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A summary of the session at the [Rio Conventions Pavilion](#) @ UNFCCC COP 17

# Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) in a Changing Climate: From Practice to Policy?

## Lessons learnt from islands

3 December 2011, Durban, South Africa



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Ambassador Ronald Jumeau, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Seychelles to the United Nations/ Global Islands Partnership (GLISPA) introduced the session by reminding that islands are places of high biodiversity and that local economies and identity are highly dependent on islands ecosystems and associated natural resources. Yet islands are highly vulnerable to climate change impacts and least able to address them effectively. 'Working with nature' as EbA proposes is an attractive and cost-effective measure to build the resilience of island environments in the face of climate change.

### Implementing climate change adaptation programmes in island regions: A European Union perspective on the role of EbA

Etienne Coyette, in charge of adaptation issues within the climate change team of the Development Cooperation Service of the European Commission argued that EbA is a very interesting approach to adaptation as it is often **low-cost, local and building on existing activities**, as well as makes an important link to poverty alleviation. EbA is also a win-win approach allowing the **implementation of the three Rio Conventions**. The European Commission works on integrating EbA in its approaches – although no specific strategy yet, but a strong will to move towards better integration.

### What can we learn from implementing EbA in islands and island territories: From practice to policy

Dominique Benzaken from IUCN presented the results of a pilot study on the implementation of EbA in islands. **National adaptation plans** are a critical framework for strategic EbA implementation and mainstreaming into national and sectoral strategies including NSDS and NBSAPs. **EbA must be evidence based** and respond to predicted climate change impacts at the appropriate scale of

management and be informed by vulnerability assessments. **Communicating EbA** concepts and guidance for EbA implementation as well as demonstrating the effectiveness of EbA (including cost effectiveness) were needed. **EbA can also apply to mitigation co-benefits** (e.g. coastal carbon) given the extensive coastal and marine domains of islands. Finally, **the status of islands** (SIDs, LDC, or territories) impacts on EbA policy and practice and access to resources which is a constraint for regional collaboration.

## Principles and guidelines for mainstreaming EbA in policy making and project development

Angela Andrade from IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM) and Robert Munroe from BirdLife International presented for consultation the *Principles and Guidelines for Integrating Ecosystem-based approaches to Adaptation in Project and Policy Design*, developed by a consortium of non-government organizations and the Ecosystems and Livelihoods Adaptation Network (ELAN). The guidelines address the **'lack of practical guidance on how to build resilience/incorporate ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation into strategies'** as outlined in the UNFCCC SBSTA Information Document *Ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation: Compilation of information* produced for Durban (FCCC/SBSTA/2011/INF.8).

## Debt-for-Adaptation-Swaps in SIDS

Yabanex Batista from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) presented an innovative funding mechanism for adaptation on islands based on the fact that marine and coastal resources of SIDS provide the *natural infrastructure* underpinning their economic development in general. In that context, **Debt-for-Adaptation Swaps:**

- provides opportunity to address climate adaptation within the **context of the MDGs** and conservation needs and goals in SIDS;
- provides opportunity to create large, **sustainable funding streams** for adaptation that can assist SIDS in maintaining their natural resources dependent economies afloat and local livelihoods, combined w/ real debt reduction;
- helps keep payments and financial resources in **the local economy**.

## Panel discussion

Panel discussions focused on the need for evidence in support of EbA to influence decision making, in particular cost-effectiveness of EbA compared to other adaptation measures, and for clear guidance on how to implement EbA. Commitments by those engaged in Debt-for-Adaptation-Swaps would be critical to make it a reality for islands and legal capacity need to be developed for such schemes.

Partnerships and collaboration, particularly at the regional level, would be a critical part of successful implementation of EbA. Such partnership could include GLISPA High level partnership mechanisms such as the Micronesia Challenge or the Coral Triangle Initiative to generate the necessary political will and advocacy for EbA on islands, through partnerships for implementation at the regional level between islands with common challenges but different status (e.g. European Union overseas territories) and responses, and cross-sectoral initiatives linking conservation and development.

EbA has been mainly focused on natural resource management, however, it is equally applicable to other sectors such as food security, education and health and better integration and innovative partnerships needed to be explored. Public-private partnership was also raised (e.g., adopt a beach). The role of national adaptation strategies was seen a mechanism to strategically progress this approach.

**Concluding remarks by Ambassador Jumeau** outlined the complexity of developing effective EbA responses, from problem identification through to policy, strategic partnerships, good practice guidelines and the need for strategic adaptation of plans supported by good science and vulnerability assessment, and leading to implementation, political advocacy and the need for innovative financial mechanisms.

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**For more information on this session**, please contact Dominique Benzaken from IUCN at [dominique.benzaken@iucn.org](mailto:dominique.benzaken@iucn.org) or +41 79 264 8797.

For information on **other adaptation-related events** at the UNFCCC COP 17, please write to [cop17adaptation@hotmail.com](mailto:cop17adaptation@hotmail.com) or visit the Adaptation Hub [online](#).

