



BRIEFING NOTE

Introduction to Adaptation in the Global Stocktake

Assessing collective progress on adaptation at the international level

Introduction

In 2015, the Paris Agreement set an ambitious goal for the world to urgently respond to climate change and its increasingly devastating impacts. Countries agreed to a “ratchet mechanism” to increase their mitigation and adaptation ambitions every 5 years. It creates an iterative cycle of planning, implementation, and review at both the national and international levels (Dagnet et al., 2018). **The Global Stocktake (GST)** is an integral part of the Paris Agreement “ratchet mechanism” that assesses the collective progress countries have made to implement the Paris Agreement and achieve the long-term goals of limiting anthropogenic global warming and adapting to its impacts. It serves an important role in helping the parties¹ to the Paris Agreement understand where we are in terms of climate action, where we want to go, and how we get there. It will be a valuable opportunity for policy-makers and practitioners to take stock of the Paris

¹ This brief uses “parties” and “countries” interchangeably. However, “parties” is only used in the context of describing United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) processes and legal obligations under the Paris Agreement, whereas “countries” is used more liberally.

Agreement's implementation, with the ultimate aim of informing the parties' updates to their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) every 5 years.

The process intends to provide key political messages, recommendations, best practices, new opportunities, and lessons learned for all countries to learn from, reflect on, and act upon.

While the first GST (GST-1) is underway, there are still many uncertainties due to the “learning-by-doing” approach that is used in the way the GST is conducted. In addition, the complex nature of this review and assessment mechanism poses challenges for the meaningful engagement and participation of parties and other stakeholders within the process. This brief aims to provide policy-makers and practitioners from Small Island Developing States and the least-developed countries who work on adaptation planning processes with an introduction to the GST process. It seeks to demystify the global progress assessment and ambition-raising mechanism, with a focus on its adaptation component. It also briefly discusses how to leverage monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) for national adaptation and countries' National Adaptation Plan (NAP) and Adaptation Communication (AdCom) processes to inform the GST.

What Is the GST?

The GST is an iterative, comprehensive, and facilitative process established under Article 14 of the Paris Agreement to “periodically take stock of the implementation of [the Paris] Agreement to assess the collective progress towards achieving the purpose of [the Paris] Agreement and its long-term goals” (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change [UNFCCC], 2015, art. 14.1). Parties to the Paris Agreement will engage in this process every 5 years, with the first one starting in 2021 and concluding in 2023. The GST process was envisioned to help the world

- Understand how far they have collectively come in achieving the Paris Agreement's long-term goals.
- Realize what is still required collectively to reach them.
- Be informed about what possible options are available for enhancing their actions both nationally and internationally, and thereby hopefully be motivated to do more.

The GST process will collect information on progress made in **mitigation, adaptation, finance flows and means of implementation, and cross-cutting issues (e.g., equity and loss and damage)**. At the same time, this process enables parties to evaluate gaps in implementation and gather lessons learned and best practices. Collectively, these insights will guide parties to update and enhance their NDCs every 5 years.

The process is different from the Enhanced Transparency Framework and other evaluation processes (e.g., Multilateral Assessments or Facilitative Sharing of Views) under the UNFCCC. The GST is designed to be collective—meaning it will not focus on assessing individual countries but rather the global progress as a whole. The process intends to provide key political messages, recommendations, best practices, new opportunities, and lessons learned for all countries to learn from, reflect on, and act upon.

