

# Learning and Policy brief on the Global Goal on Adaptation

## and its implications for subnational governments **UPDATED**

### INTRODUCTION

*This note is to help Regions4 members understand global processes on adaptation and the role Regions4 plays within them to represent the voice of its members on this matter.*

Regions4 is the global voice of regional governments (states, regions and provinces), acting since 2022 before UN negotiations, European Union initiatives and global discussions in the fields of climate change, biodiversity and sustainable development. Regions4 is officially recognized before several entities of the United Nations (UN) system: UNFCCC, CBD, UN DESA, UNEP and UNDP.

Its accreditation to the main global events on climate change, biodiversity and sustainable development enables Regions4 members to participate in international events, to network and to follow-up global negotiations, accessing decision-making processes, political and technical discussions to advance multi-level governance.

### KEY POINTS AND CHALLENGES AHEAD

- Regional governments should be involved and included in shaping the orientations of the Global Goal on Adaptation, calling for it to allow for a common framework of analysis to determine whether adaptation policies are effective, as well as research, methods, best practices that can be applied at both national and decentralized levels of governments.
- Regional governments should be involved in the Glasgow–Sharm-El-Sheikh work program that aims to define the structure of the Global Goal on Adaptation, through a more formal recognition of their important role as key partners in the fight against climate change and adaptation.
- Regional and local contributions to adaptation should complement the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and their reporting should include a section on the climate adaptation commitments, actions and achievements undertaken by subnational governments and other stakeholders.
- The Global Goal on Adaptation needs to provide credible targets and plans for deploying capital to developing countries and direct access of these funds to the regional and local level, through subnational climate funds or allocations.
- For this, climate finance institutions need to reinforce and allow for more transparent and connected and/or dedicated mechanisms that allow for regional governments to directly access international climate finance opportunities at the decentralized level, notably for African regions, and gain capacity or pipeline financing in the preparation and development of bankable projects.

## BACKGROUND ON THE INTERNATIONAL DISCUSSIONS

The Paris Agreement intends to enhance and improve the global climate change responses by strengthening all actors' ability to adapt to climate change's negative effects and promote climate resilience. It sets for the first time the objective of having a Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA). This goal is critical in providing a system for monitoring countries' adaptation efforts.

The goal aims:

- to enhance adaptive capacity and resilience;
- to reduce vulnerability, with a view to contributing to sustainable development;
- and ensuring an adequate adaptation response in the context of the goal of holding average global warming well below 2°C and pursuing efforts to hold it below 1.5°C." (UNFCCC)

The Paris Agreement expects all Parties to participate in adaptation planning and implementation, such as National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), vulnerability assessments, monitoring and evaluation, and economic diversification. All Parties should convey their goals, plans, activities, and support requirements through 'adaptation communications', which should be documented in a public registry. The Global Stocktake (GST) is used to measure countries' performance.

The GGA was created as a common aspirational objective with political rather than legal implications, and as part of the Global Stocktake (GST). While the Paris Agreement establishes clear benchmarks for pushing collective action on

adaptation, parties must still resolve several vexing concerns.

For example, there is no universal metric that can measure adaptability across all different contexts and the GGA must be built upon a clear understanding of what resilience represents for different countries. As a result, parties must consider their local realities.

One important question countries should also consider is "How can local information and perspectives be captured by our national systems?" (Beauchamp, 2021). Countries must also consider cooperation and mechanisms to increase collective capacity for data collection and learning. National data will need to be merged at the global level, and local, national, and international actors will all play a part in data collection, compilation, and analysis. There are also commitments for disseminating such information so that others can learn (Beauchamp, 2021).

Another aspect to consider is: what role should the GGA have in directing funding? Because adaptation must be localized, locally-led adaptation requires sufficient finance and support. Having strong systems in place to direct funds to regional or local initiatives would significantly improve the availability of funds for adaptation, notably through direct access (Beauchamp, 2021).

The structure of the GGA should embody adaptation characteristics: with flexibility and through the promotion of adaptive learning (Beauchamp, 2021).

