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Can we expect a transformative shift in international capacity building after Paris?

Observations from Party submissions

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Key messages

- ◆ To implement the Paris Agreement, a transformative change in international capacity building is required. Consideration of such a shift needs to be initiated soon (at SB44 in May 2016).
- ◆ Observations from Party submissions after Paris on topics related to capacity building revealed multiple suggestions on enhancing capacity building in developing countries. These included development of additional tools, methodologies and forums for sharing good experiences and lessons learned.
- ◆ However, few Parties clearly identified or envisaged a transformation of international capacity building to meet the massively increased demand associated with all countries, rather than just developed countries, achieving climate pledges. We warn of the possibility that future international capacity building could be a continuation of past approaches and thereby fail to achieve the scale and impact necessary for successful implementation of the Agreement. This has to be avoided.

1. Introduction

To achieve the core objective of the Paris Agreement, nations have pledged to implement their nationally determined contributions (NDCs). By and large, these countries will track implementation by measuring and reporting their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and removals from the atmosphere. However, the existing institutional and human workforce capacities to do so is highly variable across developing countries. Some countries simply lack the adequate capacity to properly implement the Paris Agreement, especially its enhanced transparency framework. Recognizing this challenge, Parties agreed at COP21 in Paris on the urgent need to enhance capacity building. A new Paris Committee on Capacity Building (PCCB) and Capacity-building Initiative for Transparency (CBIT) were created and are expected to become operational in 2017. These new bodies under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Global Environmental Facility (GEF), respectively, along with ambitious language in the Agreement itself, clearly recognize the need for transformative efforts in international capacity building (see, [Coalition on Paris Agreement on Capacity Building 2016](#)).

The operations of the PCCB and CBIT are still to be designed and implemented and will take into account on-going processes under the UNFCCC. They should maximally build upon existing institutions and resources within and external to the formal processes of the UNFCCC (Dagnet et al. 2015). Existing institutions for capacity building under the Convention include, but are not limited to: 1) the Implementation of the Framework for Capacity-building in Developing Countries¹ (UNFCCC 2001); and 2) the Durban Forum on Capacity Building² (UNFCCC 2011). At COP21, Parties were invited to submit their views on the future process of these two institutions³ (UNFCCC 2015). In response to this call, several Parties provided their views by April 2016. This paper surveys these submitted views and considers to what extent and how Parties envisage the transformative change in international capacity building implicitly called for by the global and bottom up nature of the Paris Agreement. Specifically, this paper asks four questions for each Party submitted view:

1. Does the submitted view mention the PCCB or CBIT? The answer to this question informs us how Parties foresee linkages between on-going and new processes.
2. Does the Party envisage any transformative change in international capacity building? Parties established the PCCB and CBIT to help address the massive needs for capacity building under the Paris Agreement.
3. Does the Party indicate it is ready to implement such a transformative change soon? Negotiations on the PCCB and CBIT start from May 2016.

¹ The objective of the framework is to guide capacity building activities related to the implementation of the Convention and effective participation in the Kyoto Protocol (KP) process.

² The forum is an annual, in-session event for sharing ideas, experiences, lessons learned and good practices on implementing capacity-building activities.

³ Decision 14/CP.21, paragraph 4 and 11

4. What kind of a transformative change is envisaged? We need to consider seriously how to make the transformative change happen.

2. Data

Parties' views expressed after Paris on items related to capacity building were surveyed in April 2016, by searching the submission portal of the UNFCCC website⁴. The selected two items were on: the third comprehensive review of the implementation of the framework for capacity building in developing countries; and additional topics to be discussed in the upcoming 5th Durban Forum.

Parties also made submissions on the membership of the PCCB in accordance with the COP21 decision (UNFCCC 2015b). Although these submissions will inform the design of the PCCB, they narrowly focused on the composition of the PCCB, including co-chairs. Therefore, information contained in these submissions was not subjected to the analysis for this paper.

Submissions by the following four Parties on the two items were used:

- Japan
- The Maldives on behalf of AOSIS (hereafter, referred as AOSIS)
- The Netherlands and the European Commission on behalf of the EU and its member states (hereafter, referred as EU)
- United States of America (USA)

Out of the four Parties, three Parties provide capacity building support to other Parties and one is a recipient of support (AOSIS).

3. Results

3.1 Views on the third comprehensive review

- All 4 Parties, in a broad sense, noted the importance of the third review of capacity building in developing countries and its linkage with the future PCCB. In this regard, AOSIS warned the needs for avoiding duplication of work between existing processes and the PCCB.
- EU asked for an assessment of the effectiveness of the UNFCCC capacity building framework.
- AOSIS specifically listed activities that need investment further to enhance capacity-building support, including new tools and methodologies, especially for identifying

⁴ Parties' submitted views are available online at <http://www4.unfccc.int/submissions/SitePages/sessions.aspx>

capacity gaps and needs.

- AOSIS also mentioned the need for engagement by an expert group to help prepare a progress report on capacity building and provide options and recommendations at the country level.
- USA outlined how the capacity gaps in accessing climate finance can be analysed.
- USA also shared its concern regarding the use of too broad indicators about measuring progress, which in the end might not be useful.