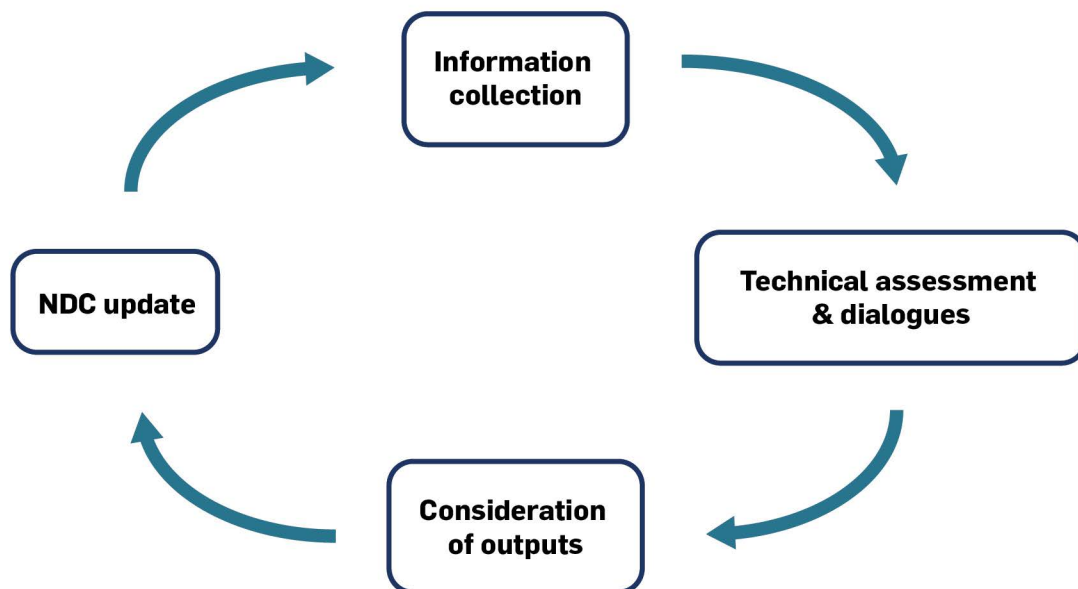
What Does the GST Process Look Like?

The GST process is designed to be an iterative cycle of information collection, assessment, consideration, and NDC update. Decision 19/CMA.1 and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) Co-Chairs' Non-Paper on the GST outlines the three components of the GST cycle (UNFCCC, 2021b):

1. **Information Collection and Preparation** (ICP) focuses on gathering, compiling, and synthesizing information for the Technical Assessments.
2. **Technical Assessment** (TA) includes the Technical Dialogues (TD) that allow negotiators and experts to assess the synthesized information and determine the progress in achieving the Paris Agreement goals.
3. **Consideration of Outputs** (CO) focuses on discussing the implications of the findings and informing parties in updating and enhancing their NDCs through a series of high-level events.

The GST process is envisioned to start roughly 3 years, or nine UNFCCC negotiating sessions, before the parties are asked to update their NDCs.