## WHAT HAPPENED IN THE RECENT INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS AND CLIMATE CONVENTIONS ON THE GGA?

### COP26

During COP26, climate change adaptation received more attention than ever before. At the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow, significant progress was made toward the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA). Parties rapidly agreed that the Adaptation Committee's document was a good starting point, on the priority of the GGA for all countries, and that a specific strategy for its implementation was required.

Thus, to better understand, conceptualize and ultimately achieve this goal, the countries that were signatories to the Paris Agreement created the two-year work program: **Glasgow-Sharm el-Sheikh Work Programme on the Global Goal on Adaptation**.

From COP26 to COP28, the **Glasgow-Sharm el Sheikh Programme** had 8 workshops on dedicated topics concerning shaping a goal for adaptation.

Consult the workshops and inputs [here](#).

### COP27

Countries at the 27th Conference of the Parties on (COP27) at Sharm El-Sheikh decided on the establishment of a **framework for achieving the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA)**.

### COP28

Nevertheless, the outcomes of the 1<sup>st</sup> Global Stocktake underlined critical gaps regarding implementation of adaptation and financing for adaptation, consult [here](#). Decision -/CMA.5 - Paragraph 15 (c) *"...most observed adaptation responses are fragmented, incremental, sector specific and unequally distributed across regions, and that, despite the progress made, significant adaptation gaps still exist across sectors and regions and will*

*continue to grow under current levels of implementation;"*

A new **UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience** was adopted at the COP28 in 2023. It recognizes the role and impacts of climate change at all levels of governments (preamble). *"Adaptation is a global challenge faced by all with local, subnational, national, regional and international dimensions, and that it is a key component of and makes a contribution to the long-term global response to climate change to protect people, livelihoods and ecosystems"*.

It sets out a list of priority actions per theme:

- (a) Significantly reducing climate-induced **water scarcity** and enhancing climate resilience to water-related hazards towards a climate-resilient water supply, climate-resilient sanitation and towards access to safe and affordable potable water for all;
- (b) Attaining **climate-resilient food and agricultural production** and supply and distribution of food, as well as increasing sustainable and regenerative production and equitable access to adequate food and nutrition for all;
- (c) Attaining resilience against climate change **related health impacts**, promoting climate-resilient health services, and significantly reducing climate-related morbidity and mortality, particularly in the most vulnerable communities;
- (d) Reducing climate impacts on **ecosystems and biodiversity**, and accelerating the use of ecosystem-based adaptation and nature-based solutions, including through their management, enhancement, restoration and conservation and the protection of terrestrial, inland water, mountain, marine and coastal ecosystems;

- (e) Increasing the resilience of **infrastructure and human settlements** to climate change impacts to ensure basic and continuous essential services for all, and minimizing climate-related impacts on infrastructure and human settlements;
- (f) Substantially reducing the adverse effects of climate change **on poverty eradication** and livelihoods, in particular by promoting the use of adaptive social protection measures for all;
- (g) Protecting **cultural heritage** from the impacts of climate-related risks by developing adaptive strategies for preserving cultural practices and heritage sites and by designing climate-resilient infrastructure, guided by traditional knowledge, Indigenous Peoples' knowledge and local knowledge systems

It focuses on the following targets:

- (a) **Impact, vulnerability and risk assessment**: by 2030 all Parties have conducted up-to-date assessments of climate hazards, climate change impacts and exposure to risks and vulnerabilities and have used the outcomes of these assessments to inform their formulation of national adaptation plans, policy instruments, and planning processes and/or strategies, and by 2027 all Parties have established multi-hazard early warning systems, climate information services for risk reduction and systematic observation to support improved climate-related data, information and services;
- (b) Planning: by 2030 all Parties have in place country-driven, gender-responsive, **participatory** and fully transparent **national adaptation plans**, policy instruments, and planning processes and/or strategies, covering, as appropriate, ecosystems, sectors, people and vulnerable communities, and have mainstreamed

adaptation in all relevant strategies and plans;

