

PROPOSAL

Using SEA to promote integration of climate change adaptation into proposed plans, programmes (and policies)

Concept Note

28 August 2007

Overall context

Adaptation to climate change needs to be considered not only when designing various development projects but especially in preparing policies, plans and programmes. Examples of key sectors that will need to consider the environmental, social and economic challenges of climate change include:

- Coastal zone management
- River basin management
- Urban development
- Agriculture
- Forestry
- Economic development plans or other cross-sector plans, programmes and policies

SEA as a tool for integrating climate change adaptation into plans, programmes (and policies)

There are two main avenues for considering adaptation to climate change in preparing plans, programmes and policies (PPPs):

- Addressing adaptation challenges for climate change within the planning process through, for example, a series of simple questions that incorporate climate change adaptation thinking into various stages of the elaboration of the PPP
- Using SEA and similar assessment processes for outlining the consequences of climate change on the future state of the environment and checking whether the proposed PPP will positively or negatively impact this changed environment and whether all relevant climate change adaptation issues, objectives and targets were properly considered within the proposed PPP.

This concept note focuses on the second avenue: the use of SEA for assessing the robustness of the proposed PPPs for climate change. SEA offers multiple opportunities for such analyses as the integration of climate change adaptation can easily be incorporated into different analytical steps within SEA processes, as illustrated in the table overleaf.

SEA presents a clear process for analyzing climate change adaptation issues in planning processes. Including these considerations into SEA may also strengthen the prominence of SEA processes in development planning and in related development debates.

Possible intervention at the UNECE level

Climate change adaptation is discussed extensively within the EU. However, climate change adaptation has not been highlighted to the same degree in South-East Europe or in Eastern

Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia At the same time, the International Panel on Climate Change predicts significant climate change impacts on these subregions and less-developed countries are considered more vulnerable.

It is therefore proposed that the future workplan for the Espoo Convention include an activity that will start discussion and action on these issues among the Parties. The activity might start by discussing the main implications in the subregions and elaborating:

- Basic procedural tools for addressing climate change adaptation issues within SEA
- Analytical approaches and tools that could be used in various SEA processes

Building links with other relevant initiatives

In 2006, the OECD Development Assistance Committed (DAC) agreed “Guidance on SEA in Development Cooperation”. The guidance was developed by a DAC Task Team on SEA (UNECE is a participant) and has won international acclaim for its innovative approach. The Task Team is continuing its work focusing now on promoting implementation of the guidance and harnessing lessons. Its work includes developing supplementary guidance notes on key issues, including one on applying SEA to Climate Change . The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) provides a Technical Secretariat to the Task Team.

A new and separate joint Task Team on Climate Change of the DAC and the OECD Environment Policy Committee has recently been established . It aims to prepare Guidance on Integrating Climate Change Adaptation into Development Cooperation. The two Task Teams will collaborate closely in producing their respective sets of guidance.

The proposed UNECE work on SEA and Climate Change (outlined below) will build close collaborative links with these OECD DAC initiatives and draw lessons from other relevant initiatives.

Workplan activity description

Activity: SEA as a tool for integrating climate change adaptation into plans, programmes (and policies)

Objective(s): Greater awareness of the importance of climate change adaptation in the preparation of plans, programmes (and policies); Availability to countries of basic procedural tools for addressing climate change adaptation within SEA

Method of work (sub-activities): subregional workshops; elaboration of a guidance note (supplementing the Resource Manual)

Organizational arrangements: Lead countries from subregions concerned; consultant to elaborate guidance note with support from a small editorial group and the Secretariat

Expected outcome: Workshop reports; Guidance note

Time schedule: workshops and elaboration of guidance note in 2009

Budget: (a) Workshops: US\$15,000 each; (b) Consultant/technical support US\$20,000

Opportunities for integrating climate change adaptation into the analytical steps within SEA processes

Usual stages of the SEA process	Corresponding opportunities for addressing climate change adaptation issues
1. Determining key issues that SEA should focus on	<p>SEA can check whether the adaptation to climate change is an important issue for the given PPP. If this is the case, SEA can define the key climate change adaptation issues and climate change adaptation objectives that need to be considered in the given PPP and the SEA.</p> <p><i>This can be done by specific provisions & methodologies for identification of relevant climate change issues/objectives for the proposed PPP.</i></p>
2. Analysing baseline trends in the environment (i.e. future state of the environment without the proposed PPP)	<p>SEA can analyse whether certain environmental trends will be influenced by climate change – e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality and quantity of water resources (rivers, lakes/reservoirs, ground waters, costal/brackish waters) • Soil (changes in soil properties, increase of desertification, changes in the permafrost, etc.) • Biodiversity (changes in ecosystems and their functions, migration patterns, etc.) • Etc. <p><i>This can be done by specific provisions & methodologies for consideration of the expected changes in the future environment due to the climate change in the SEA processes (most environmental baseline studies within SEAs now consider only impacts of the relevant development plans and programmes, if at all. Climate change is not yet considered as key factor that may influence future environmental baseline trends).</i></p>
3. Assessing the development objectives, priorities or actions proposed in the PPP	<p>SEA can assess whether the development scenarios, objectives, priorities or actions proposed by the PP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • will have positive or negative effects on the future environment as influenced by the climate change (see item 2 above); • take into due account relevant climate change issues & objectives • increase vulnerability of the given sector/region for climate change <p><i>This can be done by elaboration of methodologies for such assessments.</i></p>
4. Assessing the proposed implementation & monitoring arrangements for the PPP	<p>SEA can prescribe certain ‘climate change adaptation checks’ for the proposed projects. These recommendations can be used in EIAs for relevant projects in their standard permitting process.</p>