



Background Paper

A CRUNCH ISSUE FOR PARIS COP21: LOSS AND DAMAGE

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND?

Loss and damage generally describes climate impacts that were not avoided through adaptation and mitigation. However, an internationally agreed definition does not exist. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2014 reported that there are limits to adaptation. With the current global average temperature already 0.85°C above pre-industrial levels, the scale of loss and damage is tremendous and occurring around the globe. The scale of loss and damage that will occur in a world with 2.7°C and beyond of warming is unimaginable.

WHY IS THERE A NEED FOR LOSS AND DAMAGE IN THE AGREEMENT?

Today, loss and damage is happening everywhere. The most devastating impacts are happening in vulnerable developing countries, especially Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and in Africa. These countries, which are least responsible for causing climate change, are facing the brunt of its impacts. Support to deal with these impacts is inadequate. Impacts are rising at an exponential rate with every bit of temperature rise. Recent impacts include tropical storm Erika striking Dominica, tropical cyclone Pam at Vanuatu, heat waves in India and Pakistan, Amazon drought, flooding in Myanmar and Himalayan and Arctic melting. This is unjust and immoral.

In Paris, we are creating a durable, legally binding agreement that comes into force in 2020 and helps stabilise global average temperatures below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. WWF strongly believes that loss and damage needs to be central in this agreement. The Paris agreement must provide justice to the least responsible countries by addressing the loss and damage issue fairly. This can be done by adopting a decision on treating loss and damage as a stand-alone issue, and establishing an international mechanism on loss and damage, with adequate financial, technical and capacity building support dedicated to it.

Addressing loss and damage is not just about monetary compensation. It is about protecting the vulnerable and allowing them to live with dignity and rights. It is about addressing the permanent loss and damage resulting from slow onset events such as sea level rise, ocean acidification and glacial retreat. It is about climate justice and rights issues and adequately addressing the loss of cultural heritages, ecosystem services, lives and more. It is also about how to address displacement and climate refugee within and between international borders. Finally, it is about avoiding foreseeable losses and damage by increasing mitigation and adaptation.

WHERE DO THE NEGOTIATIONS STAND ON LOSS AND DAMAGE?

The loss and damage issue is a relatively old issue in the UNFCCC process. In 1991, Vanuatu, a Pacific island nation, tabled a proposal that asked for insurance of island states to compensate against sea level rise. Since then, this issue has risen in the agenda. In 2013 in Warsaw, Poland, parties established the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) on Loss

and Damage. In 2014 during COP20 in Lima, Peru, parties agreed to WIM's two-year work plan. These steps head in the right direction. However, they are not enough. The durability, permanence and mandate of WIM are questionable. WWF supports loss and damage being included in the Paris agreement as a stand-alone element.

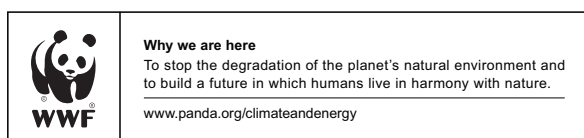
The current Draft Agreement (dated 6 November) for the Paris COP reflects loss and damage under Article 5. However, this article has two options. Option 1, proposed by the G77 & China, represents 134 developing countries strongly calling for the establishment of the International Mechanism on loss and damage under the Paris Agreement. Conversely, the Umbrella Group (US, Canada, Japan, Australia, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway, The Russia Federation and Switzerland) proposed option 2 as no article in the Paris agreement. The European Union has not put forward their option yet.

WWF ASKS:

Loss and damage should be strongly and fairly captured as a stand-alone provision in the Paris agreement, in recognition of the fact that irreversible loss and damage due to climate change will increase wherever adaptation and mitigation cannot curb the most severe impacts of climate change. Even with strong mitigation and adaptation, there will be residual losses and damages, particularly in developing countries and low lying Island nations, as a result of emissions that are already in the atmosphere. **Therefore,**

- **Loss and damage should be treated distinctly from adaptation,**
- **The Paris Agreement should establish a stand-alone International Mechanism on Loss and Damage that gives permanence and durability to this issue in a legally binding nature,**
- **The support mechanism to address loss and damage should go beyond a financial mechanism. The agreement should establish a climate change displacement facility, designed to address irreversible and permanent damages and economic and non-economic losses, and a mechanism to address loss and damage resulting from slow onset events, and,**
- **Institutional arrangements should further strengthen the work to address loss and damage as the problem evolves (building on, but not limited to, the WIM).**

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ABOUT WWF

WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the earth's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature. The Global Climate and Energy Initiative is WWF's global programme addressing climate change through promoting renewable and sustainable energy, scaling up green finance, engaging the private sector and working nationally and internationally on implementing low carbon, climate resilient development.

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