

Policy Brief

Supporting the First GST in Delivering its Outputs on Adaptation

What is the role of private sector in GST? and
How to improve GST's assessment of Adequacy and Effectiveness
on Adaptation?



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About the independent Global Stocktake (iGST) www.independentgst.org

This policy brief is based on the work of the iGST Adaptation Working Group (AWG). iGST is a consortium of civil society actors working together to support the Global Stocktake (GST). It aligns the independent community from modelers and analysts to campaigners and advocates to push together for a robust GST that empowers countries to take greater climate action. The iGST AWG was created in 2019, with the objective to support the GST by providing a scientifically sound assessment of progress made on adaptation. The iGST AWG 2023 program is co-chaired by UNEP Copenhagen Climate Centre and Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad.



Acknowledgements

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The authors are grateful for support and advice from ClimateWorks' iGST team especially Hannah Roeyer and Casey Cronin, and the leads of other iGST working groups and regional Hubs for their valuable discussion. The authors would also like to thank Vidhee Kiran Avashia from IIMA for reviewing this work. The authors acknowledge ClimateWorks' financial support for preparing this publication.

Citation

United Nations Environment Programme Copenhagen Climate Centre (UNEP-CCC). Policy Brief: Supporting the First GST in Delivering its Outputs on Adaptation 2023. Copenhagen, Denmark.

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Photo acknowledgements

Front cover: Dibakar Roy, Unsplash

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This brief can be downloaded from www.unepccc.org and www.climateworks.org

1. Introduction

With only a few months remaining before the first Global Stocktake (GST) comes to its conclusion at COP28 in Dubai, significant questions regarding the exact outcome of the process and how it will be translated into action remain open. This policy brief aims to support the conclusion of the first GST by synthesizing findings from the Adaptation Working Group of the independent Global Stocktake initiative (iGST),¹ with a specific view to the needs and objectives of the current and final phase of the GST ‘Consideration of Outputs’. The iGST Adaptation Working Group first started its work in 2019 by reviewing the key information sources listed for the GST for adaptation, followed by two further research phases focused on: 1) private-sector adaptation reporting as a source of input to the Global Stocktake (2021-2022) and 2) the adequacy and effectiveness of adaptation in Global Stocktake (2022-2023).²

2. The Global Stocktake and its final phase: Consideration of Outputs

The modalities of the GST, a component of what is sometimes referred to as the “Paris Rulebook” or “Katowice Climate Package”, were adopted at the 24th Conference of Parties (COP 24) in Katowice, Poland in 2018.³ It outlined how the GST will consist of three phases: 1. ‘Information Collection and Preparation’, which concluded in June 2023; 2. ‘Technical Assessment’, pivoted by three technical dialogues (TDs) (June 2022, November 2022, and June 2023), which were summarized in a synthesis report in September 2023⁴, just before the publication of this policy brief; and 3. ‘Consideration of Outputs’, which, building on the above technical assessment and high-level events at COP28, will negotiate a final decision for adoption at COP28, thus concluding the first Global Stocktake.

GST has four adaptation-related functions, as defined in the Paris Agreement, Article 7, para 14: “(a) recognize adaptation efforts of developing country Parties, (b) Enhance the implementation of adaptation action taking into account the adaptation communication, (c) Review the adequacy and effectiveness of adaptation, and the support provided for adaptation, (d) Review the overall progress made in achieving the global goal on adaptation”.⁵ As such the GST has a dual mandate of assessing collective progress on adaptation (function a, c and d) and informing the update and enhancement of national-level adaptation actions (function b). The final GST outputs shall address the extent to which this dual mandate as well as the four functions have been achieved.

Based on impressions from the GST TDs, which serves as a platform for Parties, experts and non-party stakeholders to discuss how the GST can contribute to understanding and closing implementation gaps of the Paris Agreement, as well as other meetings during 2022 and 2023⁶, the sub-sections below take stock of this final Consideration of Outputs phase of the GST, and explores potential discrepancies between its formally defined function (section 2.1.) and expectations of key stakeholders (section 2.2).

