The UK COP26 Presidency Glasgow Imperative: Closing the Adaptation Gap and Responding to Climate Impacts

Human activity is changing the global climate. The impacts associated with this temperature change are severe and growing. Around the world, people are experiencing heat waves, wildfires, rising sea levels, fiercer and more frequent storms, unpredictable rainfall bringing floods and droughts, acidification of our oceans and desertification of our land.

This year alone, drought in southern Madagascar, flash flooding in Germany and China, and wildfires in Greece and the US are among events that are far more likely to have occurred due to our changing climate, with wide-ranging impacts on food harvests, livelihoods and tragically, life. While no-one is immune, it is the poorest countries who are at the frontline of climate impacts, and the most vulnerable, including young people, women and girls, people with disabilities and indigenous peoples who are hardest hit.

Global temperatures are currently at least 1.1 degrees Celsius warmer than pre-industrial levels. The Paris Agreement sets out a global framework to avoid dangerous climate change by limiting global warming to well below 2°C and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. However many climate impacts are already locked in. These impacts will disproportionately affect those who are most vulnerable. Some will be able to adapt but many will not.

The scale of the challenge and the imperative for change is significant. It will require all at COP26 and on the pathway to COP27 and beyond to advocate for a fundamental transformation of economic activity, and to address the inequalities and injustices that exacerbate climate vulnerability for many populations. We are aiming for significant change that will ultimately contribute to sustainable development and a climate resilient future for all, with no one left behind: the science is abundantly clear. Action cannot wait1.

There is a critical need for a step-change on adaptation action on the ground.

Under our Incoming Presidency we have, through an unprecedented series of events, consultations and workshops, listened to and heard the core priorities to advance action at COP26 and through to the African Presidency at COP27 and beyond.

Within negotiations, to deliver action where needs are most acute, we are committed to delivering on the mandated adaptation items and to make progress on the Global Goal on Adaptation, which was established under the Paris Agreement in recognition of the urgent need to build resilience to the impacts of climate change. Through our Presidency-led workshops2 and consultations, governments have made clear there is a need for more work to understand how we can implement and review progress on the Goal, and many have suggested steps such as a work programme to take this forward and maintain momentum.

COP26 will also be an opportunity to set out more detail on the response to the call made at COP25 for more action and support on loss and damage, recognising that many countries will experience loss and damage from extreme weather and slow onset events. Parties agreed to work together to avert, minimise and address loss and damage. The UK and Chilean Presidencies have undertaken consultations and collected views on how best to develop the Santiago Network and how to respond to the call at COP25. Based on these consultations, the Presidencies prepared a discussion paper3 to support the discussions at COP26. Dedicated sessions on Loss and Damage were also organised at Ministerial level, in July and at Pre-COP, and technical workshops with a broad range of stakeholders were organised in July and in October. We were pleased with the participation of a wide range of stakeholders.

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1 UNEP’s 2021 Adaptation Gap report will be published at COP26 setting out adaptation needs
Glasgow as a moment to build a movement

Building on initiatives launched, and responding to core issues raised under our Incoming Presidency, we are driving change through five pillars: i) Building resilience across all of society; ii) Effective Risk Management; iii) Transforming Finance; iv) Catalysing Locally Led Action; and v) Harnessing the power of nature. Through the initiatives that we have championed and continue to support, as well as partners’ efforts to empower local actors to lead change, we can collectively shift from a series of moments on adaptation, loss & damage to a movement focused on action to tackle the root causes of vulnerability on the pathway to COP27.

1. Building resilience across all of society

Governments are publishing National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and sharing learning through Adaptation Communications (AdComms) to ensure that long-term strategy accounts for both locked in and future climate impacts. Since the start of our incoming Presidency, Parties have come forward with 22 Adaptation Communications, covering 48 countries and 9 National Adaptation Plans representing more than a billion more people covered by adaptation plans or communications, with more plans expected to be published by COP26. Many have also included adaptation in their Nationally Determined Contributions. Work is underway to translate these adaptation plans into investment plans and to integrate adaptation into national development and growth plans. Governments are ensuring adaptation support is provided at the core of policy and services for the whole of society, engaging households, communities and enterprises in what adaptation will be most effective for them. Governments are also building dynamic partnerships such as the Adaptation Action Coalition, which demonstrates collective agreement and global ambition in critical sectors for adaptation, such as water, health and infrastructure, and a drive towards more effective, locally-led action which empowers the poorest and most vulnerable. Action is being also driven through businesses, cities, regions and civil society actors. The Race to Resilience is mobilising non-state actors to strengthen urban, rural and coastal resilience of 4 billion people by 2030. To date, over 2000 businesses, cities, regions and civil society organisations have joined the campaign.

