

Submission by the Stockholm Environment Institute on behalf of the Adaptation Without Borders global partnership, relating to the call for views from Parties and non-Party stakeholders on the elements for the consideration of outputs component regarding the First Global Stocktake

15 September 2023

Introduction

1. This submission highlights views for consideration by the international climate policy community to address transboundary climate risks under sections C.2, 'Adaptation' and D, 'Enhancing international cooperation for climate action' in the indicative draft structure for the CMA5 decision on the global stocktake.
2. Transboundary climate risks manifest when the impacts of climate change in one place generate adverse effects in another, by cascading across both national borders and administrative boundaries. They also occur when responses to climate change (both mitigation and adaptation actions) have consequences beyond the jurisdictions where they are implemented. In our increasingly globalized world, no country can insulate itself from transboundary climate risks, or aim to be resilient to climate change by advancing adaptation alone and in siloes: global resilience involves more than the sum of national adaptation efforts.
3. Governments and experts alike increasingly recognise transboundary climate risks as a serious concern. As the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) notes in its 2023 Synthesis Report: "The transboundary nature of many climate change risks (e.g., for supply chains, markets and natural resource flows in food, fisheries, energy and water, and potential for conflict) increases the need for climate-informed transboundary management, cooperation, responses and solutions through multi-national or regional governance processes." And yet efforts to adequately assess, plan for, and respond to transboundary climate risks are – at every scale – far from adequate.
4. **This makes the Global Stocktake (GST), and the related global goal on adaptation, the most relevant international mechanism to track global efforts towards adapting to transboundary climate risks, both globally and holistically (across sectors).** It offers an opportunity to take stock of our exposure and vulnerability to such risks (nationally, regionally, globally), and our progress in building resilience to them, especially through the identification of relevant frameworks and methodologies to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of adaptation efforts globally.
5. The synthesis report by the co-facilitators on the technical dialogue of the first GST goes some way towards recognizing their importance. It highlights that "increasing impacts from climate change are being observed, and risks are being compounded and cascading across systems with projections of increased warming", while acknowledging the role that early warning systems could play in better tracking and anticipating transboundary climate risks.
6. However, to a significant extent, reports by countries analyzed for the first GST only consider domestic adaptation action to address direct climate risk. This leaves a significant degree of climate risk un-assessed. As the first GST reaches its conclusion, we are left with an unclear picture of the significance of transboundary climate risks that countries and regions face, both today and under future warming scenarios, and lack the means to evaluate collective efforts in

building resilience to them. If the GST fails to account for such risks more systematically and comprehensively, it is likely to overestimate resilience to climate change and will provide an incomplete and inaccurate assessment of global progress towards the goals of the Paris Agreement.

7. While it has been challenging to fully account for transboundary climate risks in the first GST culminating this year, its outputs could recognize this gap, assess the barriers inhibiting an accurate assessment of our global progress in building resilience to such risks, and propose recommendations to address them. This would lay the foundations to redress the ‘transboundary gap’ in the second GST in five years’ time and serve to enhance international cooperation for climate action in the crucial intervening years.

Views for consideration under section C.2 on Adaptation

8. Climate-related compounding events and cascading impacts are increasingly being experienced. In its Sixth Assessment Report, Working Group II of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2022) finds that “weather and climate extremes are causing economic and societal impacts across national boundaries through supply-chains, markets, and natural resource flows, with increasing transboundary risks projected across the water, energy and food sectors” (p. 19), and that “multiple climate hazards will occur simultaneously, and multiple climatic and non-climatic risks will interact, resulting in compounding overall risk and risks cascading across sectors and regions” (p. 18). It is crucial that section C.2 on Adaptation in the GST decision at CMA5 reflects this latest scientific evidence.
9. The decision should call not only for greater ambition at the national scale, but for reimagined approaches to adaptation at regional and global scales: encouraging the development of joint work programmes to address transboundary climate risks through regional and international organisations as well as new coalitions and alliances. While existing transboundary adaptation projects are helpful examples of what is possible, the potential for cooperation is much broader. Harnessing this potential can help promote systems’ transformations across sectors and scales, while ensuring that adaptation actions build ‘just resilience’ in our warming world.

Views for consideration under section D on Enhanced international cooperation

10. While climate change mitigation has always been recognised as a global challenge requiring international cooperation, adaptation has long been treated as a local or national issue. In light of the transboundary nature of climate risk, it is crucial that section D in the GST decision at CMA5 explicitly recognises the need for enhanced regional and international cooperation on adaptation.
11. In the last two years, many regions have begun to analyse their own exposure to transboundary climate risks and called for international cooperation to address them. These include the 2021 EU Adaptation Strategy, the 2021 ASEAN State of Climate Change Report 2021, and the 2022–2032 African Union Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan. Many individual countries have also examined transboundary climate risks and their implications for adaptation planning. The UK has been particularly proactive, devoting a full chapter of its Third National Adaptation Programme to “international dimensions”.
12. Yet such efforts and best practices cannot be shared and amplified without stronger international cooperation on adaptation, which will be instrumental to addressing the shared climate risks we face both today and under future warming scenarios. Global coordination of adaptation efforts is also pivotal to reduce the risk of transboundary maladaptation (where one country’s efforts to build resilience may inadvertently undermine another’s). It is time to address transboundary climate risks at the highest levels of global climate cooperation, recognising them (in the words of the Least Developed Countries Group) as “a vital aspect of global adaptation efforts”.