2.1 Formal definition of ‘Consideration of Outputs’ in the UNFCCC process

As indicated above, 19/CMA.1. adopted at COP 24 in Katowice defined how the Consideration of Outputs phase of the GST should cover: 1) the opportunities for and challenges in enhancing action and support for collective progress, as well as possible measures, international cooperation and good practices; and 2) the key political messages, including recommendations for strengthening action and enhancing support.⁷ In terms of how the GST outcome will be presented and communicated, 19/CMA.1⁸ and the GST co-facilitators’ non-paper⁹ decided that the Consideration of Outputs will include high-level events at the COP in 2023 and should be referenced by COP 28 decisions and/or a declaration. To facilitate the preparation for this final phase, four guiding questions were recently provided by the Chairs of the subsidiary bodies suggesting that Parties and non-Party stakeholders could organize their discussion around

1 The iGST is a consortium of civil-society actors working together to support a strong and transformative GST. Recognizing the political realities that constrain the formal process, the iGST aims to go beyond the GST in ways that ensures the Stocktake generates maximum positive impact. It features four thematic working groups and three regional civil-society hubs. <https://www.climateworks.org/programs/governance-diplomacy/independent-global-stocktake/>

2 All iGST deliverables mentioned can be downloaded in full here: <https://unepccc.org/project/the-adaptation-working-group-awg-of-the-independent-global-stocktake-igst/>

3 Decision 19/CMA.1. Matters relating to Article 14 of the Paris Agreement and paragraphs 99–101 of decision 1/CP.21.

4 <https://unfccc.int/documents/631600>

5 Article 7, para 14 of the Paris Agreement.

6 Including, e.g., OECD’s Global Forum on the Environment and Climate Change, 21-22 March 2023 and COP27 and COP28. Presidencies’ informal consultations on the Global Stocktake, 9 March 2023.

7 Decision 19/CMA.1, paragraph 34 (a) and (b).

8 Decision 19/CMA.1, paragraph 33 and 34 (c).

9 Preparing for the first Global Stocktake. Revised non-paper by the Chairs of the SBSTA and SBI. 15 Sep. 2021, p. 4.

topics of collective progress made on the global level, opportunities, challenges, mechanisms and strategies, as well as key political messages for enhancing collective action.¹⁰

For the time being, the exact format and content of the COP 28 decision/declaration remains to be seen, but it will likely include at least the following elements: 1. A summary of key political messages, 2. Identification of opportunities for, and challenges in, enhancing action and support, and 3. A call on Parties to enhance and update their NDCs based on the findings of the GST.¹¹ Furthermore, the Paris Agreement article 14, para 1, defined how the final GST output will need to first: *“take stock of the implementation of this Agreement to assess the collective progress towards achieving the purpose of this Agreement and its long-term goals”* (this could be termed the GST’s technical mandate), as a basis for informing the enhancement of Parties’ adaptation implementation (what could be termed the GST’s political mandate). This chronology is defined in para 3 of article 14: *“The outcome of the global stocktake shall inform Parties in updating and enhancing, in a nationally determined manner, their actions and support in accordance with the relevant provisions of this Agreement, as well as in enhancing international cooperation for climate action”*. In other words, adequate completion of the GST’s ‘technical mandate’ provides the technical foundation for its political conclusions. This duality is especially important when considering the large number of basic questions still under discussion relating to assessments of outcomes for adaptation: While the first GST will not be able to provide full, comprehensive, and quantitative responses to each of these questions, only if the final GST output adequately considers and reflects on these fundamental questions can it meaningfully draw political conclusions in terms of specific actions to correct any shortcomings on global adaptation efforts.

10 According to “Guiding questions prepared by the Chairs of the subsidiary bodies for the Consideration of Outputs component of the first global stocktake, 28 July 2023”: 1). What has been the collective progress to date towards achieving the purpose and long-term goals of the Paris Agreement, including under Article 2, in the thematic areas of mitigation, adaptation, and means of implementation and support, taking into account efforts under the Agreement that address the social and economic consequences and impacts of response measures, and that avert, minimize and address loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change? 2) What are the opportunities for and challenges in enhancing action for collective progress in relation to the above-mentioned thematic areas, as well as possible measures, good practices and examples of international cooperation in this regard? How should contextual elements be considered in these? 3) What effective mechanisms and strategies exist to ensure that means of implementation and support are enhanced and flow consistently in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement and in enhancing action for collective progress. 4) What are key political messages for strengthening action and enhancing support and what should be the next steps and way forward in this regard?