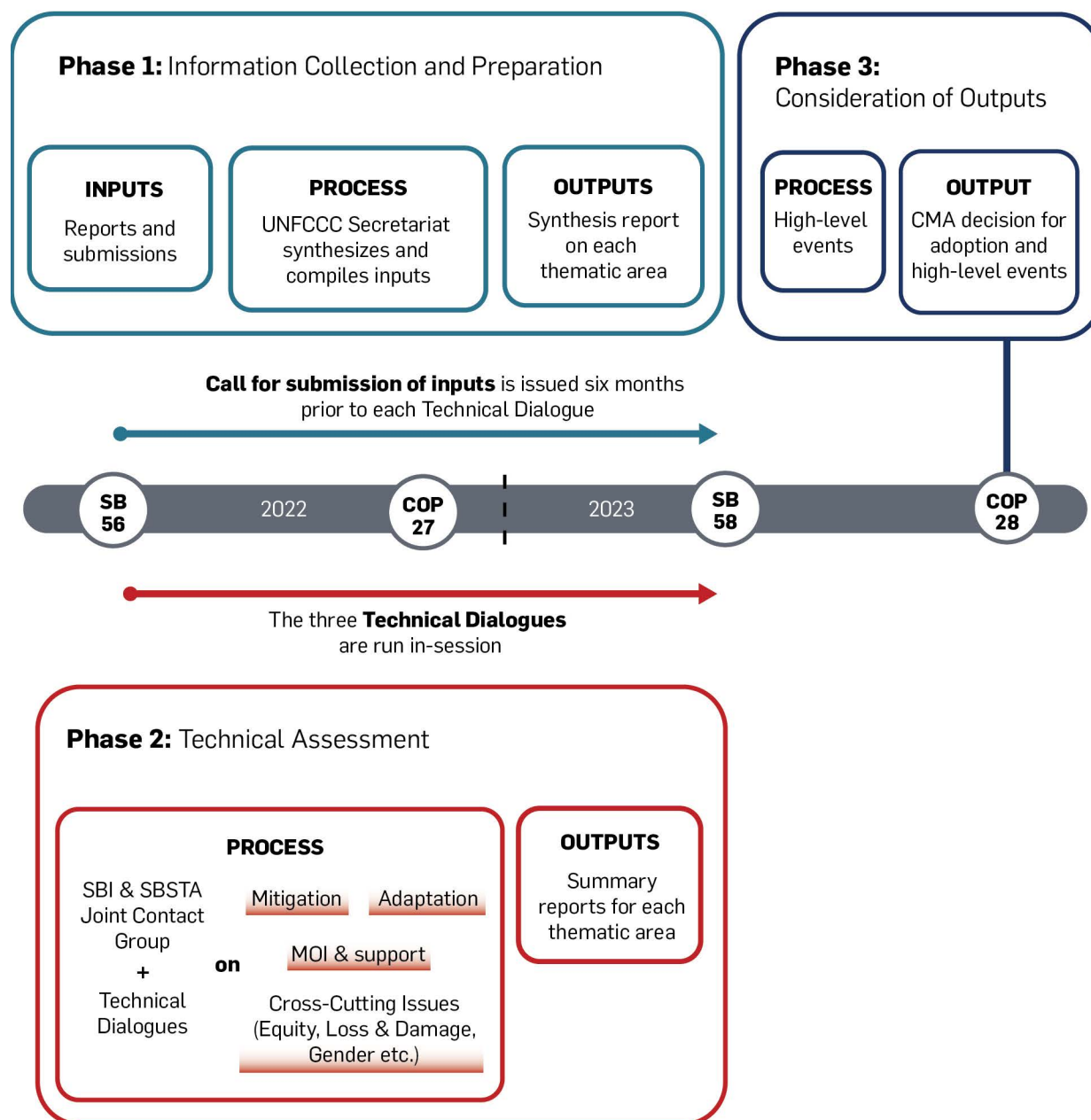
Figure 1. The GST cycle



The GST process is envisioned to start roughly 3 years, or nine UNFCCC negotiating sessions, before the parties are asked to update their NDCs (i.e., GST-1's ICP started in late 2021 for the 2025 NDC update). The entire GST process will run for four sessions, including two Subsidiary Bodies (SB) meetings and two Conferences of the Parties (COPs) meetings. In the case of

GST-1, its ICP started at COP 26 (2021) and will run continuously until SB 58 (2023); its TA will take place at SB 56 (2022), COP 27 (2022), and SB 58 (2023); and its CO forum will take place at COP 28 (2023).

Figure 2. GST process timeline (adapted from Dagnet et al., 2020)