2. Effective risk management

We want to see enhanced understanding of climate risk drivers, improved planning and new collaboration to close the gap between early warning and anticipatory action. This includes improved and more effective risk management to protect vulnerable places through precise early warnings, deployment of resources for aftermath of disasters, and deployment of resources to make them more resilient in the first place. We recognise that identifying and addressing the fundamental drivers of climate vulnerability is essential for risk management and a basis for all adaptation. Those on the frontline of climate change – particularly for women, girls and other excluded groups - need effective responses to climate emergencies that build sustainability and the capacity to adapt to, or anticipate, future impacts. The UK Presidency urges donors, international agencies and the climate funds to improve early action, enhancing early warning-warning systems, and to take action to help streamline processes to bridge disaster, humanitarian, adaptation and development actions.

3. Transforming Adaptation Finance

Finance needs to be made more accessible and climate finance providers need to increase the quantum, quality and improve the allocation of adaptation financing. Through our consultations we have heard from countries and communities that are vulnerable to climate change about the urgent need for access to public and private sector finance to adapt. Greater action on adaptation needs sufficient finance to underpin it and more innovative forms of adaptation financing are required to leverage further private sector mobilisation. We urge climate finance providers to join the Champions Group on Adaptation

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3 EU have submitted an Adaptation Communication on behalf of all Member States
Finance launched at UNGA this year, with a commitment to balance between adaptation and mitigation finance, and ask climate finance providers to help improve access to financial flows, including by supporting the work of the Taskforce on Access to Finance.

4. Catalysing Locally-Led Action

We know that there is a gap between global policy and funding to the local level, where climate impacts are felt. Those most directly impacted often have critical contributions on how to respond and prepare for climate impacts. These solutions and insights can help to inform knowledge and approaches at national and regional scales. Furthermore, giving a platform to the poorest and most vulnerable is critical if we are to progress from rhetoric to reality on adaptation, with locally-led action a more inclusive, equitable and effective form of adaptation. It is here that we see the greatest opportunity to address the fundamental drivers of climate vulnerability. The Principles for Locally-Led Adaptation, provide a framework for how adaptation can be delivered more effectively. Through our Presidency we are encouraging governments to endorse the Principles, and work towards implementation.

5. Harnessing the power of nature

Nature-based solutions, and protecting and restoring nature, are vital for increasing ecosystems’ and communities’ resilience and adapting to long-term climate trends and impacts. Healthy and resilient ecosystems reduce communities’ vulnerability by offering protection against climate disasters and safeguard global food security by ensuring that our land and food management systems can adapt to climate impacts. We need to develop more coherent responses to climate, nature and poverty and coherent financing for these solutions. Many countries are already including nature restoration and protection in their NDCs, NAPs and National Development Plans – we would encourage more to do this, and to have climate in their biodiversity plans. We encourage countries and organisations to endorse the Glasgow Leaders Declaration on Forests and Land Use, and the Global Action Agenda for the Transition To Sustainable Food & Agriculture due to be launched at COP26.
Annex - Examples of Action to date

At the United Nations Climate Action Summit in September 2019, the UK with Egypt, Bangladesh, the Netherlands, Malawi, St Lucia and the United Nations Development Programme published a Call for Action to raise ambition on climate adaptation. The Call for Action included scaling-up disaster risk reduction efforts, improving adaptation planning and increasing adaptation finance. To date this has been signed by 130 countries and over 80 organisations.

The launch of the Adaptation Action Coalition and the UN High-level Champions Race to Resilience at the Dutch Climate Adaptation Summit in January are supporting to deliver on this ambition, by mobilising countries, businesses, cities and civil society organisations to scale-up and accelerate adaptation action. As of October 2021, 38 countries have joined the Adaptation Action Coalition, supporting efforts to advance locally-led adaptation, and transform action in critical adaptation sectors, including water, health and infrastructure - working with key initiatives. Through the Race to Resilience, the non-state actor counterpart, over 2000 businesses, cities, regions, NGOs or organisations have joined initiatives, with the aim to build the resilience of 4 billion frontline communities to the impacts of climate change by 2030.

The need to adapt and step-up action on loss and damage, resulting from extreme weather and slow onset events has never been greater. Through our Incoming COP Presidency and in partnership with the COP25 Presidency, we have held a number of consultations, workshops and bilaterals with Parties on adaptation and loss and damage. And in March we convened members of the Alliance of Small Island States and Least Developed Country Group for a Climate and Development Ministerial to hear their priorities and concerns. Through the appointment of Secretary of State Anne-Marie Trevelyan as the UK’s International Champion on Adaptation and Resilience for COP26, and her international engagement, with countries and civil society organisations, we have heard about the immediate impacts that climate change is having on people’s homes and livelihoods and seen first-hand the urgent need for support to be made available for adaptation and to avert, minimise and address loss and damage.