11 IISD 2022: BRIEFING NOTE: Introduction to Adaptation in the Global Stocktake. <https://napglobalnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/napgn-en-2022-brief-introduction-adaptation-global-stocktake.pdf>

Furthermore, the final GST output will need to cover each of the four functions and the dual mandate mentioned above. However, when composing the final GST narrative, it may be worth re-considering the chronological ordering from that of the original decision, in line with the dual mandate described above. I.e., the narrative could first cover the GST’s technical mandate before moving on to its political conclusions. Or, using slightly different language, a logical chronological order could be:

1. What adaptation efforts have been made by Parties globally, including, particularly, by the developing countries?
2. Are current adaptation action and support adequate and effective? If not, where are the gaps?
3. What does the above indicate about progress made towards the GGA?
4. What are the key messages guiding Parties in enhancing their adaptation action and support?

2.2 What are the expectations of Parties, experts and non-party stakeholders?

Approaching the first GST’s final phase of Consideration of Outputs, there are existing studies discussing how to deliver the final outputs. For example, conceptualizing the GST outputs was discussed by a recent publication by C2ES,¹² which suggests the potential GST outputs could be grouped into three tiers of: high-level signals/asks, specific high impact opportunities for action, and consolidated technical resources for implementation. The publication argues that the GST outcomes should focus on the opportunities that can best result in those of “high impact”. Another study led by the OECD¹³ explores how to organize the Consideration of Outputs and suggests delivering this component through both a technical package and political package, where the technical package is suggested to cover the challenges and gaps in climate actions, opportunities and solutions, good practices, tools and guidance, as well as enablers for climate action. The political package can include negotiated outputs (implement and operationalize GST outputs and assess progress on GST1 as well as lessons for future GSTs) and consultative and/or non-negotiated outputs (political commitments, road maps, high-level political messages and feedback loops, as well as tools to drive changes).

12 A Solutions Approach to the GST: Technical Paper (15 August 2023).

13 Towards a successful outcome of the first global stocktake of the Paris Agreement. 2023. Sirini Jeudy-Hugo and Leon Charles.

Within the formal GST process, this section takes a bottom-up perspective by looking at what elements the Consideration of Outputs phase are expected to cover according to the on-going discussion led by Parties, non-Party stakeholders and experts. Data analysed in the section mainly comes from the discussions conducted under the GST TDs.

As indicated above, three TDs have been held throughout 2022-2023. The latest GST TD 1.3 was held in June 2023, where one of the main focuses of the discussion was how the GST's final outcome can inform Parties as they update and enhance their adaptation actions and support. TD1.3 was the final TD before the first GST's conclusion, and there will be only one more GST workshop on the Consideration of Outputs component (which will be held in October 2023). As the synthesis report of the TDs was only made available a few days before publishing this policy brief and mainly provides a top-level summary of key issues discussed in the full cycle of TD without a detailed record

of expectations from the participants, for the purposes of this analysis, the following summary is based on the authors' personal notes throughout the involvement in the TD1.3 events.

At the TD 1.3 Round Table, participants discussed key issues on what should be addressed by the GST and how. The discussion was moderated by the co-facilitators but without a pre-defined discussion structure. It was noticed that the participants' statements tended to be loosely aligned across a number of topics, perspectives and opinions. To summarise the key elements highlighted by participants, this section groups the highlighted topics, perspectives and opinions into five discussion perspectives, covering everything from overall methodology to the specific sectors that the GST on adaptation is expected to address. These five categories are classified with the aim of helping the GST process prepare for its final component of Consideration of Outputs. Table 1 provides an overview of these five categories and a brief description.

Table 1. Key elements discussed at the GST TD1.3 Round Table for Adaptation and Loss and Damage*

To address the question of	Discussion perspectives	Description
What key messages should GST deliver	Specific sectors	Sectors whose adaptation needs shall be considered by the GST
	What to inform the Parties	Key aspects/messages that the GST should inform the Parties
	Enabling factors	Factors that ensure/facilitate delivery of the above points
How should those messages be delivered	Key principles	What are the key considerations and principles for delivering the GST outputs?
	Inclusive approach	Perspectives to be considered to ensure an inclusive GST

* For detailed notes on the discussed elements, see Annex A.