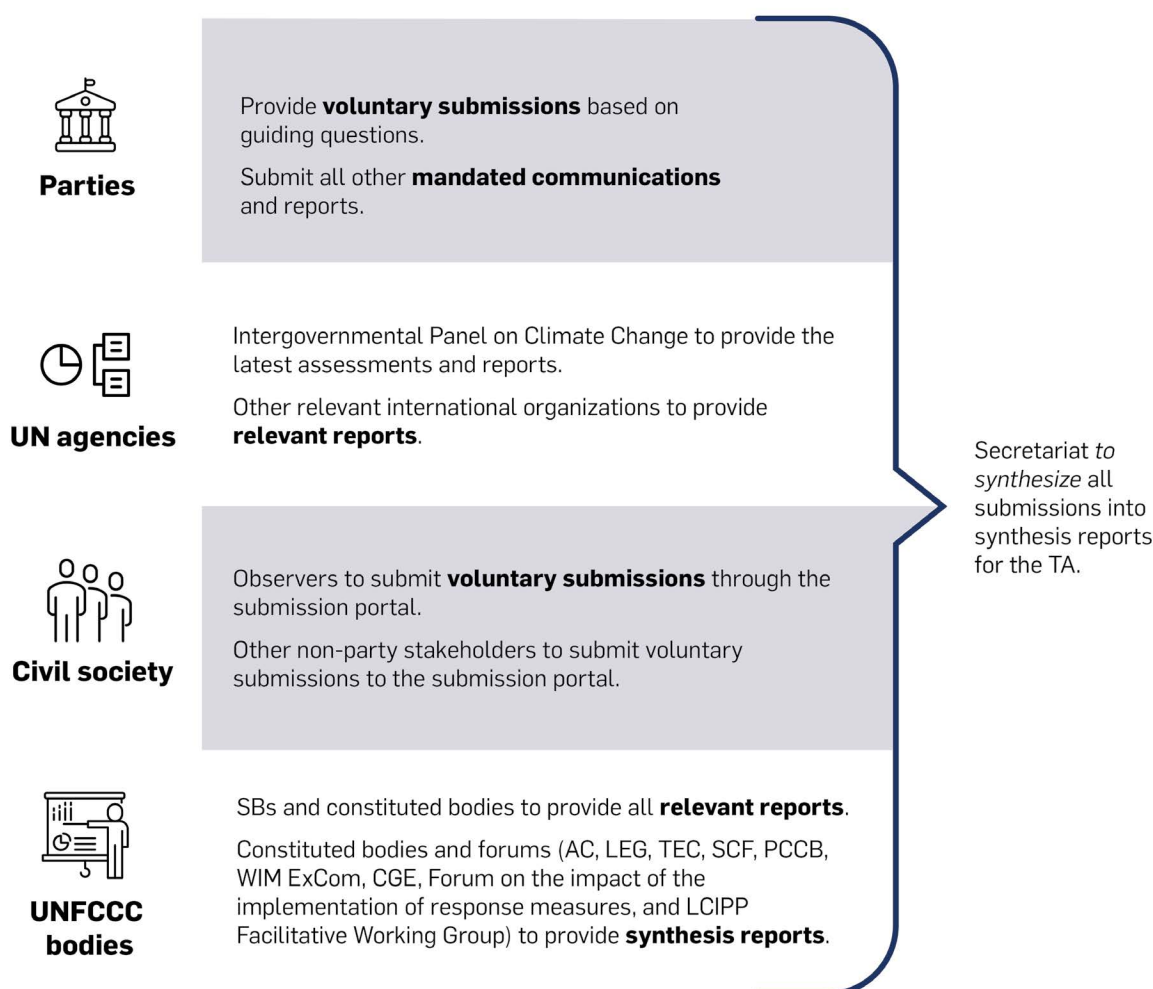
Source: World Resources Institute, 2020

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Step-by-step explanation of how the GST is conducted:

1. One session prior to when the TD begins, the Secretariat will put out a general **call for submissions** to parties, UN Agencies, observers of the UNFCCC processes, and other non-party stakeholders to submit inputs into the GST process (UNFCCC, 2021a). Figure 3 shows what information each stakeholder is asked to submit to the ICP process, with the Secretariat being tasked with synthesizing all the inputs.

Figure 3. Information each relevant stakeholder is asked to submit to the GST process



Abbreviations: AC – Adaptation Committee; LEG – Least-Developed Country Expert Group; TEC – Technology Executive Committee; SCF – Standing Committee on Finance; PCCB – Paris Committee on Capacity-Building; WIM-ExCom – Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage; CGE – Consultative Group of Experts; LCIPP – Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform. Abbreviations: AC – Adaptation Committee; LEG – Least-Developed Country Expert Group; TEC – Technology Executive Committee; SCF – Standing Committee on Finance; PCCB – Paris Committee on Capacity-Building; WIM-ExCom – Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage; CGE – Consultative Group of Experts; LCIPP – Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform.

2. The Secretariat will then combine these inputs into **synthesis reports** for each thematic area based on a methodology that is being developed by the Secretariat, in consultation with the SBI/SBSTA co-chairs and the TD co-facilitators.²
3. After the ICP is concluded for each TD, parties will review the **synthesis report** produced by the Secretariat. They will engage in the TD based on the TD Guiding Questions (see Box 1) developed by the SBI/SBSTA co-chairs.³ These TD Guiding Questions will help guide the discussions of the TDs and allow the TD co-facilitators to produce a **summary report** summarizing the results of the discussion for each thematic area. Currently, the TD co-facilitators have indicated that all thematic areas will be discussed at each TD; and each TD will focus on one key problem statement of each thematic area, to streamline the process. For instance, for adaptation,
 - TD-1 (SB 56) could discuss the impacts, vulnerabilities, and adaptation efforts of parties.
 - TD-2 (COP 27) could discuss the adequacy and effectiveness of adaptation actions and support and recognize adaptation efforts of developing country parties.
 - TD-3 (SB 58) could consider progress toward the Global Goal on Adaptation and ways to enhance adaptation action.
4. Lastly, the CO component will happen during a high-level event at COP 28 in 2023, where parties will review the **summary reports** from the TDs, and negotiate a **CMA⁴ decision for adoption** that
 - Summarizes the key political messages
 - Identifies opportunities for, and challenges in, enhancing action and support
 - Calls on the parties to enhance and update their NDCs based on the finding of the GST.