- (c) **Implementation**: by 2030 all Parties have progressed in implementing their national adaptation plans, policies and strategies and, as a result, have reduced the social and economic impacts of the key climate hazards identified in the assessments referred to in paragraph 10(a) above;
- (d) **Monitoring, evaluation and learning**: by 2030 all Parties have designed, established and operationalized a system for monitoring, evaluation and learning for their national adaptation efforts and have built the required institutional capacity to fully implement the system;

It recognizes the importance of locally led adaptation and in paragraph 20: *Recognizes the important role of all stakeholders, including the private sector, multilateral development banks, local governments, United Nations and other organizations, civil society, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and research and academic institutions, in implementing the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience towards achieving the goal;*

Regarding climate finance it calls for, paragraph 31: *urging developed country Parties to at least double their collective provision of climate finance for adaptation to developing country Parties from 2019 levels by 2025, in the context of achieving a balance between mitigation and adaptation in the provision of scaled-up financial resources, recalling Article 9, paragraph 4, of the Paris Agreement;*

It looks at the next steps, by establishing a two-year UAE – Belém work programme, on the development of indicators for measuring progress achieved towards the targets outlined in the framework.

Consult the decision here: [cma5\\_auv\\_8a\\_gga.pdf \(unfccc.int\)](#)



## Race to Resilience – supporting the global goal on adaptation

To help provide the urgent support needed by billions of people already in the throes of climate breakdown, the COP27 Presidency and the UN Climate Change High-Level Champions launched

the **Sharm-El-Sheikh Adaptation Agenda** – a shared agenda to rally global action from non-party stakeholders, including regional governments, around **30 adaptation outcomes** that are needed to achieve a resilient world by 2030.

Consult the agenda here: [SeS Adaptation Agenda Complete Report COP27 \(unfccc.int\)](https://unfccc.int/adaptation-agenda)

## WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR REGIONS4's advocacy work on adaptation?

The GGA should not only be reserved and used by national governments but needs to give a global vision and goal for all actors to work together on adaptation.

Together with the GGA, a commitment was made to double the collective share of adaptation funding within the \$100 billion annual objective for 2021-2025. This finance should be also accessible at the local and regional level, given the crucial role that local and regional play in implementing adaptation actions.

The GGA should not turn into a top-down reporting effort that burdens states with scarce government resources even more. Instead, it should become a tool that assists nations and other levels of decentralized governments in identifying their strengths and shortcomings to effectively adapt to the effects of climate change. It should:

*Acknowledges the role of subnational governments, within the new Global Goal on Adaptation framework, in diagnosing, assessing and developing local and regional adaptation plans and actions in their territories and allowing for financial and technical support to be provided for the implementation of locally-led and contextually-relevant adaptation strategies; (LGMA declaration COP28)*

Regional and local governments are advocating for increased participation in the GGA negotiations, seeking formal acknowledgment of their pivotal

role as essential allies in combating climate change and fostering adaptation efforts. They propose an initial step towards this recognition through the formal integration of subnational and local adaptation contributions into the negotiation framework. This entails including progress updates on regional adaptation plans alongside National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and advocating for comprehensive reporting mechanisms covering both NAPs and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) with a specific focus on adaptation measures. Such reporting would highlight the climate commitments, actions, and achievements of subnational and local governments, drawing from initiatives like the Race to Zero and Race to Resilience campaigns, thereby showcasing the invaluable contributions made at these governance levels.

### How Regions4 will engage to influence the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA):

The Regions4 climate adaptation initiative, RegionsAdapt, has been selected as co-lead of the Local and Municipal Authorities constituency (LGMA) Adaptation Working Group and will be influencing directly the negotiations on this issue, allowing for the representation of regional and local governments, and consulting with its members for inputs.

Regions4 has been involved with the European Committee of the Regions (COR) and participated in the Glasgow- Sharm El-Sheikh work programme workshops and prepared a submission in 2023.

Consult the submission [here and in 2024, to suggest indicators and targets to the Belem work programme, consult here](#). Moreover, Regions4 has engaged in a joint advocacy and communication campaign with Under2 Coalition and COR on this issue for COP28, allowing for the recognition of subnational governments within the GGA.