Taking a closer look at these elements provides a more detailed understanding of Parties, experts and non-party stakeholders' expectations. In terms of **what** key messages the GST should deliver, participants called on it to provide improved an understanding of adaptation gaps, needs, and adequacy and effectiveness. The main concerns raised in these discussions could be summarised in three categories: 1) the specific sectors that the GST should address; 2) recommended actions to address the adaptation gaps; and 3) the enabling factors that can facilitate the enhancement of actions. Sectors that have been emphasized include agriculture, food and eco-systems. To address the potential adaptation demands, participants have called for the needs of early warning systems, eco-system-based and nature-based adaptation solutions, as well as translating and funding existing adaptation planning into implementation.

To facilitate such actions, key enabling factors highlighted by participants included research, collaborations, infrastructure, capacity-building and particularly finance, where adaptation finance gaps, access and modality were emphasised. Through all these discussed elements, Parties and non-Party stakeholders have demonstrated great appreciation of adaptation challenges and their high expectations of how the GST could address those challenges. However, it was observed that significantly less of the discussion was focused on the GST's function of providing an overview of the adaptation implementation gaps at the global level, which is the necessary foundation for the future design of effective adaptation actions.

Furthermore, the discussion also touched upon the point of **how** those key messages should be delivered. Focuses under these lines of discussions can be summarized in two categories:

ries of: 1) key principles in delivering the GST outputs; and 2) facilitating an inclusive approach. For the first category, concerns included: the nature of GST (more as a technical tool for stocktaking than for implementing adaptation), historical data on climate impact attribution, boundaries between adaptation and loss and damage discussions, linkages between adaptation and mitigation, and avoiding reporting burdens and maladaptation. It further suggests that the GST should communicate its outputs using clear language and indicators, supported by data and examples. The discussion also highlighted the importance of inclusive approaches where perspectives of equity, human rights, gender issues and the participation of NSAs, youth, children and indigenous groups in implementing adaptation should be integrated. The elements summarized under these “how” questions are well aligned with supporting the GST’s dual mandate. For instance, these key principles could support the GST in designing a methodology (e.g., spatial and temporal boundaries, distinguishing adaptation from loss and damage etc.) to assess adaptation progress, while the inclusive approach would support the GST in enhancing adaptation implementation.

Summarizing these elements highlighted in the TD 1.3 Round Table, it was observed that discussions on the GST seem a bit unbalanced in addressing GST’S dual mandate. GST is mandated to provide progress assessment on adaptation implementation and inform the Parties in updating and enhancing their adaptation action and support. However, in many on-going discussions, including the above-mentioned TD1.3, the focus has been put more on treating GST as a framework for addressing pre-identified adaptation challenges in a given context. Less attention has been paid to taking GST as an opportunity to understand first the adaptation implementation gap at a global level, and then how Parties can enhance their adaptation implementation on that basis, that being its more narrowly defined mandate in the official UNFCCC decisions. What is more feasible, therefore, is that the GST shall provide a comprehensive understanding of adaptation gaps in order to outline the broad political pathways available to fill those gaps, which can then be brought into the broader UNFCCC negotiations.

After looking more closely at how the ‘Consideration of Outputs’ is formally defined in the UNFCCC process and at Parties’ and non-Party stakeholders’ expectations on what it should cover, it seems that there is a certain gap in understanding between the two angles. Hence this policy brief calls on the GST to guide a more balanced discussion with more focus directed toward the GST’s technical mandate

as an assessment tool. This would form the foundation for enhancing adaptation implementation on the global level.

In the following section this brief will elaborate on how our iGST Adaptation Working Group’s work could potentially contribute to addressing some of these concerned elements proposed by the TD1.3 participants.

3. ‘Consideration of Outputs’: key findings from the work of the iGST Adaptation Working Group

Having now considered both top-down and bottom-up expectations of the GST as a whole, and specifically its Consideration of Outputs phase, we can now discuss how the findings of the iGST AWG during 2021-2023 can inform the final phase of the first GST. The following discussion and recommendations are thus split into two based on the two main research topics: 1) private-sector adaptation reporting as a source of input to the Global Stocktake (2021-2022); and 2) the adequacy and effectiveness of adaptation in the Global Stocktake (2022-2023).