How Does the GST Drive Adaptation Ambition?

Assessing the collective progress toward achieving the medium- and long-term adaptation goals is a complex undertaking. In the Paris Agreement, the long-term adaptation goals are expressed in qualitative terms—Article 2.1(b) states the goal as “increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development” (UNFCCC, 2015, art. 2.1b). The lack of an evidence-based, collective MEL system on adaptation at the global level makes the assessment of long-term adaptation goals more difficult (UNFCCC, 2020).

² For GST-1, the TD co-facilitators are Harald Winkler (South Africa) and Farhan Akhtar (United States).

³ The Guiding Questions for GST-1 will be finalized in April 2022 in preparation for the first TD, and the TD Co-Facilitators will release an information note providing further details on how GST-1's TDs will be conducted.

⁴ CMA refers to the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement.

The GST provides a unique opportunity to create this collective MEL system to inform future adaptation efforts and decision making (Beauchamp & Bueno, 2021). This is a chance for parties to

- Create a common definition of an “adequate adaptation response” (Dagnet et al., 2020) and review the adequacy and effectiveness of the current level of adaptation and support.
- Recognize the adaptation efforts of developing countries.
- Gather lessons learned and best practices to enhance adaptation actions, including those on how to enable gender-responsive and socially inclusive adaptation action that is inclusive of different knowledge systems.
- Share challenges and barriers to adaptation in order to identify capacity-building and technology needs.
- Review the overall progress made in achieving the Global Goal on Adaptation.⁵

Box 1. Draft guiding questions on adaptation for the TA

In February 2022, the SB Chairs released a new version of the guiding questions for the TA (UNFCCC, 2022a):

1. What is the collective progress in terms of the current implementation of, and ambition in, adaptation actions towards achieving the goals defined in Articles 2.1(b) and 7.1 of the Paris Agreement?
2. What efforts are being undertaken to plan, implement and accelerate adaptation action towards achieving the goals defined in Articles 2.1(b) and 7.1 of the Paris Agreement, and with a view to recognizing the adaptation efforts of developing country parties, what efforts have been undertaken by these parties towards achieving these goals?
3. How adequate and effective are the current adaptation efforts and the support provided for adaptation towards achieving the goals defined in Articles 2.1(b) and 7.1 of the Paris Agreement?
4. How can the implementation of adaptation action towards achieving the goals defined in Articles 2.1(b) and 7.1 of the Paris Agreement be enhanced, taking into account the adaptation communication referred to in paragraph 10 of the Paris Agreement?
5. In order to achieve the goals defined in Articles 2.1(b) and 7.1 of the Paris Agreement,
 - i. What further action is required?
 - ii. What are the barriers and challenges, and how can they be overcome at national, regional and international levels?
 - iii. What are the opportunities, good practices, lessons learned and success stories?

The final version of the guiding questions will be released in April 2022.

⁵ Article 7.1 of the Paris Agreement sets the **Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA)** of “enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change, with a view to contributing to sustainable development and ensuring an adequate adaptation response in the context of the temperature goal” (UNFCCC, 2015). The main issues at hand include methodological challenges in setting quantitative and qualitative metrics for measuring and assessing adaptation progress, as well as challenges with aggregating data at a global level and answering the question of how we can achieve the goal collectively (Beauchamp, 2021). The first GST will be conducted in parallel with the Glasgow–Sharm el-Sheikh work programme on the GGA, and the work programme will contribute to the GST process with enhanced understandings of the GGA, including “the methodologies, indicators, data and metrics, needs and support needed for assessing progress towards it” (UNFCCC, 2021c).

By understanding what is currently being done to adapt to climate change, and the experiences and lessons learned from past implementation, the GST will raise the global adaptation ambition through distilling key messages around the adequacy of the global adaptation response and informing countries on best practices for low-carbon, resilient development.



Knowledge from local communities and Indigenous peoples are crucial in the GST process. The goals of the Paris Agreement will only be achieved when information is collected in an inclusive and participatory manner.
Photo: ©2015 CIAT/GeorginaSmith

What Are the Sources of Information for Adaptation?

The GST process will look at two types of information— backward-looking and forward-looking information— to assess progress made so far (formally called “ex-post reviews”) and to consider information essential for informing future actions (formally called “ex-ante considerations”) (Friedrich, 2017).

