



CLIMATE CHANGE – Actual general context
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INTRODUCTION

Between 7 to 18 December 2009, the 15-th session of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 15) was held in Denmark, Copenhagen.

To determine the position of the European Union (EU) for the Conference, the Council of Europe (CE) has adopted the basic conclusions for negotiating an international agreement on climate protection, to take effect immediately after the Kyoto Protocol expiration. Following, we list some of the most important.

1. Preventing climate change calls for economic and social development through concerted and sustained efforts permitted by the regulatory framework of UNFCCC (*United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*). It is essential to focus on increased alliances and on the development of partnerships with developing countries, on the achievement of mutual benefits between developed and developing countries in the efforts to combat climate change and ensure the future security of biodiversity and ecosystems.

2. Council of Europe stressed the importance of the *recognition of key objectives on climate and energy*: such as maintaining less than 2 °C the level of global warming and the reduction of at least 50% of global emissions by 2050, and in the developed countries, with 80% or more.

3. CE also emphasized the potential importance of agricultural activities on *poverty reduction, food security over long-term and, in this context, on the creation of a framework for adaptation*.

4. Of particular importance are the decisions concerning the integration of different policies and sustainable strategies for adapting to all

levels and in all actions of cooperation and the public funding and development of specific structures in conjunction with various circumstances and priorities.

5. Regarding the regulatory framework necessary to strengthen the European climate change adaptation, we mention some basic requirements:

- consistency and correlation between programs, institutions and international stakeholders, regional and national implementing adaptation policies, models of assessment and risk management and other related activities;

- adequate financial support is essential to implement a comprehensive and coherent working framework to support the Copenhagen agreement on the basis of appropriate contributions from participating States;

- establish an integration entity to provide for a consolidated picture of the sources of international financing for investments related to climate change, to revise the balance of the international distribution of public finances by priority, to include relevant actors to assist in this area and ensure synergy with other environmental agreements;

- implementation of the EU strategy for disaster risk reduction in developing countries;

- efforts to exploit synergies between the various international conventions to cooperate and integrate the effects of the climate change in the sense of the agreement in Copenhagen;

- develop comprehensive frameworks for climate services, in order to continue to expand cooperation in scientific research and systematic observation, and to develop and transfer technology and knowledge of adaptation actions, including regional climate



scenarios for providing quality climate services;

- integrating adaptation into national planning, development of a knowledge base for adaptation, capitalizing experiences in areas supported by pilot projects, and monitoring, review and support adaptation actions, which involve information sharing among stakeholders.

With the implementation of the Copenhagen agreement, Member States have pledged to contribute an annual grant of 2.4 billion Euros for the years 2010 to 2012. UNFCCC Secretariat has estimated that by 2030 the total costs of adaptation for developing countries will reach between 23 and 54 billion EUR per year.

Meeting these requirements will be subject to continuous monitoring by the EC and regular review of the audit institutions of Europe.

2. AN AUDIT PERSPECTIVE ON THE EUROPEAN REGULATORY AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

One of the major objectives of the Council of Europe regarding the implementation of environmental programs is reforming the system of environmental governance.

In this context, in April 2009, the European Commission has developed and presented the document The White Paper on climate change adaptation which proposes a framework of the European Union on the adaptation constraints imposed by the climate change and reduce the impact through concerted action of Member States, targeted to increase adaptability and to minimize impacts of climate change, through measures applied at national, regional or local levels.

CE objectives arising from this document are:

1. Building a European framework for climate change adaptation;
2. Policy and the working frame for adaptation measures to reduce vulnerabilities of EU the impact of climate change;
3. Creating a pan European platform for exchange of information between governments, agencies and organizations

working to develop adaptation policies concerning the risks induced by climate change, impacts and best practices;

4. Adaptation measures for the implementation of policies at national and regional level, according to natural relief and the associated specific vulnerabilities;

5. Emphasizing the role of EU in terms of: providing financial support, assistance, providing advice and policy integration at European level.

2.1 Key elements of the EU framework on adaptation to climate change

The key elements of the EU framework on adaptation to climate change, arising from the review of European approaches are:

1. Improving the knowledge base available at the European level, on the observed phenomena that provide information about the impact of climate change across Europe. With all the measures taken so far, on can note that there are weaknesses concerning the provision of information from different regions and in the monitoring of environmental programs, the lack of scenarios reflecting the impact of climate change and the different awareness at the European level, of the socio-economic issues as well as the lack of cost-benefit analysis of various adaptation options, and insufficient information on best practices. Agriculture could be the first beneficiary of this knowledge base.

2. Reflecting the impact of climate change in key EU policies. Currently, there are many sectors with major involvement in the European policies concerning the climate risks and the adaptation measures to reduce long term vulnerability of sectors such as agriculture, forests, biodiversity, fisheries, energy, transport, water and health. This means using or creating mechanisms to allow decision makers to integrate climate risks in all relevant policy interventions.