3.1 Greater reflection of the private sector in the GST

Generally, it is recognized that, although the GST is a Party-driven process, inputs from Non-Party stakeholders, including the private sector, provide important contributions.¹⁴ At the GST TD1.3 round table, the importance of involving the private sector through inclusive and participatory approaches was again brought up, in line with discussions under the two previous TDs. Arguments for greater reflection of the private sector in the GST include: 1) the private sector’s ability to contribute important expertise and experience in, as well as pledges and commitments to, climate actions;¹⁵ 2) its inputs to adaptation finance and capacity-building are particularly important;¹⁶ and 3) with a large and increasing role in adaptation, it is critical that the benefits, costs and risks of private-sector adaptation action are included in the GST.¹⁷

14 Summary report on the first meeting of the technical dialogue of the first global stocktake under the Paris Agreement, 342, 2022.

15 Summary report on the first meeting of the technical dialogue of the first global stocktake under the Paris Agreement, 41, (e), 2022.

16 Summary report on the first meeting of the technical dialogue of the first global stocktake under the Paris Agreement, 153, 155 2022.

17 Summary report on the first meeting of the technical dialogue of the first global stocktake under the Paris Agreement, 305 (i), 2022.

However, due to the fact that there is no existing systemic approach to collecting and reporting such data, the limited transparency and accountability of the private sector's adaptation action and support makes it difficult to track and assess such adaptation actions under the GST.

Against this background, regulatory approaches to engage the private sector at the national and international levels under the GST have been suggested.¹⁸ In response, in 2021 the iGST AWG conducted a study of the private sector's role in the GST, exploring how its adaptation challenges and efforts could be taken into consideration by the GST.

Findings from this study show that currently the private sector is reporting on climate adaptation to different stakeholders, including national governments, non-state climate action databases and corporate disclosure platforms. However, the study also indicated that currently state-led adaptation reporting processes may under-report or miss altogether a significant share of adaptation progress and efforts by the private sector, and that in general adaptation data reported through all three types of reporting pathways is of limited quantity and quality. On top of that, there is a lack of clear pathways for linking reported data to the GST. In other words, currently the private sector's adaptation data is not being comprehensively assessed at the global level. To address these challenges, the iGST AWG study explored the potential for 1) increasing the quantity and quality adaptation-relevant data generated by private-sector reporting; and 2) establishing and strengthening the pathways that link available data sources on private-sector adaptation to the GST.² Based on the analysis, the study made a few further recommendations.

Taking the angle of how such recommendations could support the GST's final outputs by addressing how the private sector can contribute better to and benefit from future GSTs, the following points could be useful for the first GST to take into consideration:

1. The GST could facilitate standardizing private-sector reporting on adaptation by providing guidance targeting key stakeholders:

- a. For climate-related disclosure initiatives and other relevant business organizations, such guidance could focus on building capacity for companies to report on physical risks and their management within corporate disclosures
- b. For national governments, such guidance could focus on facilitating the establishment of national bespoke reporting systems for private-sector reporting and further mandating domestic corporate disclosures in alignment with existing principles, e.g. the TCFD (Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures) recommendations¹⁹

2. The GST should further ensure it remains open to including information reported by the private sector by providing guidance on how such data from various channels will be included in the future GSTs.

3.2 Consideration of adequacy and effectiveness in the first GST

As a second area of focus, the iGST adaptation working group looked more closely at the third function of the GST for adaptation, soliciting a group of international experts to write a short discussion piece around the question: *'How can the concepts of adequacy and effectiveness of adaptation be operationalized in assessments of global progress on adaptation?'* The six articles contained in the study covered both the conceptual and operational aspects of Adequacy and Effectiveness (A&E) and included empirical examples.