The **backward-looking information** focuses on assessing the progress and actions already undertaken to meet the global commitments outlined in the Paris Agreement. For the adaptation component of the GST, the backward-looking information is a key part of recognizing developing countries' adaptation efforts to date and understanding the baseline of vulnerabilities and impacts.

Another key priority of the GST's adaptation thematic area is to identify gaps, barriers, and lessons learned to inform future decision making and signal plans and intent to step up adaptation ambition at the international and national levels—what parties are calling “**forward-looking information**”. Identifying this forward-looking information at the national and sub-national levels is also integral to removing barriers and accelerating adaptation actions at all levels of governance.

Paragraphs 36 and 37 of Decision 19/CMA.1 list the sources of inputs for the GST (UNFCCC, 2018). For the adaptation thematic area, the following sources of inputs are explicitly referenced:

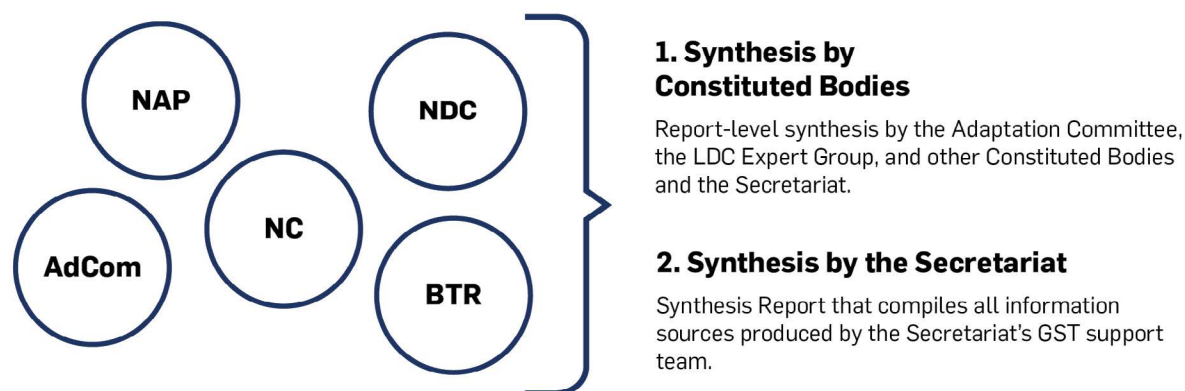
- Reports and communications from parties, including NAPs, AdComs, NDCs, National Communications (NCs), Biennial Transparency Reports (BTRs) and other relevant reports.
- The latest reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, especially reports of the WG-II on vulnerability and adaptation.
- Reports from constituted bodies and forums, especially those from the AC and the LEG.
- Voluntary Submissions from parties, including on inputs to inform equity considerations.
- Submissions from non-Party stakeholders and UNFCCC observer organizations.

The LEG will prepare a synthesis report on the overall progress made by developing countries in formulating and implementing their NAPs based on submitted NAPs and past LEG reports. The AC will prepare a synthesis report on promoting coherence in adaptation, experiences, and priorities of countries, and opportunities for enhanced action and cooperation based on past reports and publications of the AC. **All of these inputs will be combined into a synthesis report by the Secretariat**, in addition to the national reports (NDCs, NCs, BTRs, and AdComs), scientific reports, and other relevant reports of the UNFCCC constituted bodies, using a common methodology (to be developed in early 2022).

How to Leverage the NAP and the AdCom Processes to Inform the GST?

NAPs and AdComs provide valuable backward- and forward-looking information to the GST, such as national adaptation priorities, strategies, policies, plans, goals, and actions, as well as support and implementation needs. Similarly, the adaptation component of the parties' NDCs remains an important source of adaptation information.⁶

Figure 4. Synthesis process



⁶ Parties can choose to designate their NDC's adaptation component as their AdCom to the UNFCCC, which will be captured in the GST information collection and preparation process. Parties are encouraged to structure their NDC's adaptation component according to the AdCom elements.

As mentioned, NAPs, AdComs, and NDCs will be subject to two synthesis processes (see Figure 4). The first synthesis will happen when the AC, the LEG, and the Secretariat's Adaptation Review subdivision prepare their reports on NAPs, AdComs, and other reporting instruments. And the second synthesis will happen when the Secretariat's Collective Progress subdivision prepares the synthesis report for the TDs based on the constituted bodies and other Secretariat units' reports to summarize the state of adaptation efforts, support, experience, and priorities.⁷ Thus, some more detailed national- and sub-national-level context and information may be lost in the syntheses, and the aggregated information may not comprehensively capture different countries' experiences and priorities. In addition, some developing countries may not be able to submit their AdComs and NAPs in time for the GST process for their adaptation information to be captured.

