

Climate Change Action Framework

Focus (left) and Cross-Cutting Areas (right) have been identified in pursuance of the broader mandates and capacities in the UN system (with corresponding convening agencies) to ensure better coordination and cooperation for concrete deliverables:

- Adaptation
- Technology transfer
- Forestry and Agriculture
- Financing mitigation and adaptation action
- Capacity-building

- Climate knowledge; science, assessment, monitoring and early warning
- Supporting global, regional and national action
- Public awareness-raising
- Social Dimensions of Climate Change

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Objectives

The UN system supports Governments and partners to:

- **Advocate a multidimensional approach to climate change policies** to take into account the potential social co-benefits of effectively addressing climate change as well as opportunities to focus on the most vulnerable in order to enhance well-being in society.
- **Identify ways in which the UN system can more effectively support Member States** in developing and implementing climate-related policies and measures to provide better living conditions in their societies as a whole, as recognized by the recent Cancun Agreements.

Activities

The main activities of the UN system focus on:

- Mapping of existing social impact assessment tools to support countries in assessing social impacts and opportunities of policies, programmes and projects;
- Develop a comprehensive and inclusive conceptual framework on the social dimensions of climate change, drawing on the expertise of the UN system in related fields;
- Raising awareness among Member States and other stakeholders of the importance of including the social dimension in climate change responses;

- Ensuring that physical and social structures and essential social service provisions will withstand climate impacts;
- Supporting Member States in making informed decisions on addressing the social dimensions of climate change, by enhancing the social and human science knowledge base.

Benefits

The UN system will contribute to the development of more resilient societies that can cope with the diverse and multi-faceted challenges of climate change by promoting sustainable well-being, including more decent work, better health, adequate housing, basic infrastructure and services, education, respect and protection of human rights, gender equality, protection for children, food and water security, viable agriculture, social protection for all, and safer migration. Ultimately, the UN system's work on the social dimensions of climate change is a crucial component of its contribution to poverty eradication and sustainable development.

Moving Forward

The UN system will continue its joint effort to:

- Set an agenda that recognizes that mitigation and adaptation should be designed primarily to improve living standards for all members of society, irrespective of gender, age or social status;
- Support countries in developing appropriate adaptation and mitigation policies by promoting coherent and holistic climate policies and programmes based on assessment of environmental and social impacts.