Among many other things, the articles demonstrated how the two concepts of 'Adequacy' and 'Effectiveness' are not conceptually clear, neither in the literature nor in the UNFCCC's negotiations. Before they can be operationalized in a GST, therefore, a global consensus will need to be reached on a basic question: *'Adequate and Effective: for whom, when and why?'* The answer to that question will then point to how a stocktake of A&E could be structured and implemented, including what metrics and methodologies that should ultimately be applied. Taking this question seriously may imply thinking beyond a standardized quantitative stocktaking exercise to consider also how well-designed national assessments of adaptation outcomes can help provide meaningful feedback to a country's adaptation practice

18 Summary report on the first meeting of the technical dialogue of the first global stocktake under the Paris Agreement, 309 (d), 2022.

19 Building on TCFD recommendations, ISSB / IFRS S2 Climate-related Disclosures was launched in 2023 aiming at streamlining the fragmented global landscape of climate related disclosure.

and eventually facilitate better adaptation actions. Ultimately, a discussion of adaptation metrics and approaches for assessing adaptation outcomes at both the national and global scales is also intricately linked to the broader conversations under the Glasgow–Sharm el-Sheikh work programme on operationalization of the global goal on adaptation.²⁰ Despite the still developing conceptual definition of A&E, the articles in this iGST AWG study are able to point toward several practical ideas that could help operationalize its assessment in the GST. Important among these is the notion that the GST’s assessment of A&E will need to reconcile several seemingly opposing objectives and approaches, such as the need for globally comparable and aggregable (quantitative) data for the GST vs. the need for locally adapted M&E systems providing more contextual data that is not necessarily comparable to other contexts. These should be combined into one meaningful process, though with significant data and methodology limitations, at least for the first GST cycle. First, regarding data restrictions, reviewing the available national reporting in NAPs and Adaptation Communications, it is increasingly clear they will not contain sufficient amounts or quality of data to support the kind of bottom-up aggregation of quantitative (or semi-quantitative) data that would ideally be the approach applied in the context of the UNFCCC. This is hardly surprising given the lack of standardized reporting frameworks and agreed operational definitions of the global goal on adaptation. Instead, it can be expected that the assessment in the first GST will have to build on large amounts of heterogeneous and often qualitative data, and likely from a broader pool of resources than national reports to the UNFCCC. This has further implications for methodology, with A&E assessments also seemingly needing, for the time being at least, to incorporate more top-down and guided perception-based and qualitative methodologies. Several of the articles in the iGST study propose ways to aggregate and assess highly heterogeneous data sets, such as national reporting in NDCs and Adaptation Communications and scientific literature, either through coding and assessment systems or through guided processes of structured expert judgement. While not ideal, applying such semi-quantitative approaches to assessment could help achieve some form of aggregated global assessment in the short term. In the longer term this also has the potential to limit rigid global reporting standards and metrics that may not have meaningful benefits for national adaptation processes, while still producing semi-quantitative data that will enable some form of quantitative tracking and comparison of progress across GST cycles.