Progress is happening across each of the five pillars for change. However, more needs to be done. The scale of the challenge to build resilience so people and nature thrive, not just survive, is tremendous.

Scaling up adaptation finance and improved access

- At the G7, partners committed to increase adaptation finance. Canada announced a doubling of their climate finance to CAN$5.3bn over the period to 2025, and Japan committed JPY6.5tn over this period, with Germany committing to deliver EUR6bn in climate finance per year by 2025. The US commitment at UNGA to double the trebling of adaptation finance announced in April, improves their adaptation finance commitment to $3bn and Japan and Canada have specifically committed to increase the proportion of their finance going to adaptation. We welcome other recent contributions from Denmark and Sweden and are urging donors to communicate new pledges for adaptation finance to 2025, as part of the Germany-Canada led $100bn/yr delivery plan, encouraging providers to evidence how the level and proportion of adaptation finance will increase in the coming years.

- At UNGA, climate finance providers, the UK, Denmark, Netherlands, Ireland, Sweden, Finland, launched the Champions Group on Adaptation finance aiming to increase the total level of adaptation finance, particularly for LDCs and SIDS, including by delivering a balanced approach through their own public finance and encouraging others to do the same. Since the launch, Germany has joined and we urge others to step up their adaptation finance contributions and join.

- Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) are also committed to scale-up adaptation financing. The African Development Bank (AfDB) has committed to increase its climate finance to $25 billion
between 2020 and 2025, with the AfDB joining the World Bank in allocating 50% or more of funding to adaptation. We welcome other increases in adaptation finance made by MDBs.

- On top of increased public finance, increasing the scale and reach of private sector finance is important for driving greater action on adaptation. At the Finance in Common Summit last year, the DFI+ Collaborative for Accelerating Private investment in adaptation and resilience was launched, to help overcome market barriers to creating an investment pipeline for private sector flows to adaptation, particularly in Africa. Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) and MDBs are encouraged to join this collaborative and the incoming Presidency is pressing for greater private investment directly into adaptation action.

- The Coalition for Climate Resilient Infrastructure Investment (CCRI), a private sector-led initiative, encourages businesses and countries to apply climate risk pricing tools to make sure that resilience is at the core of decision making, attracting more private sector investment and supporting vulnerable communities. 120 institutions have now joined the coalition, holding over $20 trillion in assets.

- In addition to increasing the quantum of adaptation finance, the processes for accessing climate finance are often slow, complex and resource intensive. We have heard countries, including at the Climate and Development Ministerial, call for more long term coordinated finance which can be based around existing national systems. This should drive a more integrated approach to climate and development. The Taskforce on Access to Climate Finance was established following the Climate and Development Ministerial in response to calls from country partners. The Taskforce will seek to deliver a practical new approach to climate finance to align behind national climate plans of climate vulnerable countries, supporting local delivery; improve coordination between sources of public finance; and support a shift to longer-term country-led programming. A set of Principles under the Taskforce on Access to climate finance will be developed and published to underpin and guide the new approach before COP26.

**Effective risk management to prepare for and respond to climate impacts across all sectors**

- Enhanced and more effective climate and disaster risk integration and management is required across all sectors of society. The importance of early action, disaster risk finance and insurance was emphasised in the Carbis Bay G7 communiqué. During the Leaders Summit, both the UK and Germany made significant contributions to regional risk pools, of £120 million and €125 million respectively. Additionally, the US committed to join the Risk-informed Early Action Partnership (REAP) and InsuResilience, which promotes innovative climate risk insurance to improve the resilience of vulnerable households.

- REAP is hosted in the Red Cross Climate Centre and has a goal to make a billion people safer from disasters by 2025. The UK has made a £175 million commitment against its objectives, and we are working with the donor community to push for £500 million in commitments by 2025. Under target 1 of REAP, work is in progress to support countries to integrate disaster risk planning into their national policies and strategies.

- We are also working with partners to encourage a wide range of contributions to the debate on effective response to climate impacts, including through the OECD report on losses and damages which we expect to be published shortly before COP26. As a contribution to debate, the UK also plans to publish a short discussion paper sharing experience from practical efforts relevant to action on loss and damage.

