

CLIMATE VULNERABLE FORUM
Operational Modalities
October 2013

Background

The Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF, or, the Forum) was founded in November 2009 as a group of nation states represented by their respective government leaders who convened in Male', Maldives, from around the world to act together on the concerns each share as a result of human-induced global climate change. Since then the Forum has met a number of times in New York, USA; Ambo, Kiribati in 2010; Dhaka, Bangladesh in 2011; and has held sessions at relevant United Nations conferences in Bonn, Germany; Durban, South Africa; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; and Doha, Qatar.

The challenges faced by its member countries are real and long-term. They call for an institutional framework to respond to its sustainability and long-term needs. Hence, there is an imperative to achieve a convergence of views on the CVF's objectives, characteristics, scope, extent and modalities for its engagement and operation. This document shall henceforth serve as the reference and guide to the functioning of the Forum as an operational body.

Objective

Aims of the Forum include, *inter alia*, (i) agenda setting for highlighting concerns, issues and challenges faced by countries highly vulnerable to climate change; (ii) consensus building and position convergence; (iii) building trust among all stakeholders and breaking down divides; (iv) cooperative action in the context of intergovernmental fora; (v) collective awareness raising; (vi) sharing good practices on adaptation, mitigation, sustainable development, financing, governance, low emissions economic development, and other important fields linked to climate change policy; and (vii) contributing to a truly effective, inclusive and responsible global climate change governance regime.

Characteristics

The Forum may be identified with the following characteristics:

- I. **Flexible and Open:** Countries may choose to join and discontinue their participation. The platform may maintain flexible engagement with observers and non-state-stakeholders, as necessary.
- II. **Inclusive:** As climate change is generally non-discriminatory, the membership shall not to be limited to any specific region nor to countries impacted by a single or group of specified phenomenon, nor shall vulnerability to climate change be interpreted on the basis of arbitrary, deterministic or highly selective parameters.
- III. **Semiformal Platform:** It may be midway between a formal and an informal entity. This may be understood in value-neutral terms, whereby participants may not be put in a negotiating position to defend perceived national interests. Semi-formality circumvents barriers to cooperation and also allows non-members to contribute to

the process of the collective examination of issues, if so required. Semi-formality is not to suggest a casual approach and an absence of procedures. Agreements of member countries in the context of the Forum should strive at unanimity but no formal Rules of Procedure shall govern decision processes.

- IV. **Modalities for Efficient Functioning:** It may agree on amendments to these modalities in respect of membership and on various organisational aspects such as Chairmanship, consultation process, decision processes, periodicity of meetings and events, coordination and follow-up.
- V. **Non-binding:** Member countries are not expected to negotiate binding rules and may not be obligated to implement decisions and recommendations.
- VI. **Focused:** It may have the competence to focus on all aspects of climate change policy, including, *inter alia*, adaptation, vulnerability, disaster risk reduction and impacts (human, socio-economic and ecological); mitigation and low-emissions development; technology transfer and development; public and private finance; and, capacity building.
- VII. **The Forum as a Process:** The CVF may not conduct one-off events only. It may seek to have technical meetings to identify issues and share experiences coupled with political level engagements to create greater convergence and to pronounce its views and preferences. Periodicity of political level engagement (Ministerial and Summit) may be flexible and may respond to the need of the time.
- VIII. **Operational Scope:** It may agree and pursue the following courses of action beyond high-level and technical meetings of member countries:
 - i. Commission research or analysis to address an identified collective need, such as the “Climate Vulnerability Monitor” publication series;
 - ii. Establish advisory bodies and technical panels comprised of independent authorities and experts on matters of particular importance;
 - iii. Form thematic focus group tracks or sub-committees for concentrating the attention of member countries on specific issues;
 - iv. Call on external experts to advise Forum members on key issues;
 - v. Host open events for joint advocacy and outreach at important occasions and employ caucusing to reflect its concerns and views in appropriate and global decision making processes;
 - vi. Maintain a public website and utilize other online media channels;
 - vii. Form collaborations with other groups or organizations on particular concerns; and,
 - viii. Conduct missions to observer and other governments and organizations in order to advance common CVF agenda.
- IX. **Networking:** It may maintain virtual networking through secure websites and assigned nodal points.