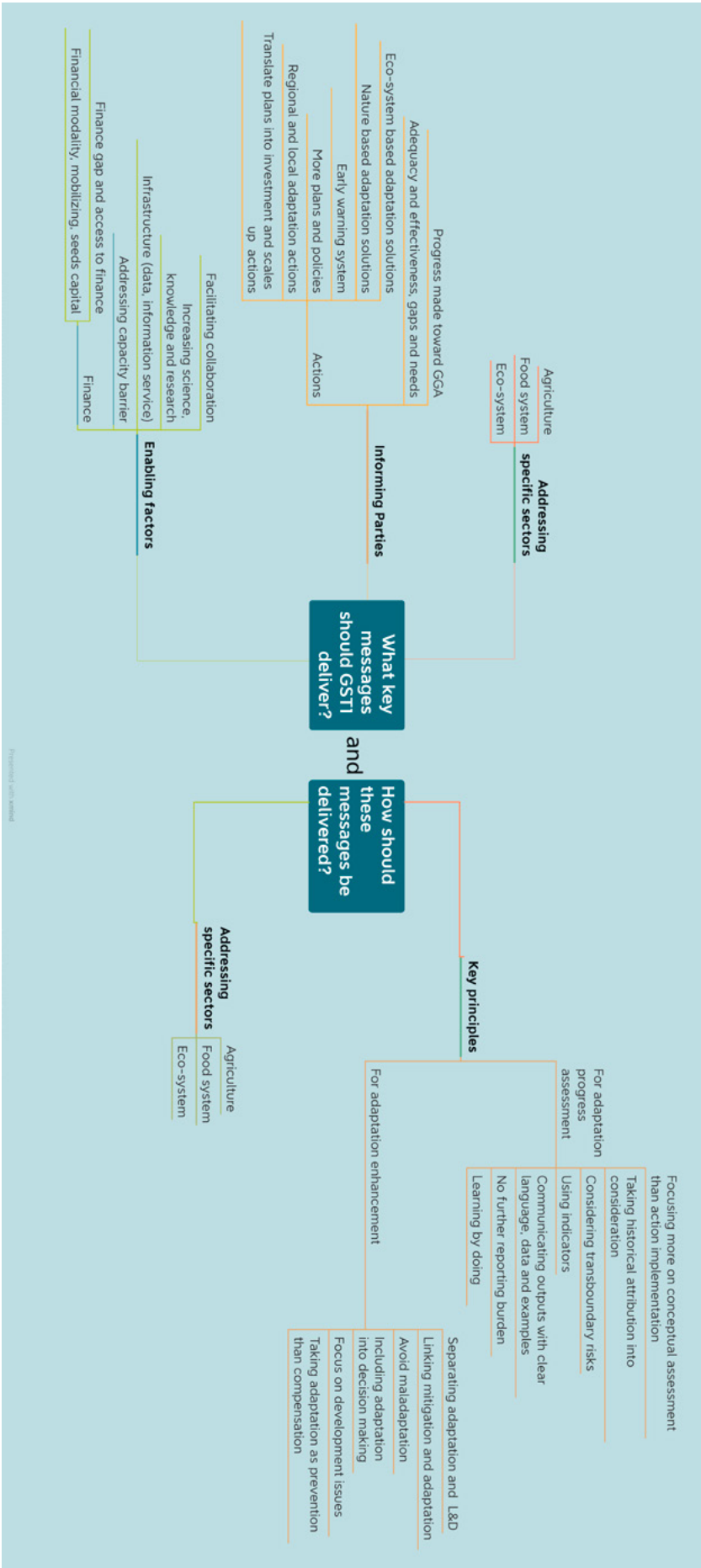
Specifically for the Consideration of Outputs phase of the current GST cycle, the following points might be considered in light of the findings above:

1. Considering the expected data and methodological limitations, it might not be realistic for the first GST to strive for a quantitative assessment of the degree to which global adaptation action is adequate and effective. Instead, based on the technical phase’s review of submitted national adaptation reporting it could ‘take note’ of the frequent lack of any assessment of adequacy and effectiveness, as well as the heterogeneous methodologies and approaches used in those that do include an assessment of this element.
2. Building on the above, the first GST could take a clear step forward towards improved assessments of A&E in future GSTs by calling for the setting up and testing of a pilot assessment framework based on semi-quantitative approaches to assessment through either coding and assessment systems or guided processes of structured expert judgement. The primary purpose of such a pilot assessment would be to provide a more quantitative representation of progress on A&E in the second GST and to generate experience and learning for a more refined system in following GSTs. Furthermore, the framework should provide clear guidance to countries on the type and format of information to include in the next round of NDC/AC submissions to be aligned with the assessment framework.
3. The first GST could call for more research at the interface of GGA and GST, particularly on methodological development for the conceptualization of the A&E of adaptation as it relates to the potential GGA framework which is currently being discussed. With the help of the GGA framework (where hopefully its three elements would be conceptualized as measurable goals and targets, either qualitatively or quantitatively or both), one direction for conceptualizing A&E of adaptation in GST could be to define them further with indicators under each of the three elements. For example, what is considered as adequate or effective adaptive capacity enhancement, resilience strengthening or reduction of vulnerability? As such indicators will largely be outcome-based, this will complement the current practice of mainly using inputs or outputs-based indicators in adaptation assessments.

²⁰ Decision 7/CMA.3 and Decision 3/CMA.4.

Annex A

Figure 1. What key messages should GSTa deliver and how? - expectations from Parties and Non-Party stakeholders



Source: author's own notes taken from the TD 1.3 Round Table, June 2023



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