3. Financing, involving various policy measures to achieve the best effect. Financial constraints constitute one of the main barriers for the adaptation to climate change, as reflected by the priorities of the current EU



multiannual financial framework (2007-2013). Funds available, along with other financial services provided, and additional revenues generated through tax mechanisms (tax shifting) must reflect this priority.

4. International efforts to support adaptation to climate change. To remove the adverse effects already produced in some areas outside the EU imposes cooperation in support of adjustment programs, particularly through financial assistance programs in relevant sectors.

From the perspective of auditing, the European framework has a phase-oriented approach: (a) the implementation of four key elements (2009-2012) which will lead to developing a coherent EU adjustment strategy and (b) the implementation of the strategy (starting with 2012).

2.2 European Platform of exchange and access to information

The reference document of the EU framework concerning the adaptation to climate change, *The White Paper on climate change adaptation*, is proposing a European platform for exchange of and access to information called *Clearing House Mechanism* on climate change impacts. This will be implemented on the Internet, will improve the access to the information stored in a database through IT tools and will also facilitate the assessment of national, regional or local impacts of climate change. *Clearing House* will provide information on the basis of scenarios having as object the climate change for essential variables (temperature, precipitation, wind intensity and so on). for the next decades, their impact on different sectors (agriculture, tourism and so on), the resulting vulnerability for some regions of Europe, as well as indicators, impact assessment tools and best practices.

The *Clearing House Mechanism* will be operational in 2011 and will be integrated with the *Distributed Environment Information System* developed as a joint initiative of the European Commission and the European Environment Agency (EEA) to establish a common information systems context with the

Member States concerning the environment. It will also connect with the information system GMES (*Global Monitoring for Environment and Security*) to provide for geographical information.

The most authorized source of scientific information about climate is *The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (IPCC), established in 1988 by the World Environment Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). The goal of IPCC is to assess, from a scientific, technical and socio-economic point of view, the relevant information, in a coherent, objective, transparent manner, concerning the climate change adaptation options and the associated potential impact as well as the mitigation of dangerous consequences, as a documentary, while also being a basic source for the audit.

2.3. The role of ecosystems in the rehabilitation required by climate change

Ecosystem-based adaptation is in most cases the best and most effective, as more as more services are provided for and synergy is promoted. Europe has developed a network of over 26,000 protected areas in all Member States, representing more than 20% of the territory of Europe, a network known as Nature 2000, the largest network of protected areas in the world.

2.4 Policies, strategies and programs related to EU framework on adaptation to climate change

Climate change issues transcend the limits set by borders. Therefore, EU policies should be integrated in all relevant international agreements and policies, such as: The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), The Comprehensive Agreement on Climate Change Copenhagen, The Global Climate Change Alliance, and other bilateral agreements.

In Copenhagen it was proposed that all developed or developing countries should implement coherent national strategies for adaptation and reduce the impact of climate



change, should use the modern technologies and design support for the related strategies, should promote cooperation projects and create a dissemination environment for knowledge and technologies. A number of advanced Member States, such as Denmark, Finland, Germany, France, Hungary, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, have already adopted national strategies in this domain.

Also, as part of the agreement in Copenhagen it was proposed to create funding programs and to establish financing options for poor or developing countries. For emergency situations and disaster risk reduction the adoption of a funding mechanism to react immediately has been proposed - *Global Climate Financing Mechanism (GCFM)*. This will allow the funding of priority actions related to climate (approximately 1 billion per year for 2010-2014) and will represent a significant area of audit.

At the level of the EU responsible institutions, environmental initiatives were formulated and appropriate measures were taken to support the European framework for adapting to climate change. These are summarized below:

- Launch of large scale research and development actions that integrate physical models and projects on adaptation to climate change in an economic model that quantifies the impact of climate change on vulnerable issues in Europe;
- Develop lines of actions, guidelines and methodologies concerning the management of the adaptation to climate change;
- Rising the awareness of global climate change substance and of the impact over regional and sectoral level;
- The foundation of climate change adaptation decisions on sound scientific and economic analysis. At the European level a package of political measures has been initiated in order to reduce the emissions of greenhouse effect gases through the *ECCP (European Climate Change Program)*, involving all Member States, to implement their own measures, either complementary or converging to explore low cost options, in synergy with the *Lisbon Strategy* as regards the economic

growth and job creation, which constitute also basic targets for the audit.

The *Council on environmental issues* held in Brussels in December 2009, after the Copenhagen Conference, set forth the priorities of the Council of Europe in the quality of the environment, summarized by the following phrases: (a) eco-efficient economy (environmental and economic): green economy, new products, new energy sources; (b) reconciliation of areas: common, consistent and convergent policies; (c) cross-compliance; (d) modern technologies of communication and dissemination of environmental information; (f) computerized reporting procedures.