Therefore, per paragraph 37(i) of Decision 19/CMA.1, parties, observers, and other non-party stakeholders are given the opportunity to submit **Voluntary Submissions** as a vehicle to **emphasize their political priorities on adaptation and ensure a balanced or elevated profile for adaptation and related support** in the GST process. Countries may use the voluntary submissions to **highlight their sub-national actions** and suggestions and lessons learned from domestic experience for creating the global MEL process, and include a series of framing questions to pose during the TDs.

At this moment, parties and the Secretariat have no plans to create guidelines for parties and observers wishing to compile and submit voluntary submissions. Thus, parties and observers wishing to submit voluntary submissions are not bound by any requirements, other than having an executive summary in English, but may face a lack of guidance on how to compile and submit voluntary submissions (UNFCCC, 2022b).

To minimize duplication of efforts and additional burdens, developing country parties could choose to prepare Voluntary Submissions by leveraging their NAP and AdCom processes to include existing information and key highlights that

- Recognize adaptation efforts and progress, especially those at the sub-national level.
- Share case studies, best practices, and lessons learned from adaptation experiences.
- Share national-level experiences on MEL for adaptation.
- Highlight gaps and barriers, as well as resource and technological needs.
- Elevate the status and profile of adaptation in the GST process.

In addition to submitting voluntary submissions, developing country parties' meaningful and equitable participation in the TDs will be crucial to the success of the GST. Experts and practitioners who engage in their respective countries' national adaptation planning processes could share valuable insight and perspectives during the TDs to inform the GST and ensure developing countries' views, experiences, priorities, and messages are captured adequately and accurately.

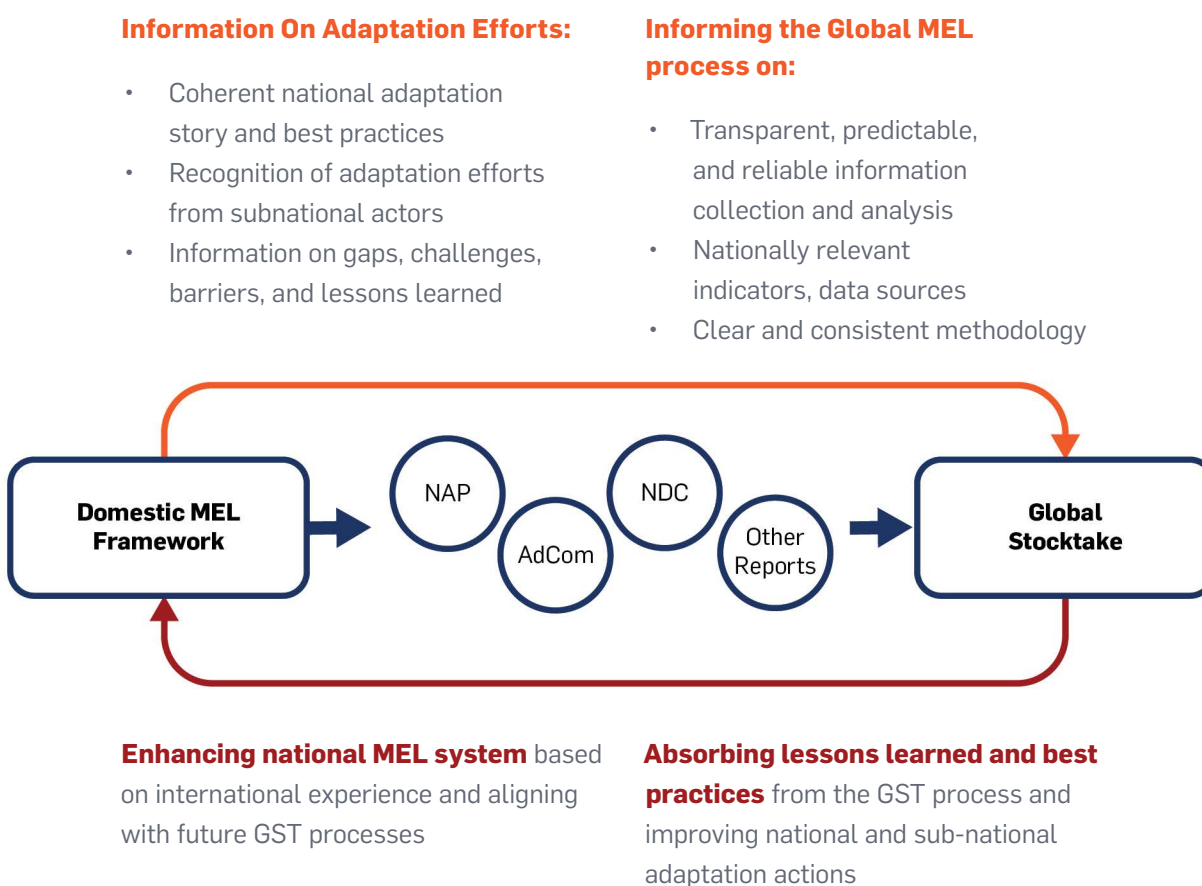
⁷ The UNFCCC Secretariat's Intergovernmental Support and Collective Progress division, Collective Progress subdivision is responsible for supporting the GST process.