Membership

Vulnerable countries from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Pacific, which attended the full Forums held in Male’ and Dhaka are confirmed as forming the membership of the CVF. Members may enjoy the flexibility to discontinue participation in writing to the incumbent Forum Chair. Each member will designate focal point(s) within its national authorities for the purpose of coordination and follow-up.

New members may be added from among developing countries that are faced with disproportionate adverse impacts and/or a high degree of risks owing to climate change and/or that are vulnerable due to inadequate coping capacities. The Forum may seek to maintain an appropriate number of members given the requirement of critical mass and to avoid a situation of being unwieldy.* The CVF may revisit the question of its membership at a reasonable periodicity (such as every 5 years). Any new members shall be required to endorse the fundamentals of the Forum and in particular endorse recent outcome documents of the Forum. Any proposal for inclusion and expansion for the Forum may be considered at any high-level meeting of the full Forum or CVF Summit. Interested countries may petition the incumbent Forum Chair in writing.

The CVF may engage observer countries for developing effective partnerships. Likewise, the CVF may seek to engage relevant UN agencies, international institutions and actors. CVF may also benefit from its engagement with select local and international experts and representatives of leading civil society organizations and the private sector.

Leadership

- I. **Chairperson:** A Chair will lead the CVF process for a defined period of 18 months. The period may be extended or reduced in agreement with outgoing and designate Chairs, the Troika or the full Forum/Forum Summit. The Chair will:
 - a. Articulate group positions and views while engaging with other forums and contributing to other discussions;
 - b. On important issues, as needed, avail the services of a Troika comprised of past, incumbent and future Chairs (if known/designated). Other past Chairs may also be appropriately consulted, if it is so required;
 - c. Maintain contact with members through designated focal points and normal diplomatic channels;
 - d. Obtain, as needed, the services of an appropriate arrangement and/or a relevant organization to support activities, conduct studies and prepare background papers on issues of common concern; and,
 - e. Mobilize and oversee the expenditure of resources for events and programmes and activities of the Forum and consult and liaise with interested donors and external entities in these respects.
- II. **Troika:** On important issues, the Chair may avail the services of a Troika comprised of past, incumbent and future Chairs (if known/designated). Other past Chairs may also be appropriately consulted, if it is so required.
- III. **Other Arrangements:** On specific issues or in particular intergovernmental fora, special focal points from among the member countries or Task Forces of any members may be formed on the initiative of the Chair and/or Troika with competencies similar to the Chair with respect to those specific issues or as otherwise defined by the full Forum/Forum Summit.

* At present, the membership may remain within an upper range of 30-35.

Coordination and Follow-up

The CVF may carefully examine the crucial role generally played by a coordination arrangement in supporting Chairs and following-up on decisions. This may be required for contacting stakeholders, disseminating information, facilitating follow-up of decisions and providing managerial support. Additionally, it may be assigned to conduct studies and prepare background papers and also maintain links through maintaining a web-portal. The Chair may maintain a coordination hub that may rotate. Till the time the Forum decides to have a permanent Secretariat, the services of an interested, reputed and neutral organization may be utilised as an ad-hoc Secretariat.

Structuring of Meetings

The CVF body may generally convene the full Forum at Ministerial-level. Summit level interactions may also be organised given the need for highest possible level engagement and ownership. Ministerial meetings may be generally held once in 2 years, unless there is compelling reasons for Ministerial meeting in between. Summit level Forum may be held once in 5 years, or as otherwise agreed by the membership. Meetings of the full Forum are to be hosted, generally in-country, by the incumbent Chair.

Political engagements may be followed up with a feasible implementation mechanism at the technical/operational level. Expert level/senior officer level meetings and interactions may be organised between Ministerial meetings as per demand. Technical events may also be organised.

Financing

Resources for any activities of the Forum may be generated from voluntary contributions made by member countries, in addition to which financial support may also be sought from observers and any other donor countries and organisations. Member countries shall support the Chair and Troika in their lead role in the mobilization of resources for collectively agreed activities and other costs incurred by the Forum's operation.

The preferential mechanism for managing any contributions is the CVF Trust Fund administered by the United Nations Development Programme Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office that was established, following broad consultation with member countries, in September 2012. Mandated partner organizations may also receive funds for the implementation of activities commissioned by the Forum. The Chair and/or Troika shall oversee the resourcing and administration of activities where other arrangements are not provided for.