3.2 Views on additional topics for the 5th meeting of the Durban Forum

- Japan and the USA considered capacity building for transparency an important topic that needs addressing. In addition, USA and EU mentioned capacity building for the preparation and implementation of NDCs is valuable and should be discussed.
- USA showed interests in capacity building for accessing finance, in particular, in relation to NDCs.
- AOSIS's view was not theme-specific but broad, touching upon the ways in which capacity building activities could be implemented under the Paris Agreement, how to create synergies, and how to make the Durban Forum more beneficial and responsive.
- Japan encouraged the function of the forum as a platform for sharing experiences and knowledge.

4. Discussion

All 4 Parties mentioned the term PCCB in their submissions. Two specifically referred to capacity building for transparency-related activities. Two Parties also mentioned the capacity building for the preparation and implementation of NDCs. The Parties clearly recognized the importance of future efforts on international capacity building. They envisaged that these efforts would be built on and extended from what international processes have practiced previously. This proposal should be supported, but only for those efforts that have been shown to be effective. In reality, and unfortunately, we have little understanding of what capacity building approaches have been effective in a given context and what approaches have been ineffective, especially with respect to their long-term impacts on developing country capacities. As one Party mentioned, we need the assessment of exiting capacity building approaches. And we need this assessment to be conducted urgently.

Based on these submissions, Parties have not communicated a recognition or consideration of the need for a transformative change in international capacity building.

At least, the urgency of such needs did not appear to be part of their central messages. Some Parties mentioned the continuation of on-going processes, such as sharing information and experiences. In general, the type of major scaling and intensification of capacity building implicitly intended in the Paris Agreement does not yet appear to be recognized.

There were, however, a number of useful suggestions in the submissions for advancing international capacity building. Some submissions highlighted the needs for capacity building in a specific manner (Table 1). For example, AOSIS emphasised its needs for additional instruments to identify capacity gaps and understand progress in capacity building. They also raised the importance of involvement of an experts group to further enhance the capacities of AOSIS countries. It is not yet clear how the current international arrangements for capacity building would address these requests.

Another example is the USA's concern about the use of overly broad indicators for tracking capacity building progress. It advocated for indicators that capture effects at the local level. An initial action resulting from this recommendation by the USA would be work to develop and evaluate indicators and tools to track improvement in capacities of developing countries over time. Would the new PCCB or CBIT support this type of research?

To enable transformative change, we need to seriously discuss making new, additional arrangements in the framework of international capacity building. Such arrangements have to be able to drive fast, scaled up, innovative and efficacious international capacity building. If activities to facilitate the implementation of the Paris Agreement are limited to a continuation or extension of past approaches, it is likely this critical window of opportunity before 2020 and start of the Agreement will be missed and political momentum will be lost, undermining the key global nature of the bottom up NDC approach and underpinning transparency framework.

Table 1: Selective list of capacity building needs expressed in Party submissions

Category	Description
Topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of NDCs, including access to finance • Transparency-related activities • Synergies across capacity building activities
Tools and methodologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify the types of human capacities/skills that developing countries require • To report what developing countries will require and/or what has been achieved • To monitor and evaluate capacity building efforts and the support provided by developed countries • To assess capacity gaps in accessing climate finance • To capture what is going on at the local level
Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To present Parties' experiences, best practices and lessons learned
Actor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of an expert group to prepare a progress report and provide options and recommendations to effectively address capacity-building gaps

Annex

Table A1: Summary of Parties' views on the third comprehensive review of the implementation of the framework for capacity building in developing countries

AOSIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The third review can explore how the PCCB complement and not duplicate existing efforts under the UNFCCC process - The review can ensure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ New or improved tools and methodologies to identify the types of human capacities/skills that developing countries require ➤ A suitable format and modality based on which countries can report what they will require and/or what has been achieved ➤ Tools and methodologies for the monitoring and evaluation of capacity-building efforts and of the support provided by developed countries - The review can engage the services of an expert or group of experts to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Prepare a report on the progress in the effectiveness of the implementation of the framework ➤ Provide options and recommendations to effectively address capacity-building gaps
EU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The review and its conclusion and recommendations is the basis for taking capacity building under the Convention to the next level. The result of the review is key input to inform the design and function of the PCCB. - It is important to assess the effectiveness of the framework
Japan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is important to start with taking stock of the past 5 years implementation period - Bearing in mind that the results of the third review should be one of bases for discussion at the PCCB
USA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The review must take into account the Paris Agreement and its related decisions, including the future role of the PCCB - For assessing capacity gaps in accessing climate finance, the review could: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Outline the variables that affect a Party's ability to access the full spectrum of available resources ➤ Present Parties' experiences with identifying, attracting or applying for and managing different types of public and private finance - Common, standard or broad overarching indicators may tell a story globally, but they do not necessarily capture what is going on at the local level.

Table A2: Summary of Parties' views on suggestions on additional topics for the 5th meeting of the Durban Forum

AOSIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How to implement the capacity-building activities that are in the Paris Agreement - How can the Durban Forum on Capacity Building create opportunities for synergies across capacity building activities - Examples of successful capacity-building efforts - How to improve the Durban Forum to make it more beneficial and responsive to the needs of all involved in capacity building
EU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capacity building for the implementation of INDCs
Japan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - May take the issue of capacity-building to enhance transparency - Can provide great opportunities to share experiences and knowledge from activities, such as by the Consultative Group of Experts (CGE) and under multilateral and bilateral initiatives
USA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Best practices and lessons learned from the preparation of intended nationally determined contributions - Capacity-building support for transparency-related activities - Building capacity for accessing finance in support of NDC implementation

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