

Key Messages for COP 18

Climate Change: How Can We Adapt?

Water is central to the world's development challenges. Whether it is food security, poverty reduction, economic growth, energy production, human health—water is the nexus. Climate change is the spoiler. No matter how successful mitigation efforts might be, people will experience the impacts of climate change through water. Floods and droughts will be more frequent and severe, rainfall patterns will change, water temperatures will increase and sea levels rise as a consequence of climate change.

The conferences convened by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) provide an opportunity to make water resources management a strategic approach to adapting to climate change.

We urge the Parties to the UNFCCC to commit to:

INTEGRATION

Integrate adaptation strategies with water resources management. Water is an engine of economic development. Its management and allocation needs to be integrated within national development priorities. An integrated approach also provides the framework for benefit-sharing of transboundary waters, which are a driver for regional cooperation.

INFORMATION

Improve the collection of water and climate information. Better information makes for better modelling scenarios which make for better responses. Vulnerable "hotspots" — arid regions, areas reliant on shrinking water resources, small island developing states and low-lying deltas — must be identified so that resources for data collection are prioritised.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Build climate resilience by investing in infrastructure—both "hard" infrastructure such as water storage, new technologies for water recycling and irrigation, and "natural" infrastructure such as wetlands.

INVESTMENT

Prioritise water resources management in allocating adaptation funds. Investing in water is cost-effective: it delivers immediate benefits as well as long-term social, economic and environmental resilience. Today's investments in water should be seen as part of a strategy to build a climate resilient world: mitigating against floods, droughts and other threats, while contributing right now to poverty reduction and sustainable development.

INSTITUTIONS

Strengthen water management institutions that provide water for people, industries, energy, agriculture and ecosystems. From transparent regulatory frameworks to multi-stakeholder dialogues, stronger institutions can cope with present climate variability and be in a better position to cope with future adaptation. As climate change unfolds, innovative institutional solutions will need to be found for closer collaboration with disaster risk reduction efforts.

We need "partnerships for adaptation" that empower communities to identify local coping strategies and enable all stakeholders to participate in water resources management.

COP18 messages on reverse

A Water Secure World

The Global Water Partnership is an intergovernmental organisation of 13 Regional Water Partnerships, 80 Country Water Partnerships and more than 2,500 Partner organisations in 161 countries. The GWP network is committed to building a water secure world.

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These messages are based on the High Level Session on Water Climate and Development convened at COP 17:*

- Water needs to be sufficiently addressed on the UNFCCC agenda since it is part of Article 4.1 (e) of the Climate Change Convention. Climate change is to a large extent water change and the water community is already dealing with the challenges. The existing experience and knowledge needs to be shared. Developing countries and development partners need to work strategically to ensure water resources as a thematic focus in the UNFCCC.
- Water is not a sector, it is a resource. Climate change is making water resources management more complex due to the uncertainty and unpredictability in weather patterns. The complexity and cross-cutting nature of water must be fully acknowledged. Addressing water is not about bringing in sectoral interests, but a way of systematically addressing complexities that currently are addressed under headings such as hazards, floods and droughts.
- Water is about both adaptation and mitigation. It needs to be distinctly pointed out that the success of most mitigation interventions, as determined by the UNFCCC, rest upon the availability and sustainability of water resources.
- Water knowledge expertise needs to inform the adaptation committee to ensure linkages between NWP and the Cancun Agreement, emphasizing importance of water as a key medium for adaptation. Qualified water resource management expertise should be represented amongst the members of the Adaptation Committee.
- The decision by the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA), to organize a technical workshop on water should be strengthened by establishing a thematic focus under the Nairobi Work Programme.
- Establish water as a priority under the Green Climate Fund with a sub-thematic funding window for water resources management.
- The Climate Change funds established at global, regional and national levels should include a thematic funding window for water resources to be utilized for projects related to water management and climate change adaptation and mitigation.



**The messages were developed at the Water, Climate and Development Day at COP 17 in Durban, South Africa, convened by the African Development Bank, the African Minister's Council on Water, the African Union, Global Water Partnership, the Republic of South Africa's Department of Water Affairs, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the Water and Climate Coalition.*

FURTHER INFORMATION

Water Management, Water Security and Climate Change Adaptation – GWP Technical Committee Background Paper No. 14

Other climate change documents can be found at www.gwp.org.

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