- Additionally, we need to improve decision-making and planning under uncertainty. This requires engagement with the science community to generate and provide relevant information. We are working with partners to co-develop an international Adaptation Research Alliance (ARA) for launch at COP26 with an initial aim of recruiting 100 members. This global collaborative effort will
seek to catalyse increased investment and capacity for action-orientated research that supports effective adaptation to climate change – primarily in developing countries – at the scale and urgency demanded by the science.

- ARA will seek to support research programmes such as the Science for Humanitarian Emergencies & Resilience (SHEAR) and the Future Climate for Africa (FCFA) programmes. SHEAR is supporting improved disaster resilience and humanitarian response by advancing the monitoring, assessment and prediction of natural hazards and risks across Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. This aims to catalyse earlier and more effective action to respond to imminent natural hazards and enable greater and more effective investment in disaster resilience and preparedness. The FCFA programme aims to enhance the scientific understanding and prediction of climate variability and change in Africa, and is working with stakeholders to bring this information into use in adaptation planning. FCFA includes 11 pilot studies across sub-Saharan Africa that are using climate information to inform decisions, including infrastructure development, climate-smart agriculture, and urban and national planning.

**Building resilience across all of society**

- The Incoming Presidency has been encouraging countries to publish National Adaptation Plans and, for those that have already done so, to work towards implementing them. These plans are a helpful tool to support countries to better integrate adaptation into their national and sub-national decision making and strategies, and will further contribute to the global picture on progress toward a more resilient world.

- We also are requesting that countries produce Adaptation Communications to inform the Global Stocktake of progress on adaptation. In partnership with the NAP-Global Network (NAP-GN) and Wilton Park, the incoming Presidency is holding regional dialogues to improve capabilities and promote South to South knowledge exchange in the development of Adaptation Communications. Further, NAP-GN is assisting 14 countries to develop an Adaptation Communication and 8 to finalise National Adaptation Plans in the run-up to COP26. With additional donor support to NAP-GN and other support mechanisms, including NDC Partnership, GCF, and the LDC led Initiative for Effective Adaptation and Resilience (LIFE-AR), much more could be achieved.

- The Adaptation Action Coalition, established by the UK in partnership with Egypt, Bangladesh, Malawi, the Netherlands, Saint Lucia and the United Nations, will bring together States with the aim of accelerating global action on adaptation, including through delivery of sector-specific action oriented workstreams, to drive innovation and build climate resilience, starting with the water, health, and infrastructure sectors. By October 2021, 38 countries have joined the Coalition.

**Catalysing Locally Led Action**

- To shift how adaptation interventions are developed and implemented in a way that is equitable and informed by local priorities, knowledge and expertise, the Incoming-Presidency is committed to advancing locally-led adaptation. Under the UK G7 Presidency, the Foreign and Development Ministers welcomed the Principles for Locally Led Adaptation. The Adaptation Action Coalition and the High-Level Champions’ Race to Resilience campaign with partners have additionally held a series of regional dialogues ahead of COP26 with State and non-State actors respectively on the Principles for Locally Led Adaptation and developing domestic capabilities to implement them. This process complements the LDC led Initiative for Effective Adaptation and Resilience (LIFE-AR), by seeking to improve finance to the local level. The World Bank and Asian...
Development Bank will also be launching programmes to further locally-led action. At COP26 there are a series of events that will focus on support for finance to enhance local-led planning and delivery.

Harness the power of nature

● At the start of COP26, the Presidency will convene World Leaders in an ‘Action on Forests and Land Use’ event which will bring together a coalition of countries drawn from all over the world, including tropical and temperate forests, to commit to halting and reversing forest loss and land degradation in the next decade.

● The incoming Presidency has established the Forest, Agriculture and Commodity Trade (FACT) Dialogue, which the UK co-chairs with Indonesia, to discuss and agree an inclusive vision and effective action for a sustainable forests and land economy that will be essential for helping producers and consumers of agricultural commodities to adapt to a changing climate.

● The incoming Presidency is working with other donor countries to raise our contributions to climate finance that delivers positive co-benefits to nature and adaptation, as well as continuing to scale up political ambition to ensure that nature and nature-based solutions are seen as critical tools in combating climate change through both mitigation and adaptation.

● We are also building on the momentum of the Just Rural Transition (JRT) initiative and Vision Statement that was launched at the UN Climate Action Summit in 2019 through UK leadership on Adaptation, endorsed by over 60 governments, stakeholder associations, private sector and financial entities. A coalition of willing countries are now engaging in a ministerial policy dialogue on support to the agriculture sector which is finding shared ways forward to more nature-friendly, resilient food production, building on the UN Food Systems Summit in September 2021.