



IGES SDGs project, "Aspiration to Action," will examine and suggest essential "means of implementation (MOI)" so that global SDGs can be put into action through active engagement with various stakeholders and partners.



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### Photo Report



## Briefing Note "Integration for Climate Change Adaptation and Sustainable Development"

### Outline

- Integrative approaches to land management, such as ecosystems-based approaches and landscape approaches, together with sustainable infrastructure and the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity, provide multiple benefits. By providing stakeholders with a means to work through competing interests over land and natural resources, while at the same time underscoring the importance of maintaining natural capital, these integrative approaches have considerable potential to contribute to international goals for development, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. Integrative approaches, sustainable infrastructure, and sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity constitute important strategies for Asia Pacific countries to achieve the SDGs.
- Integration is required at various geographical and time scales. While the focus has been on developing adaptation strategies at national level, in an increasingly interconnected world integration of development and adaption planning at transboundary levels to address transboundary climate change risks should be understood as a regional priority.

### Introduction

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a comprehensive and universal call for action for achieving global prosperity and peace. As climate change threatens peace and prosperity, climate action has been included among the SDGs (SDG 13). To ensure that climate actions support other SDGs, and vice versa, that other SDGs support climate action, integrative approaches that provide processes for stakeholders to work through the SDGs in devising plans and actions are needed. The SDGs are understood to be indivisible (UN, 2015a), making integrative approaches indispensable to their realisation. While adaptation planning has focused on the national level, adaptation supported by integrative approaches is also required at transboundary levels.

### Background

Adaptation is embedded in the SDGs. The targets for SDG 13 Climate action include strengthening resilience and adaptive capacity to climatic hazards, integrating climate change measures into national policies and plans, strengthening measures for education and awareness generation of people and institutions on the need to address disaster risks, enhanced financing for both mitigation and adaptation actions, and mechanisms for raising capacities of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS), and other vulnerable groups.

Since the adoption of the SDGs, very limited progress has been made towards developing the means to achieve targets under SDG 13. What progress has been made is mostly in the form of national adaptation planning and identifying priority approaches for achieving these targets. For example, the second United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) (May 2016) identified multi-stakeholder partnerships and science-policy interfaces as important means of achieving the SDGs in general (UNEP, 2016a). UNEA 2 also resolved to strengthen collaboration between UNEP and other UN bodies on work related to adaptation to reinforce synergies and avoid duplication (UNEP, 2016b). Subsequently, the recently concluded UNEA 4 (March 2019) identified sustainable ecosystems restoration, biodiversity, and land degradation as areas for achieving climate change adaptation and mitigation benefits, and achieving resilience to natural disasters (UNEP, 2019).

Several observations can be made from the progress made and the dependence of the SDGs on integrative approaches:

**Environmental actions with climate change adaptation and mitigation synergies are likely to be promoted:**  
The progress towards SDG 13 and decisions by UNEA indicate that the focus for achieving SDG 13 is on national initiatives, and those taken under the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR, 2015) and the



Paris Agreement (UN, 2015b). While SDG 13 provides an anchor point for climate change considerations within the SDGs, the support of UNEA for implementation of climate change adaptation elements under the SDGs framework will focus on those environmental actions that have climate change adaptation and mitigation synergies. This can be seen in the promotion of biodiversity and sustainable infrastructure in the UNEA sessions.

**Progress on adaptation is slow, due to limited institutional and technical capacities, and limited coordination:** Many Asia Pacific countries have initiated work to prepare national adaptation plans (NAPs) as a coordinated response to climate threats at the national level. Among the region's developing countries, only Sri Lanka and Fiji have submitted a NAP, while others are in the process of finalising them (UNFCCC, 2019). Progress with NAPs has been slow because of the limited technical and institutional capacities of developing countries, and lack of the institutional coordination necessary to formulate them (UNFCCC, 2018).

Funding for climate actions by countries is being made available through national budgets, the Adaptation Fund under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, multilateral banks, bilateral finance, and private sector sources. A part of this support is provided for by adaptation planning under the UNFCCC, through the Green Climate Fund readiness and preparatory programme. Multilateral development banks contributed the single largest source of climate adaptation finance, standing at 21% of its total funding in 2017 (7.4 billion USD) (EBRD, 2018). The currently available adaptation finance is insufficient, highly fragmented, and cumbersome for countries to access. In addition, there is limited capacity among countries to access the available finances due to complex procedures and the technical nature of proposal development (ibid).

**Integrative approaches for sustainable development and adaptation:** Integrative approaches can potentially deliver multiple benefits and avoid unnecessary trade-offs that arise when a single goal or narrow set of goals is adopted. Integrative approaches to land management are especially important to the achievement of the SDGs in the Asia-Pacific region, where millions of hectares of land are now degraded and over-exploited. Integrative approaches to land management include the ecosystem approach (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2004) and landscape approach (Scheyvens et al., 2017). Both these approaches highlight the importance of having processes for stakeholders with different interests in the land to agree on a framework and objectives for land management. For the SDGs, this means a process is in place for reconciling potentially conflicting targets associated with, for example, economic growth and biodiversity conservation. Under these approaches, biodiversity conservation and resilient infrastructure can both be promoted, providing climate change mitigation, adaptation, developmental and disaster risk reduction benefits.

Ecosystem-based approaches can also be applied specifically to adaptation and disaster risk reduction (Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, CBD, 2018), with potential to contribute to multiple SDGs. Some countries may already have the preconditions in place to employ these approaches in their agriculture, infrastructure and forestry sectors.

Integration is also required at larger scales to address teleconnections including human movement across borders, transboundary natural ecosystems, trade and financial investments. Because of growing regional and global economic integration, countries will be greatly affected by the impacts of climatic events far from their territorial borders (Prabhakar et al., 2018). Development and adaptation actions in one country may positively or negatively impact the adaptive capacity of others. For example, a transboundary benefit would occur when a food exporting country adopts an adaptation action to maintain land productivity, benefiting countries that import its food. Conversely, a transboundary cost would likely occur when to adapt one country increases extraction of water from a river that flows through other countries. Lack of recognition of transboundary climate change risks associated with teleconnections will result in a net increase in global vulnerability to climate change.

## Conclusions


**Integrative approaches critical to the SDGs:** The ecosystem approach and landscape approaches direct the attention of stakeholders towards maintaining natural capital while also providing processes to mediate competing interests in land. Without such processes, land use is likely to contribute to SDG targets associated with economic growth, at least as long as the land remains productive, at the expense of other SDGs. Ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation and disaster risk reduction can also contribute to many of the SDGs. For these reasons, initiatives under the SDGs framework and UNEA can be expected to continue promoting integrative approaches, such as those focused on ecosystems and landscapes.

**Important to recognise and act on transboundary climate change risks to sustainable development:** While the current discourse under UNEA, UNFCCC and various regional and national mechanisms recognise the

importance of integrative approaches in general, more attention needs to be directed at integrating plans and actions to address transboundary climate change risks. Some progress towards coordinated plans and actions can be seen in various initiatives to manage transboundary water resources. These examples may provide ideas for addressing transboundary climate change risks in areas such as human mobility, trade and investments.

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