How to Link MEL for National Adaptation With the GST?

MEL for national adaptation is integral to providing inputs to, and absorbing outputs from, the international GST process. A functional national MEL framework or system **facilitates transparent, predictable, and reliable information collection that can inform the GST's adaptation thematic area** through countries' NAPs, AdComs, and voluntary submissions (see Figure 5). It provides

- An opportunity for countries to create a coherent national adaptation story that highlights priorities, best practices, and success stories from national and sub-national actors across sectors.
- An opportunity to share information on gaps, challenges, barriers, and lessons learned for internal reflection, as well as for informing international-level decision making.
- A potential opportunity to support the development of a global adaptation progress tracking system to guide future GSTs—addressing challenges such as a lack of common metrics and methodology for assessing progress and aggregate qualitative information across scales.

Figure 5. Interactions between national MEL frameworks for adaptation and the GST



In addition, a key objective of the NAP Global Network and partners working on MEL of adaptation is to better understand what “learning” actually means in the MEL system to enable iterative and progressive adaptation implementation. The GST process is designed to **offer learning and improvement opportunities for countries** to enhance their NDCs and other climate-related policies, plans, and reports. An emphasis on “learning” in the national MEL system will **yield valuable forward-looking information that feeds into the GST process** and offers insights on gaps and challenges to be overcome. In addition, a learning framework is also important for absorbing the wealth of information coming out of the GST process and for enhancing national and sub-national actions by applying international best practices and experiences in a local context.

Conclusion

The first GST will be a critical juncture for the Paris Agreement. It will be a moment for understanding how far the global community has come to address the climate crisis and a moment for raising the collective ambition looking into the future. For adaptation, it is a chance to recognize the adaptation efforts being undertaken by developing countries and to create the momentum to step up adaptation actions and supports to the most vulnerable countries, including Small Island Developing States and the least-developed countries.

The equitable and meaningful participation of developing country parties is particularly important to ensuring the GST carries out its mandate: answering the questions of where we are, where we want to go, and how we get there. Developing countries’ national adaptation planning processes will provide valuable information to the GST and facilitate progress assessment and knowledge sharing, with the ultimate goal of enhancing global adaptation ambition and actions.

It is important to note that the process and guiding questions of the first GST will continue to evolve and be improved upon through the “learning-by-doing” approach, to maximize its agility and flexibility. Policy-makers and practitioners who are going to engage in the GST process should pay close attention to updates in

- The guiding questions and the formats of the TDs
- The guidance on how the voluntary submissions should be produced
- The sources of inputs for the GST
- The interlinkages between the Glasgow–Sharm el-Sheikh Work Programme on the Global Goal on Adaptation and the GST
- Opportunities to provide feedback on improving the overall process to ensure the success of the first GST.

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The briefing note was prepared with financial support from Irish Aid. The ideas, opinions and comments therein are entirely the responsibility of its author(s) and do not necessarily represent the NAP Global Network's funders' policies.

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Financial support provided by:

Ce projet a été réalisé avec l'appui financier de :

Secretariat hosted by:

Secrétariat hébergé par :



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha
Department of Foreign Affairs