For COP28, Regions4 also drafted a joint LGMA declaration proposing text and input in the negotiations of the GGA. Consult here: [lgma\\_towardscop28\\_final.pdf \(cities-and-regions.org\)](#)

Regions4, through the Race to Resilience, is also an active partner of the **Sharm-El-Sheikh Adaptation Agenda**, providing inputs and reporting progress notably on the collective outcome to have 100 regional governments by 2030 with actionable adaptation plans.

Through Regions4 and other international networks, regional governments commit to the Race to Resilience campaign to accelerate their work on adaptation and resilience, calling by 2030, to catalyse action by non-state actors that builds the resilience of 4 billion people from groups and communities who are vulnerable to climate risks. These commitments need to be connected and aligned to the renewed NDCs and NAPs.

Local and regional governments stand ready to partner with their national counterparts to ensure further progress on adaptation and leading to a climate-resilient future.

## Regions4 at COP28

- To learn more about Regions4 at COP28 take a look at the [Regions4 Report Contributions and Outcomes at COP28](#).
- Also, check on the **Regions4 President's assessment of COP28 outcomes**, accessible on the [Regions4 COP28 website](#), as well as the **article on key takeaways**, accessible [here](#).
- At the [Regions4 COP28 dedicated website](#), you can equally access all our media outputs and images (Media section).

## References and suggested reading

- BEAUCHAMP, E. (2021) “Five key questions for making the Global Goal on Adaptation work for local people and places”. *iied*, Available at: <https://www.iied.org/five-key-questions-for-making-global-goal-adaptation-work-for-local-people-places> What next for the Global Goal on Adaptation?”
- HUANG, J., WENGER, C. and KAVEH GUIANPOUR, W. (2021) “The Global Goal on Adaptation: Issues for COP26”. Center for Climate and Energy Solutions. Available at: <https://www.c2es.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/the-global-goal-on-adaptation-issues-for-cop26.pdf>
- PRINGLE, P., STRACHAN, E. and THOMAS, A. (2021) “What next for the Global Goal on Adaptation?” *Climate Analytics*. Available at: <https://climateanalytics.org/media/what-next-for-the-global-goal-on-adaptation-2.pdf>
- SINGH, H., HARMELING, S. and RAI, S.C. (2016) “Global Goal on Adaptation: From Concept to Practice”. CARE International, ActionAid, and WWF. Available at: [https://wwfint.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/global\\_goal\\_on\\_adaptation\\_from\\_concept\\_to\\_practice.pdf](https://wwfint.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/global_goal_on_adaptation_from_concept_to_practice.pdf)
- IISD - [The National Adaptation Plan \(NAP\) Process: Frequently Asked Questions - NAP Global Network](#)
- UNFCCC (2021) “Glasgow–Sharm el-Sheikh work programme on the global goal on adaptation”. *United Nations Climate Change*. Available at: <https://unfccc.int/documents/311181>
- UNFCCC (n/d) “New elements and dimensions of adaptation under the Paris Agreement (Article 7)” *United Nations Climate Change*. Available at: <https://unfccc.int/topics/adaptation-and-resilience/the-big-picture/new-elements-and-dimensions-of-adaptation-under-the-paris-agreement-article-7>
- [COP27: Here’s how the Global Goal on Adaptation framework was negotiated at Sharm El-Sheikh \(downtoearth.org.in\)](https://downtoearth.org.in)

## ABOUT THIS LEARNING AND POLICY BRIEF

This brief is part of a series aiming to inform RegionsAdapt members on key results and recommendations based on RegionsAdapt research and Community of Practice session.

**RegionsAdapt** is Regions4 climate initiative gathering more than 70 regional governments. It mobilizes ambition and action on climate adaptation by facilitating access to the latest innovations, tools, and best practices at the regional level.

**RegionsAdapt Community of Practice** offers a space for regional governments to present their expertise and to learn from each other, discuss and engage, on a series of learning sessions on focused topics on adaptation, so as to help them gain capacity and improve their own policies and activities on adaptation.

For more information on the initiative, please visit: <http://www.regions4.org/project/regions-adapt/>

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