

# Meeting Summary Report: Climate Effects on US International Interests Chapter

## Introduction

The Fourth National Climate Assessment (NCA4), currently in development, will assess the science of climate change and its impacts across the United States. It will document climate change-related impacts and responses for various sectors and regions, with the goal of better informing public and private decision-making at all levels. NCA4 is planned to be released in 2018.

To ensure that the assessment is informed by and useful to stakeholders, engagement activities were planned for many of the 17 National Chapters. These activities provided stakeholders an opportunity to provide input to and exchange ideas with the chapter author team on key message formulation, share relevant resources, and give individual feedback on issues of importance to their sectors and regions.

## Climate Effects on US International Interests

For the first time, the NCA will include a chapter on the impacts of climate change on U.S. international interests, focusing on the following areas in which the U.S. is connected to the wider world:

- Economics and Trade
- National Security
- International Development and Humanitarian Assistance
- Transboundary Issues
- Cooperation to Build Scientific Knowledge and Capacity

Rather than being an assessment of climate impacts globally, which is generally the role of reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, this chapter will focus on how US interests and commitments are currently being and will potentially be affected by climate variability and change. It will also address the efforts being undertaken to manage those effects.

## Public Engagement Meeting

On April 6, 2017, the NCA4 International Chapter author team held a public engagement meeting at a special edition of the Adaptation Community meeting in Washington, DC--an audience primarily focused on international development and security issues. Remote participation was available; several stakeholders joined virtually. The objectives were to share information about the progress to date of the International chapter, gather input from stakeholders to help inform the further writing and development of the chapter, and raise general awareness of the process and timeline for NCA4.

## Overview and Topics of Discussion

NCA4 Director David Reidmiller gave an introduction to USGCRP, then described the NCA4 structure and timeline for completion. Joel Smith, the Chapter Lead, provided an overview of the International chapter, while individual members of the author team described each of the proposed focal areas.

Participants raised questions and provided comments focusing largely on the developing country context, specifically on development and security issues, as well as the general use and application of NCA reports.

## Key Takeaways

The author team received input and feedback on the current structure of the International Chapter, which are organized into themes below:

Stakeholders suggested that NCA-type products are a potentially important tool for the developing world and noted that thought should be given to how these types of assessments can be accomplished in developing countries.

- Recognizing that an NCA4-type assessment may not be as useful to developing countries or in different policy settings, this report will have an appendix that will place NCA4 into a global context. The section will compare and contrast NCA4 with selected, representative national climate / vulnerability assessment efforts around the world, in both developed and developing countries. The international appendix will also look briefly at global assessments (examples: AMAP, IPCC, Arctic).

Stakeholders suggested that the author team should investigate the role that international development plays in building resilience, reducing climate impacts and producing significant positive outcomes in the developing world. Conversely, the lack of resilience in developing countries can ‘filter up’ to developed countries (including through straining their international aid capacity).

- These provide good framing questions for the U.S. and other developed nations: what do international climate events/ impacts mean for our interests in the short- and long-term?
- Even though the chapter is space-limited (with roughly one page per section) the issues related to climate impacts on our investments in developing countries are of keen interest.
- An illustrative example of how resilience/ adaptive capacity makes a difference is in how drought differentially impacts places like the U.S. and the Horn of Africa.
- Issues that are relevant to the International Chapter were raised at a recent Senate briefing: “How Foreign Climate Aid Benefits the United States”  
<http://www.eesi.org/briefings/view/041117aid>

Stakeholders suggested that past NCAs may be able to provide important lessons on how these reports are used and by whom.

- NCA3 served as a good communications report, and a number of tools for decision makers exist/have been developed. Some examples are the Climate Resilience Toolkit and EPA’s Climate Indicator effort. NCA4 will be written at same level as NCA3, but will include these new exciting tools that Feds have developed since the last assessment.

- It's important to note that the NCA is not a policy-prescriptive report, but that the issues included in NCA4 can help inform policy decisions.
- One important lesson of this new International Chapter will be that the impacts from climate change on American interests don't stop at US borders; the objective is to expand people's view of the "extent of risks" the U.S. faces.

Stakeholders suggested that the author team give thought to how chapter topics may be related to the idea of climate change as a 'threat multiplier' on security issues. Recent conflicts in the Middle East and in areas where there are underlying vulnerabilities (e.g., to water and food resources) highlight this, and it was suggested that authors should think about how these connect to U.S. international interests.

- The film "The Age of Consequences" was offered as an example of an analysis of threat multipliers.
- DoD is in a unique position to provide valuable resources and the author team (which includes a DoD representative) should look carefully at what information can be incorporated into the chapter. Given the need to limit chapter length (in order to keep the report accessible), users will also be given links to the significant work that's been done on Climate and Security, and all the other issues addressed in this chapter.

Where possible, the author team should continually examine the relationships between sections and reduce redundancy.

- The sections on National Security, Development, and Transboundary Issues can be closely related and maybe shouldn't be separated.

### Chapter Author Team

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